

Beloved family of God,

It is an honour to be your Priest in Charge. Your support and encouragement as we've continued to navigate opportunities and challenges together over the past year reminds me of what an incredibly gifted community we are and how committed you are to using your God given gifts for the building up of kingdom of God in this place and in this city.

More of our pre-pandemic programming was reinstituted since our last AGM. In my last charge, I challenged you to resurrect the coffee hours and as most of you know, we now have weekly coffee and goodies and lively visiting in the Chapter Room every Sunday morning after the 9:15 service. Thank you to everyone who is a part of making that happen. "In Conversation", the potluck and discussion gatherings is in full gear again. Both Christmas Eve services doubled in size from what they were in 2022, and the family style service at 4:30pm ballooned in terms of the number of children present. It exceeded the last pre-pandemic Christmas Eve number. The pre-Christmas "Community Carols" service held on 22 Dec saw a full CNJ, so full that in fact that the service will need to be in the Nave next December. Thank you to everyone who has helped breathe new life into these important ministries, services and programs.

The last year saw the emergence of new initiatives including a Grief group to provide support for those who are grieving. In response to a call from the Archbishop of Jerusalem, the liturgy team quickly created a service to pray for Peace in the Holy Land on Oct 17. The service attracted over 70 people, many from the wider community. That galvanized us to think about providing more opportunities to pray for peace. So, we are currently offering Prayers for Peace every Friday at noon during Lent. We organized a Gala in record time that not only raised money for the operating fund but brought people together. A regular message I receive is that people want to gather. They want to be together. Thank you to everyone involved in these new initiatives.

We continue to recognize and respond to the needs of the city and wider world around us. Yesterday, a group from the Cathedral participated in the Coldest Night of the Year walkathon to raise money for Our Place. They raised 132% of their goal, so well done to them. Once again, a group gathered to write letters for the "Write for Rights" initiative to advocate for prisoners around the world. We hosted the local Ukrainian community for the Holodomor commemoration at the end of November. This was the second time we've hosted this commemoration. On the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation we hosted an important conversation with the First Nations with the "Blood in the Rocks" event where we and many from the wider community learned about the smallpox epidemic that decimated the indigenous peoples one hundred and fifty years ago. And there are currently twenty-one people taking part in an Intersections course here every week for the duration of Lent. These events represent huge personal contributions from members of our cathedral community, and I thank all of you for stepping up.

A group of parishioners took part in the "Invite, Welcome, Connect" workshop in the Fall at The Church of the Advent. Welcoming newcomers and visitors is a critical part of what we do here at the cathedral. I am grateful for the stewards and the sidespeople who are at the forefront of greeting but it is work that all of us must be

involved in. Is there somebody you don't recognize sitting behind you, in front of you, or maybe where you would normally sit? Take advantage of that opportunity to welcome someone new into the community. It is wonderful when I look out at the congregation and see new faces. And we have a lot of them. A longstanding and very involved member of the congregation told me recently that a couple of years ago they would have been able to name everyone in the cathedral, but that is no longer the case. I challenge each of you to say hello to someone you don't recognize today in church and to do that each time you are here. On the topic of welcoming, please send Jennifer your pictures so we can continue to add them to our database. It will help Jacqueline and me learn your names and it will also be a valuable resource for the new dean when he or she arrives.

The past year saw the school face a significant challenge around the Head of School position. Jake Humphries has been the interim head providing capable leadership for the community. The school board is now chaired by Chris Thackray and I am absolutely thrilled about that. Chris is eminently suited to this job, bringing the right combination of skills and experience. As Chris and I recently announced, Crystal Harvey will become the new Head of School this Summer and I look forward to introducing you to her in advance of that time.

We have 8 people currently in the Christian initiation group taking place this Lent, two seek to be baptized and three want to be confirmed. Those are exciting numbers! Our cathedral community continues to encourage people to commit their lives to Jesus Christ and to grow their faith. Please keep them in your prayers.

Those of you who joined us for the Budget information sessions on Tuesday and Thursday understand that the cathedral faces serious financial challenges. Thank you for attending those meetings. There are small, hopeful signs on the financial front; we've seen an increase in new givers and an increase in amounts pledged for the next year. It is never too late to pledge. Your cathedral needs you, every one of you, to support it by giving what you can give. Not more than what you can give. But what you are able to give.

Finding solutions to our financial problems is everyone's business. We have a hard working and committed group of leaders at CMT, Cathedral Council, the Stewardship committee, and the Finance committee who continue to explore ways to address our financial issues but input and ideas from the congregation are always welcome.

Building For The Future understandably remains an ongoing item in our discussions as a congregation and a precinct. The rezoning application for the proposed rezoning of the precinct was submitted to the city earlier this month and the city has determined that the application is complete. Now the application will work its way through the various processes necessary to make a decision about it. New signs will be going up on the precinct in March that will indicate that the application is in process and how people can get more information.

I want to stress that it is the diocese which is ultimately responsible for BFTF. The land and buildings here on the precinct are diocesan assets and, therefore, it is the diocese which oversees and drives the process. However, the cathedral has a vested interest in what happens on the precinct and, ultimately, stands to benefit from the revenue generated from BFTF.

There are many unknowns about the future when we're talking about BFTF. No one can guarantee how much revenue will be generated by any development. We don't know what will eventually be built on the precinct or when, assuming the rezoning application is approved. There is risk involved in this project. However, there is risk involved no matter what we do at this point. That's uncomfortable and stressful. But it is in fact where we are. I can tell you from where I sit that there has been a lot of hard work done to assess that this rezoning proposal is solid and, if approved, will result in a substantial lift to the value of the land before anything is built on it. I continue to encourage you to consult the BFTF portion of the cathedral website if you have questions about the process to this point, particularly the Frequently Asked Questions. If you can't find answers there, please let me know and I can put you in touch with people who are more equipped than I am to answer them.

I understand there are some people who would like an opportunity to raise questions about BFTF in a forum that involves only members of the congregation. I'm announcing today that I will work with Cathedral Management Team and Cathedral Council to organize such a meeting. Our aim will be to publicize a date for this gathering by 15 March. We will also continue to do regular updates on BFTF with representatives from the diocese and Wiser Projects to give you the opportunity to ask questions directly to them.

I believe that having done our due diligence in discerning our way into the future, we are called to move forward in faith, trusting that God is journeying with us into the unknown. The stories of our spiritual ancestors illustrate this. Moses led God's people from Egypt through the wilderness to the promised land. If we substitute "unknown" for wilderness, and then consider that Moses's journey through the unknown was full of risk, anxiety, fear, and frustration it sounds familiar as we propose to embark on something new, something not as clearly defined as we would like it to be. I am confident that those who were working on the building of this cathedral and precinct one hundred years ago also experienced uncertainty and risk as they proposed to build and develop on this precious land. They could not predict what would happen here.

I want to turn the focus onto our incredible staff. I've been with them through an entire calendar year now and my esteem for them has only grown. Norri and Kevin work tirelessly to keep the cathedral building tidy and clean for those who use the space and visit each week.

Jennifer is my right hand. She keeps me organized as much as it is possible for anyone to keep me organized! Jennifer assumed almost all the facilities management side of the house over the past eight months. Alex is Jennifer's partner in dealing with the public facing work of the deanery. The two of them welcome folks, deal with many phone calls every day, and handle multiple, varied requests each week. Alex's job has also changed in the past year. As Jennifer's job shifts, Alex has assumed some of her previous duties. I am thankful every day for their presence, contribution, and support.

Our musicians, Donald and Mark, are world class. We absolutely have if not the finest than among the finest of musical programs in the Anglican Church of Canada. We are blessed indeed. And of course they don't do this alone. We are blessed with fine

choirs at 9:15am, 11am and Evensong every Sunday and with the young choristers singing at Evensong on Wednesdays.

This year we welcomed Gary Reynolds as our Interim Financial Manager. Gary has been a wonderful addition to the team and has kept our finances organized. Gary will be leaving us so that he and his wife can travel, and I completely understand that, but we will miss Gary. He has generously offered to stay until his replacement is found and had an adequate handover. A search for a new Manager of Accounting is underway and we will let you know when the spot is filled. Backing Gary up is Kathy, our bookkeeper. Kathy works quietly and efficiently to ensure that our books are up to date, and we are very fortunate to have her with us.

Our Sacristan team: Bob and Cyrus, you two are here when the cathedral is silent and empty of people preparing for worship services. No one will ever know all that you do but I am thankful for the ways you ensure our worship is conducted with decency and good order. And my thanks extend to all who serve as servers, Eucharistic Ministers, litanists, and readers.

Jacqueline Stober joined us in July and it is a joy to work with Jacqueline. Her warmth and generosity of spirit is being felt throughout the parish. Some of you may not know that Jacqueline didn't receive the bulk of her furniture and belongings from England until the end of December. I've moved many times and never been without my belongings for over five months! Jacqueline, we know this has been a long and complex move for you, Jess, and the cats but we are so thankful you are here with us.

The search for the new Dean continues and as I've indicated elsewhere, Bishop Anna hopes to provide an update on the status of the search in mid-April. In the meantime, please pray for the candidates, the search committee, and for the bishop.

Lastly, I want to say a heartfelt thank you to all of you who give freely of your time to support the many ministries of Christ Church Cathedral, Victoria. To the Management Team and the Cathedral Council; I can rely on you to do what needs to be done to help move the cathedral forward. I treasure your commitment, and your seemingly endless willingness to say "Yes" when I ask for assistance. You have my back and I trust that you will tell me when you think I need a course correction. Our trial governance model continues to evolve and be fine-tuned. For your information, you will find an update in the AGM files on our website.

Thank you to all of you who serve on committees. Thank you to those who answer the call to help host receptions, or to bake, or to make sandwiches such as those we will enjoy post service. In whatever capacity you volunteer here at the cathedral you are fulfilling your role as the Body of Christ in this place, and we value your contribution. Because we need everyone here to offer their time, talents, and treasure in order to be the Body of Christ in this place. Each and every one of you.

Thank you to my clergy colleagues and friends who support life here at the cathedral as they are able; whether that be in participation in worship or preaching, teaching, or in providing much cherished mentorship and support, I am incredibly blessed to work with you. And a special shout out to my husband who, when I took on the position of Priest in Charge, said he would not take on any interim ministries so he could be

totally available to the cathedral and to take care of me. Doug, thank you. I love you. I couldn't do this without you.

Now I will conclude with a prayer for the parish that was written by one of our own. I recommend it to you for use as you pray for the cathedral.

Let us pray:

God, we pray for this Cathedral community of Christ Church. We thank you for the many blessings you have bestowed on us through the years. Grant us the will and the strength to continue worshipping you and serving you in this place. Help us to be a loving and supportive community to one another, a source of welcome and solace to all who visit, and a valued contributor to the life of the city around us. During this time of transition and challenge, of uncertainty and opportunity, may your Spirit lighten upon us with the gifts of love, patience, discernment, and wisdom. All this we ask in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ. *Amen.*