

## RECTOR'S REPORT – 2022

I ended my report to vestry last year saying this: “I pray that when I sit down to write my report in February of 2023, lockdowns, masks and physical distancing will all be long forgotten.” Well ... sort of. We are certainly in a much better place this February than we were last February. Life has, indeed, gone back to normal in many ways. But, of course, Covid is still with us and, it seems, may always be with us. And the threat of a return to the lockdowns of the past continues to loom over us. But that being said, church in 2023 is, thankfully, beginning to look and feel more and more like church as we know and love it. Slowly, but gradually, more people are returning to in-person worship. Most of our programmes have been restarted. And we are beginning to feel more confident about planning future events and services without the constant fear that such plans may be in vain.

While 2022 was full of uncertainty and risk, I am pleased to say that, as will be reported elsewhere, we finished the year with the highest level of givings for operations in the history of our parish. What's perhaps even more surprising is that our previous high-water mark for givings was reached in 2020, the very year the world was shut down and church was completely online for nearly ten months. And this generosity extends far beyond just financial gifts. We are blessed by a plethora of talented, committed and passionate laity and lay leaders who have continued to give of their time to make this parish thrive and grow despite the enormous challenges of these pandemic years. I think all of this says something important about our parish: in the face of adversity, we rise to the challenge.

And I believe that this fighting spirit is ingrained in the DNA of St. Olave's. For much of our 136 year history, we have defied the odds, punched above our weight, and overcome the obstacles set in our path. There's an inner strength and resilience that has consistently defined the people of this parish throughout the generations up until the present day. I give thanks to God frequently that he has blessed us in this way. And I am deeply grateful to all of you who, time and time again, have demonstrated your unwavering commitment to this place.

Of course, we still face many challenges and there is much work to be done. Our in-person attendance is still far below what it had been before the pandemic. While we will continue to produce high quality online services for those who are unable to attend because of health concerns or geography, we want to see our building full of people. Community is the heart of parish life and it is vital that we come together to laugh and sing and learn together. If your health allows it, and you haven't yet got back into the routine of regular attendance, I encourage you to think about coming back. We miss you and we believe that you will be better off for it!

Our parish had some significant ministry transitions in 2022. On February 10, Bishop Asbil appointed the Rev'd Dr. PJ Carefoote as an Honorary Assistant at St. Olave's, and we are greatly enriched by his ministry with us. We also welcomed Siobhan Carmichael to the role of Junior Church Coordinator and she has been doing an exceptional job reenergizing that programme after nearly three years of disruptions. And we were joined by Jeremy Tingle who continues to serve as our Interim Director of Music, and who rose to the challenge of pulling together Lessons and Carols and Christmas services with only a few weeks notice! I am truly blessed by the depth and

breadth of the ministry team at St. Olave's and not a day goes by where I don't count these blessings.

In the fall of 2022, we completed our participation in a programme offered by the Diocese called MAP (Mission Action Planning). MAP is defined as: "A process that helps parishes vision, plan, decide and act for growth ... by providing a framework and set of processes that help parish leaders identify, evaluate, and develop: Where you are – the neighbourhoods and communities where God has placed you and the opportunities this presents to your ministry; Who you are – the strengths and challenges of the congregation; Your Missional Stretch – God's call to your parish to reach out to share God's Kingdom with others in your neighbourhoods and communities." A small working group of parishioners led this process forward and the results were shared with the congregation in the fall. Several goals and projects were identified and we are currently seeking to implement them.

It was a delight to prepare 13 people for Confirmation this past year. The service was held on the 29<sup>th</sup> of May with Bishop Asbil officiating. In the end, 12 people were confirmed (one came down with Covid and had to miss the service). It was a wonderful occasion and was, at the time, the largest in-person service since the pandemic began.

Making our building more accessible is a complicated task and one that has challenged successive generations of parish leaders. Those of us who have been thinking and working on this project in recent years have come to understand that every possible option comes with a set of pros and cons. A creative and novel idea about the project will be presented at this meeting, but it too comes with both pros and cons. But having spent a lot of time on this file, I believe this particular idea has the most pros and fewest cons. And for that reason, I believe it's worth careful consideration by the parish. I commend all those who have worked on this project in the last few years, and I look forward to discussing the ideas that will be presented to Vestry this year.

I was pleased to complete my first ever published book in 2022. *These Our Prayers: Timeless Words for Every Occasion and Need* was a labour of love which gave me great joy in compiling. It would have been impossible if not for the talents of parishioners like Sandra Franke (who allowed me to use her artwork for the cover), Patrick McCormick (who did the layout) and especially Janice Douglas who motivated me to continue with the project and who served as editor and publicist.

I was also able to give some time to Diocesan work this year including participating in a committee tasked with implementing Bishop Asbil's vision for a restructured leadership system. Rather than four Episcopal Areas, each led by an Area Bishop, we now have five Archdeaconries, each led by an Archdeacon. This new structure will take a while to become fully integrated into the rhythm of diocesan life and there will, no doubt, be changes and improvements as time goes on. Below is a map I created which shows these new Archdeaconries (West, North, East, Central and South). St. Olave's is within the South Archdeaconry and our Archdeacon is the Venerable Cheryl Palmer from Christ Church Deer Park. The Suffragan Bishop who will be our main point of contact will be Bishop Kevin Robertson.



we continue to be blessed by her dedication to this vital role. With this group of strong leaders, we are well positioned to continue our trajectory of growth and ministry success.

Our staff contributes to the growth and health of our parish in many ways. Our Sexton, Dave, continues his work, currently at reduced hours. Judy, our parish administrator, quietly, diligently and patiently keeps St. Olave's moving forward. I remain ever grateful for the very fine and dedicated staff of our parish.

And I sincerely wish to thank you, the parishioners of St. Olave's, for your prayers, your kind and encouraging words, and your generosity throughout 2022. Many of you hold volunteer positions in the church, support our ministries by attending services and events, and offer untold hours of volunteer service. Thank you for everything you give and all that you do for our parish.

May God continue to bless us in the months and years ahead as we seek to do his will in this place.

Respectfully submitted,

The Rev'd Rob Mitchell  
Rector VI