

Wardens' Report

It's been another busy year for your wardens. We have supported St. Olave's ministry in varying capacities, including serving on committees, maintaining the church property, organizing events, scheduling greeters and readers, running the live stream, volunteering for Hunger Patrol, leading the Youth and Young Adults, delivering meals to seniors, managing social media and more. We meet often, in person and on Zoom, and are in regular contact with each other and Canon Rob via text and email.

You have likely read the many e-blasts and bulletin announcements reporting that we reached our 2023 targets for giving and attendance. While St. Olave's has benefitted from your generosity throughout the pandemic, building back the community has been a challenge. There are stories about the epidemic of loneliness across the nation, and in fact Toronto has been described as the loneliest city in Canada¹. The benefits of "living in community" are more important than ever and churches like St. Olave's can play a role.

We also note many churches did not survive the pandemic, including the one right next door to us at 356 Windermere (Windermere United). While we value the technology that allowed us to build an online community these past three years, we recognize that St. Olave's relies on strong in-person participation, in our services and parish life. To that end, the wardens supported the plan to return to a more typical pre-pandemic schedule of worship and events, thereby creating more opportunities for people to connect with each other.

Praying for Growth

Our 2022 Strategic Mission Plan "All Hands on Deck" identified our primary focus as being a "community that prays together." So it's not surprising that we value the thought and preparation that goes into our worship services. We're grateful to **Canon Rob** for creating meaningful liturgies week after week; to **Rob**, our deacon **Jim Leatch** and our honorary assistant **PJ Carefoote** (hopefully returning soon!) for delivering inspirational sermons and for leading services; to **Jeremy Tingle** and the choir for the time and care put into the psalms, canticles, hymns and anthems; to **Jon Ingall** and the servers for reading lessons, leading prayers and helping the services go off without a hitch; to **Dale Allen** and the Altar Guild for laying the Lord's Table every week, and to **Caroline Mitchell**, for adding spectacular beauty to the altar with memorial flowers; to our **congregational readers** for bringing life to the Epistles and lessons; to our **greeters** for welcoming one and all; and to **Judy Beal**, our office administrator, for preparing the bulletins, organizing the scripture readings, updating the prayer binder and so many other tasks too numerous to mention.

Another key element of our weekly services is fellowship. Thank you to **Lisa Jeens** and **Alicia Christopher** for stepping up as co-chairs of the Hospitality Committee in 2023. They convene our weekly coffee hour schedule, as well as support the Patronal Festival BBQ, the Lessons & Carols reception and the Pancake Lunch. Thank you to **Siobhan Carmichael** for leading an amazing Junior Church program, which continues to thrive. And finally, thank you to everyone who supports these lay ministries by singing in the choir, greeting, reading, honouring loved ones with flowers, helping with coffee hours and simply coming to church!

We have been live streaming our services since September 2021, thanks to a grant from the Diocese of Toronto to purchase a camera and computer. In 2023 we received another grant of \$1,500. Combined with a parishioner donation, we were able to purchase and install a second camera. This provides more variety in our online services. The ability to live stream services and events on YouTube continues to be a valuable asset. It has been especially helpful for weddings and funerals, allowing more people to participate. Thanks to our live stream operators **Carol Ambler**, **Carol Drummond**, **Craig Douglas**, **Bill Wilson**, **Janice Douglas** and **Aden Shapland**.

¹ [Toronto is one of the loneliest places in Canada](#), Toronto Star, November 15, 2023

In 2023, we added two more Choral Evensongs and returned to the in-person format for the Lenten series, including light suppers. Thank you to Canon Rob for leading the Lenten series, to **William Cowling** for coordinating our guest speakers and to **Annis Tebbutt** and the Arts Guild for offering two performances. *See details in the Religious Education report and the Arts Guild report.*

Building Community

While praying together is a major part of St. Olave's DNA, we recognize that it's not the only thing we do. We like to gather at other times, too! To that end, the wardens supported or led several initiatives designed to connect parishioners outside of worship:

- In January, the Rector gathered people from St. Olave's and other area churches to tour the **Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library** at U of T, where our Honorary Assistant the Rev'd Dr. PJ Carefoote was the head librarian for many years. PJ led an informative tour to about 25 people.
- In February, nine parishioners attended a Toronto City Opera performance of **Don Giovanni**, starring Alexander Cappellazzo and Thera Barclay, then members of our choir.
- In April, Siobhan Carmichael led a team to organize a **Community Open House**. Approximately 40 visitors came in to see our space and learn more about our programs and partners.
- In August, Annis Tebbutt led seven parishioners on a visit to Wycliffe College to see the **Marc Chagall exhibit**.
- In November, we convened the annual **Christmas Craft Show**, this time adding back the bistro lunch. More than 200 people came in to shop and browse.
- In December we reconvened our **Christmas Community Meal**, which had not been done since 2019. About 50 volunteers came together from St. Olave's and St. Martin-in-the-Fields to serve 70 people from the community who would not otherwise receive a family meal at Christmas. We also partnered with the Bloor West Food Bank on this initiative and are keen to repeat in 2024.
- Most recently, in January 2024, 25 parishioners gathered at **St. James' Cathedral** to celebrate the Rector's installation as Canon.

Besides these community-building events, we have continued to support the Parkdale Golden Age Foundation's seniors lunch program that began in 2022. We are now distributing as many as 50 lunches twice a month. Our team is led so ably by our ACW Executive, **Sheila Tait**, **Bette Birmingham**, **Judy Sher** and **Margaret Roze**, but includes many volunteers who pack and deliver the meals (Cathy Hutcheon, Allison Inouye, John and Leslie Stafford, Sharm Powell and Janice Douglas). This has been an especially rewarding form of outreach that also provides opportunities to visit people who are unable to pick up the meals themselves. PGAF also supported our Christmas Community Meal by roasting the turkeys, cooking the stuffing and making the gravy!

We have also focused on community-building with phone trees (led by **Martha Drake** and the stewardship committee), in our e-blasts, and in Rob's pastoral letters and sermons. The ACW continues to be a strong force in building community and connections in the parish (*see Stewardship and ACW reports for details*).

All these initiatives have worked together to bear fruit. We are seeing greater parishioner engagement, welcoming new parishioners (11% increase) and boosting weekly attendance. As you will read in the stewardship report, we have increased our average Sunday attendance from 52 to 68. Our goal is to duplicate that result in 2024 and return to pre-pandemic attendance.

Property improvements

Our Strategic Mission Plan prioritized several key investments to the property that would ensure our future and attract the community. These were done in 2023:

- Installation of in-ground sprinklers to preserve the lawn, a valuable community asset that requires regular maintenance. An in-ground automated sprinkler ensures the grass will get watered regularly and more efficiently, saving on our water bill as well.
- Installation of a new electronic sign to more easily advertise our programs to the community (estimated completion spring 2024)
- Installation of air conditioning in the parish hall. With climate change worsening, the A/C will ensure the comfort of our tenants and user groups on the hottest days.

Thank you to Sheila Tait, ODT, for overseeing the maintenance of our beautiful building. (*See more details in the Property Report.*)

Tenants and rentals

The Wardens receive inquiries from prospective tenants almost every week. In July 2023 we welcomed Toronto Dance Spot, a ballroom dancing school. They also offer classes from Swansea Town Hall but prefer the expansive wood floor of our beautiful parish hall. TDS started with classes Wednesday evenings and recreational dancing every other Saturday. In January 2024, they added Monday evening classes. We will also welcome Suitcase Theatre children's camp to St. Olave's during March Break and two weeks in August. In 2023 we hosted five music events in the nave, making use of our live stream technology on two occasions.

We're grateful to all our tenants and user groups for partnering with us and in some cases forming a vital part of our annual revenue: Addus, Power4Teens, Toronto Dance Spot, 101st Scouts, Ethiopian Orthodox Church, Sudanese Community Church of Toronto, Hunger Patrol and the Parkdale Golden Age Foundation, who also uses our kitchen to cook meals for seniors at Swansea Town Hall.

Sadly, in 2023 we saw the departure of the 155th Guiding Unit, due to irreconcilable differences between the Girl Guides of Canada and the Diocese of Toronto over the wording of the license agreements. All guiding units that were operating in Anglican churches across the diocese chose to relocate to schools and other community centres. This was a deep loss of a historic partnership.

Financials

A huge thank you as always goes to our financial team, led by our treasurer **Annis Tebbutt**. Annis logs countless hours counting the collection and preparing the weekly deposit slips, as well as preparing financial statements for the wardens to review. She also handles the CRA reporting and the audit which are extremely time-consuming. **Judy Beal** handles accounts receivable and payable, the weekly banking and maintains the accounting ledger. She also tracks donations to the Hosanna Mission to Romania and issues charitable tax receipts to those donors. **Doug Hewitt** tracks donations as our Envelope Secretary and issues charitable tax receipts. *For more please see the Treasurer's Report.*

Marketing & Communications

St. Olave's maintains an active Facebook page (@stolavesevents), and an Instagram account for families (*see Junior Church report*). In the past year, our Facebook page followers have grown 27% to 521 people, from 410 in February 2023. Canon Rob leads the Daily Offices on Facebook Live, Tuesdays to Fridays at 8:30 and 4:30, with our Daily Officers (Janice Douglas, Carol Drummond, Bill Wilson, PJ Carefoote, Annis Tebbutt and Jelana Duncan). We also post the Sunday live stream link, the sermon audio file, upcoming events and images from parish life. Our weekly e-blasts are sent out Fridays at 5:15. They are a wonderful way to promote the Sunday service, including a message from Canon Rob. They also complement the weekly announcement leaflet. We also advertise in the *Toronto Anglican*, *The Wholenote* and take free listings in *Neighbor* newspaper and on the Diocese of Toronto website.

Rectory

Since 1955 St. Olave's has owned a Rectory in which our Rector and family have lived. When we sold the old Rectory in 2016 and purchased the current one on Willard Gardens, we were delighted that Rob and Caroline felt at home in it. The surplus funds were put into a Consolidated Trust Fund held by the Diocese. The fund generates quarterly dividends of 4% (\$6,800 annually), and we have used it for major repairs and projects at the Rectory. The value of the fund at the end of 2023 was \$183,000.

It has been a key strategy that our incumbent lives within the Swansea community in order to minister to our parishioners, as well as anyone living within the parish bounds. We thank Rob for officiating at the funerals of two neighbours on Willard Gardens, and for offering pastoral care to those who were bereaved.

When there is a maintenance issue at the Rectory, Rob informs the wardens, then calls a tradesperson, or in some cases several tradespeople if the work is significant. We are grateful that he is willing and able to coordinate these repairs. It ensures that we can stay on top of maintenance issues before they become urgent.

It is the responsibility of corporation to provide a comfortable home for Rob and Caroline. This year we intend to renovate the guest washroom in the basement that was identified as a priority when we purchased the house. Based on quotes that are being received, we expect the renovation to cost between \$25,000 and \$30,000. We can access funds from the Diocese's Consolidated Trust Fund. In order to do this, we require a Vestry Motion that will be moved at this meeting.

... and finally

In April, our Rector was appointed Regional Dean for Parkdale-Toronto West deanery, and then in November he was named as an honorary canon to the Cathedral of St. James. This recognition is so well deserved. Heartfelt congratulations to you, Rob, and our gratitude for steering this ship.

Respectfully submitted,

Carol Ambler, Deputy People's Warden

Sharm Powell, People's Warden

Allan Taylor, Deputy Rector's Warden

Janice Douglas, Rector's Warden