

RECTOR'S REPORT

Last year began with a personal highpoint. After being named an Honorary Canon of St. James' Cathedral at Diocesan Synod in November of 2023, I was officially "installed" at a beautiful Cathedral service on January 21. Caroline and I were touched to see twenty-five people from St. Olave's attend the service in-person, along with several others who watched online. A special thank you to those who organized and attended the lovely coffee hour reception on Sunday, January 14. I was delighted with the special hymn composed in my honor and for the gift of the red cincture to be worn with my cassock.

Besides overseeing all the services and weekly Bible Study, visiting parishioners and taking an active role in committees and events, I continue my role as Regional Dean for the Parkdale-Toronto West Deanery. The deanery stretches from the Humber River to Spadina Avenue, and from Lake Ontario to Eglinton, and includes all the Anglican parishes, schools and institutions within that area. As part of this role, I chair monthly meetings of the clergy ("Clericus"), attend strategic meetings with other regional deans and bishops, and offer some pastoral care and assistance to clergy colleagues. With great help from Janice Douglas, I produce a bi-monthly electronic newsletter for the deanery called *Sundry Places*. In June, we held our first ever Deanery Evensong at St. Thomas's with Bishop Kevin Robertson officiating and preaching. It was a great success (115 people attended), and I hope to make this an annual event, held at different churches throughout the deanery.

The deanery experienced four sad losses this past year: The Holy Cross Priory on High Park Avenue closed its doors for good; St. Anne's, Gladstone Avenue, a historic church built in the Byzantine style and with a ceiling decorated by members of the Group of Seven, was completely destroyed by fire; St John's, West Toronto, where our former curate Alexandra Stone was the Priest-in-Charge, closed its doors due to declining finances and attendance, and a lack of lay leadership; and the Rev'd Canon Dr. Eric Beresford, the Rector of St. Mary Magdalene's, died suddenly of a heart attack. Please continue to pray for all affected.

Along with the Rev'd Canon Jesse Parker (St. John's Port Hope), I am the co-chair of a working group tasked with reimagining the Areas and Area Councils of the Diocese. Area Councils existed for 40 years as a kind of Advisory Board to the Area Bishops. Now that the Area system has been dismantled, Area Councils need to either be abolished or reconfigured in a way that makes sense for our new system of Archdeaconries. The total budget of the four Area Councils was about \$350,000 and their role in offering grants and supporting youth ministry have been vital.

I am also serving on a feasibility committee for a proposed capital campaign for the Diocese. The Diocesan leadership is considering embarking upon a \$50-million campaign over the next few years. The majority of the funds raised would go directly back to the parishes for their own capital and ministry projects. A smaller amount would be used for diocesan ministry initiatives.

The purpose of the study is to determine the validity of the proposal and to help shape the campaign, if it proceeds.

Here at St. Olave's, a Special Vestry Meeting was held on Sunday, April 21, to vote on a path forward for the accessibility project. The motion presented to Vestry committed the parish to initiating the elevator project and to following certain guidelines for how that work would be undertaken. During the debate, strong support was voiced for the motion and it passed unanimously. I am pleased to see that a way forward has emerged and I am grateful to Henry Jeens and all members of the committee for their dedication and hard work on this important project. Since that meeting, the committee has continued its work and engaged a local architectural firm, Lynch & Comisso, to create preliminary drawing for us to consider.

We acquired four beautiful altar frontals from St. Leonard's Church (Lawrence and Yonge), which closed a few years ago. Altar frontals are the embroidered silk hangings that beautify the altar throughout the year. After sending out a special email appeal to cover the costs of purchasing and retrofitting them, all four frontals were spoken for within a few minutes: the green in memory of Gretta Chandler, by Betty Chandler; the white in memory of the Reverend Diana Spencer, by Philip Spencer and Jessica Zeyl; the purple in memory of Emily Hutcheon, by David and Catherine Hutcheon; and the red in memory of Elwood and Thelma Downey, by Deborah and Sandra Mitchell. Noel Lien embroidered text for the back of each frontal to indicate the names of the donors and of the people in whose memory they were given. Each of the four were dedicated and are now in frequent use.

We partnered with St. Bartholomew's, Regent Park, for our Lenten Study this past year. The study was hosted at St. Olave's on Wednesday nights. We read the recently published book, *Images of Pilgrimage: Paradise and Wilderness in Christian Spirituality*, by Robert Crouse. Crouse was a well-respected Anglican priest and scholar from Nova Scotia, who died in 2011. The Rev'd Walter Hannam of St. Bart's led the sessions.

I led a Confirmation class from April 15 to June 5. Due to the busy schedules of our candidates, there wasn't a time of the week that worked for all. So, we held the courses completely online. Each week, a short video and lesson were emailed to the candidates, and they returned their homework to me the following week. Several of the candidates were present on June 2 to rehearse portions of the Catechism in front of the congregation. And on September 29, Bishop Patrick White, the former Bishop of Bermuda, confirmed nine young people and one adult. Thank you to the ACW who funded the purchase of a bible for each confirmand.

The rectory basement bathroom was renovated in 2024. In consultation with the wardens, I oversaw the project. Some unexpected things cropped up along the way (including some asbestos that needed removal and some work on an exterior gas line), and the project took longer than initially expected. But the end result was the worth the wait!

We had the choir of St. Anne's Gladstone join us for evensong on the Sunday Next Before Advent. This was a lovely event, and a chance to support our mother parish, who lost their building in the fire last year. \$1000 was raised to support their ministry at the collection. 70 people attended the service.

Shortly after our Honorary Assistant, the Rev'd Dr. PJ Carefoote, returned to us following a long stint as the Interim Priest-in-Charge of St. Martin-in-the-Fields, we once again lost him to a deanery parish in need. Following the death of Canon Eric Beresford, PJ was appointed Interim Associate Priest at both St. Mary Magdalene's, Manning Avenue, and St. Matthias, Bellwoods. We hope to have him back with us in September. We also said farewell to our Deacon, the Rev'd Dr. Jim Leatch, and his wife, Sandy. Jim has been a parishioner and chorister for many years, and for the last few years, our parish deacon. He has served on Advisory Board as well as several other committees. The diocese has appointed him to the parish of St. John the Baptist, Dixie, to continue his formation for the priesthood. Jim has been a blessing to our parish and will be greatly missed. We hope and pray that he may return to us someday.

A very special congratulations to Janice Douglas who was named to the Order of the Diocese of Toronto in November of 2024. Janice was nominated by Corporation for this prestigious recognition for her many years of faithful service to the parish. We are so blessed to have someone with Janice's dedication, skills and faithfulness in our midst. Thank you, Janice! The award was presented at Evensong, following the Bishop's Levee at the Cathedral on Jan 1.

It was great sadness that we lost Bob Ragsdale in January of 2025. Bob was a parishioner since the 1950s, was frequently a warden, and led several committees and initiatives of the parish over those 70 years. Among many things, he was a founder and long-time committee member of the Second Century Mission Fund. Bob's funeral was on January 25 at St. Olave's. We also mourn Sue Harris, a parishioner since childhood and former Sunday School teacher, warden and active supporter. Sue's funeral was June 5. Both will be deeply missed.

It was wonderful to have Bishop Kevin Robertson and the South Sudanese church with us on January 19. This was the first time we had this combined service since before the pandemic. It was a joyous occasion, with a delicious lunch provided by the Sudanese community after the service.

I am enormously grateful for our wardens: Janice Douglas, Sharm Powell, Allan Taylor and Carol Ambler, and Annis Tebbutt, our Treasurer. I could not have asked for a better team of skilled and experienced people to help lead the parish. I am happy to reappoint Janice Douglas as Rector's Warden. As mentioned above, Janice uses her many skills and devotion to the parish to help us grow and thrive. I am happily reappointing Allan Taylor, an 8:30 a.m. parishioner, as Deputy Rector's Warden. Allan brings a vast array of skills to the position, especially related to building issues, and brings a keen business mind to the task. Sharm Powell is again allowing her name to stand for People's Warden. Sharm has a financial background and has been an exceptional member of the leadership team, bringing her many professional and personal skills to

the job. Sadly, Carol Ambler has moved to London to be closer to family. Her humour, dedication, and skills will be greatly missed by the parish, the youth group, and especially Corporation. I am happy to announce that Henry Jeens is allowing his name to stand for Deputy Peoples Warden. Henry is an engineer by trade, and the co-chair of our Accessibility Committee. He will make a great addition to Corporation. Annis Tebbutt has been reappointed by the wardens as our treasurer and we continue to be blessed by her dedication to this vital role. Annis gives countless hours behind the scenes and I am deeply grateful.

Our staff contributes to the growth and health of our parish in many ways. Jeremy Tingle has led our choir in producing some memorable choral pieces this year, especially at Good Friday and the Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols. Judy Beal, our parish administrator, diligently and patiently keeps St. Olave's moving forward with efficiency and skill. And Siobhan Carmichael's dedication to the spiritual nurture of the parish's children is exceptional. Our new Sexton, Romario Maharaj, has been a wonderful addition to our staff team. 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 2024. 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.

Respectfully submitted,

The Rev'd Canon Rob Mitchell
Rector VI