



REPORT TO DIOCESAN SYNOD 2022

The **Emmaus Community** is a Victoria, BC-based neo-monastic Christian community – meaning that we draw on ancient monastic ways as ordinary everyday Jesus-followers. We have a Rule of Life and take vows of prayer, presence and simplicity. One can read more about the community, its history and rule at www.emmauscommunity.ca).

In the past few years, **The AbbeyChurch** (www.abbeychurch.ca) has increasingly taken on a life of its own, while remaining integrated as the Sunday worshiping expression of our wider neo-monastic common life. We proudly remain a shared ministry of The United Church of Canada and The Anglican Church of Canada; intentionally modeling a witness of radical discipleship, reconciliation, ecumenism, and diversity.

2022 was a challenging but fruitful year for Emmaus and AbbeyChurch! For the Emmaus Community, this meant the slow work of coming back together around shared meals and meetings, as well as finding time for fresh vision to emerge as we've dealt with Covid-19 and contextual exhaustion, as well as other health issues faced by core members in the community. With that backdrop, in March we went on our annual retreat to Galiano Island. We were led by Brenda Jenner, SSJD, who 8 years ago led the first group of founders in a formation process. It was a rich time as she met with us individually and together to reflect on a life of integrated vows of prayer, presence and simplicity.

2022 was also a year of transition as The AbbeyChurch moved into a new worship space. St. Matthias Anglican Church was a welcoming home for 5 years; a familiar place for us to gather and worship. We give thanks for our season there. On July 1st we settled into First Metropolitan United Church, who have been a welcoming community as we have begun to share their space! The move had its challenges as we lost some folk who were resident to the previous space and learned to adjust once more to the set up and take down realities of a 'church in a box' model. However, we were pleasantly surprised that early in September, new people were finding their way to us in this more central neighbourhood.

The Fall was a time of growth for the Abbey and we are still living in that season as we begin 2023. We now have about 35-50 people coming to worship each week (sometimes with up to 15 children), over 35 regular monthly givers -including about 10 new givers since the fall; and over 100 souls on our list of adherents. It remains to be seen how the move and new space evolves the identity of the AbbeyChurch - but we give thanks for new and diverse faces (Including a puppy and a parrot!) finding us and finding resonance with the community.

Our commitment to living with respect in creation led us to offer several opportunities of lament for climate change in worship as well as participating in the Candles for COP27 walk, with Kairos and For the love of creation. Around 50 of us - including about 15 from Emmaus/ AbbeyChurch walked in prayer from the steps of First Met downtown and back, singing songs and stopping at several places to pray. A number of us partnered with other United and Anglican Churches to lead a Wild Church pilgrimage from Duncan to Victoria and a good number of adults and children from Emmaus/AbbeyChurch participated.

In advent we dove into the beautiful book *This Here Flesh* by Black Womanist writer Cole Arthur Riley and in the beginning weeks of 2023 wrestled with the theme of hospitality in the book, *A Place At the Table* by A Rocha founder Miranda Harris and Jo Swinney; gathering weekly over bowls of soup. As we look ahead to Lent we will look closer at the United Church and Apostles' Creeds and how they shape and form our life of discipleship.

In terms of our outward presence, we continued serving a monthly meal at the Mustard Seed street church. However, relocating to First Met has opened up opportunities to partner with the North Park Neighbourhood Association in outreach, including supporting their weekly hamper program. The fall also allowed us the opportunity to come alongside UVic campus ministries and contribute food for students.

One of our growth edges for 2023 is our children and youth program. While we face the similar struggle of many churches with inconsistent attendance of our younger folk, we have found that a committed core is forming. This is both a challenge and a blessing as there are wonderful and lively children in several distinct age groups. However, each need focused support and while we have some young adults to help, we do not have many program staff or resource hours to go into this ministry.

The Emmaus Community and The AbbeyChurch have an interdependent and shared budget. We run on a very modest budget (under \$90,000) for a growing community of our size which resources both Emmaus as a neo-monastic community and AbbeyChurch. This number includes space rental, music, children's ministry, and other admin/clergy staffing. Part of this modesty comes from a minimal staffing (multi-vocational) model. Meagan and Matt are paid 14 hours a week each at below recommended Anglican rate (28 total hours) and Rob is entirely voluntary. This volunteer staff time represents about \$30k+ that is not in the budget.

The positive news is that since we started receiving grants, we've been steadily building capacity in our givings - which we expect to be \$50-55 in 2023 (up from \$30-40k the previous few years). Our 2023 grant request represents a decline to \$15,000 from the \$25,000 we asked for in 2022 from the Anglicans - which is a further move toward self-sustainability and a continuance of the \$15,000 from the United Church. We hope to move deeper into self-sustainability in 2024 as those granting cycles are declining or coming to an end and we have set a goal to drop from \$30k in denominational funding in 2023 to \$15k in 2024.

As we head into 2023, we look forward to once again hosting Welsh singer-songwriter Martyn Joseph (as we did in 2022) and be sponsors and co-hosts for LeaderShift's Resurrect 2023 - happening in the AbbeyChurch space. Resurrect will be bringing Carmen Landsdowne, Michael Blair, Liz Vice, Edith and Randy Woodley and others for a learning party which will also feature many of our plants - and which has The Rev. Craig Hiebert on the planning team and has the Diocese as a co-sponsor.

In Christ, made known in the breaking of bread,

Rev. Matt Humphrey, EC
Prior of Emmaus Community and Priest to AbbeyChurch