

## **WARDENS' REPORT – 2020**

At last year's Vestry, we were blessed to have three new Wardens join St. Olave's leadership team. Don Weston was elected as People's Warden (having served as a Warden before) and Sharm Powell was elected as Deputy People's Warden. Michael Jones was appointed Deputy Rector's Warden and Janice Douglas was re-appointed to continue serving as Rector's Warden.

Just a few weeks later the pandemic hit and we had to close to in-person worship.

Despite this once-in-a-century challenge, your Wardens continued to look after the day-to-day workings of the church. Here are some of the highlights of 2020:

### **Worship**

Parishioners are by now well aware of the rapid move to online worship, led so deftly by Rev'd Rob and Rev'd Alexandra. Our clergy began recording Sunday services and educational videos, edited by Janice and then published to YouTube (step 1, get a YouTube channel!). Rev'd Alexandra moved Bible study to Zoom and started offering Compline services on Zoom Tuesday evenings. Our clergy began live streaming Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer to Facebook Live. The learning curve was steep at first but eventually, the weekly rhythm of church shifted.

### **Finances**

In late 2019, we moved our online giving from PayPal to a church donation platform called tithe.ly. We do not pay a licencing or set-up fee, but our online fee is 2.9% of every donation, plus 30¢. Donors also have the option of covering the fee (and many do). Tithe.ly allows us to easily add different categories such as Second Century Mission Fund or Flowers for the Altar. This turned out to be very lucky to have this in place before the pandemic hit.

### **Staff**

During the first wave of COVID-19, Wardens met regularly over Zoom to make sure that our staff were safe when in the church or were able to work from home. Due to illness, our Director of Music, John Stephenson, could not work for five months. Our sexton Dave Webb reduced his time in the church to perform only essential tasks that would keep the building and its occupants safe. Judy worked from home, coming into the office once every two weeks to perform essential financial and bookkeeping tasks, as well as other duties when already in the building.

### **Building**

We took advantage of the building being in limited use over the summer to replace 14 windows in the lower level. This work had been deferred for the last several years but we are now very pleased that we were able to get this done. More windows will hopefully be replaced in 2021. We are grateful that Dave is able to do the repairs to the interior plaster framing.

In late summer and fall, Dave Webb tackled another project that has been on “the list” for a long time, renovating the Addus office. As our weekday tenant, Addus has been an important part of the fabric of St. Olave’s daily life for more than 10 years. We look forward to the time they feel they can return to run their program safely, and their office will be waiting for them.

### **Organ Restoration Project**

At last year’s Vestry meeting, it was agreed that some work needed to be completed on the organ, over and above the regular tunings that had been taking place. The organ provides a very important component of the ministry that is offered by St. Olave’s and we wish to continue this with an instrument that meets our needs.

The first step in the project was to locate an Organ Technician that would be able to complete a full assessment of the instrument and then be able to perform the necessary repairs. We reached out to three separate individuals.

- Robert Hiller, President, Alan T. Jackson Company Ltd., Casavant Frères representative
- Clem Carelse, St. Swithun Organ Works
- John Struve, Organ Technician

We received a report from each of them, detailing their findings and recommendations. We subsequently elected John Struve to carry out the identified repairs.

There were a number of different areas within the instrument that he identified as requiring repairs. These were all signs of design and age of the Keates Organ. Throughout the summer, when the church was closed, this work continued to be performed. Here is a summary of those actions:

- There were many “dead” notes in several parts of the organ due to the failures of the valve bearings
- Some of the larger pipes were never properly supported and had collapsed.
- There were many wind leaks that needed to be sealed up
- The Combination Action unit, used to establish pre-sets, had partially failed
- Lighting for the Pedals and Music Stand required repairs
- Attach the Pedalboard platform to organ
- Relocate the blowers to the original basement location

With the exception of the last point, all of the identified repairs have been completed, and a partial tuning of the instrument was performed before Christmas. The relocation of the two blowers is on hold pending a further assessment. Access to the organ is not currently possible due to the lockdown.

The ongoing maintenance of the instrument will include the regular tunings, a couple of times each year. When new issues are identified, they will be corrected as soon as possible.

### **Return to in-person worship**

By midsummer, we began planning for our reopening. Don and Michael and a team of volunteers were busily refinishing and painting the doors a welcoming shade of red. Sharm researched and organized the new cleaning protocols, working with Property Chair Sheila Tait, ACW members and other volunteers to put systems in place for our parishioners, tenants and staff. Janice worked on new exterior signage and a “welcome back to church” video with many cameo appearances. By September, Judy was back to her regular three-day-a-week schedule. We were also relieved to welcome back John Stephenson to the bench for in-person and recorded services. It was definitely all hands on deck as we focussed on reopening to in-person worship September 27 and welcoming back our tenants.

As it turned out, only Power4Teens, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and one music tenant (Paulina Derbez) returned to regular use of the church. Rev’d Peter John of the South Sudanese congregation live streams their service from the church on Facebook. Hunger Patrol continued uninterrupted throughout the summer to use their storage space and refrigerator for their sandwich ministry. Scouts and Guides gathered online or offsite outdoors according to their organizational protocols.

For nine Sundays we were able to worship together again, though masked and physically distanced, and without singing. Worshippers were screened and signed in for contact tracing by members of our trained greeting team. One worshipper (not a regular parishioner) did inform us that there had been a COVID outbreak in her kids’ school, but she did not test positive. As COVID numbers grew by the end of November, we were forced to close again. (Does anyone have whiplash yet?)

### **Advertising and Communications**

From January to April 2020 we advertised our services and our subsequent move to YouTube in the local community newspaper, the Bloor West-Parkdale Voice, owned by Metroland. Unfortunately they were one of the many businesses to shutter due to the pandemic. We then focussed our advertising on FaceBook ads and external signage (new banner and inserts for the lawn sign). In December, in light of having to be online for Christmas, we took an online ad on Toronto.com (also owned by Metroland) that was “geotargeted” to specific postal codes in proximity to the church (M6S, M6P, M6R, M8X and M6E). The ad directed people to a page on our website with the four Christmas programs (Comfort & Joy, Nativity Video, Lessons & Carols and Christmas Day Holy Communion). Given that these videos had very high views, we pronounce the ad campaign a success. In this new and atypical way, we are reaching more people with our message of keeping Christ at the centre of our lives.

With the switch to online worship, we began sending two e-blasts a week: one Sunday morning with the weekly service and one Wednesday evening with the weekly educational video. We are now back to one e-blast a week. The mailing list has also grown as more people subscribe to receive our weekly messages. Our Facebook followers and engagement (people commenting on or sharing posts) is also increasing. These are measurable signs that our message is being received and shared in a form of digital evangelism.

## Acknowledgements

As volunteers, we take our cues from strong leaders. At St. O's we are truly blessed to have Rev'd Rob at the helm, and Rev'd Alexandra as the 2IC. Their clear communication, ready availability and compassion is beyond compare. We thank them for continuing to create beautiful worship experiences for us, enhanced by John Stephenson and the choral leads, Martha Riddell's children's talks and Caroline Audet Mitchell's floral arrangements. We also gain strength and inspiration from our fellow volunteers. There are too many to name, but in particular Sheila Tait, ODT (Property Chair), Annis Tebbutt (Treasurer), Karen Bennedsen (bookkeeper) and Doug Hewitt (envelope secretary) continue to keep the wheels turning. And we could not do the work we do without the dedication of our office administrator, Judy Beal and our sexton, Dave Webb.

## In Closing

This has been a strange and stressful year for each of us Wardens. Like many of you, we are dealing with visits to parents in long-term care homes, supporting our children with in-home learning or with childcare, or coping with not being able to see our grown children at all. Blessedly, we have all remained healthy. Rob's and Alexandra's sermons have encouraged us to recognize the grief of the pandemic, and the disruption of not being able to worship together. The prayers week after week have sustained us. Each piece of work we did for the church, every hour spent, was an act of prayer and a show of faith.

Respectfully submitted by

Janice Douglas, Rector's Warden  
 Don Weston, People's Warden  
 Michael Jones, Deputy Rector's Warden  
 Sharm Powell, Deputy People's Warden