

The Social & Eco Justice Committee
2020-2021 Annual Report (submitted by Yvonne Hsieh, Chair)

The SEJC held monthly Zoom meetings between August 2020 and June 2021. Linda Leone became Co-Chair in August 2020 and will succeed Yvonne as Chair in Sept. 2021.

Due to the pandemic, we held the annual Amnesty International **Write for Rights** event virtually on **Dec. 12**. Collectively, 27 participants (including 18 of Tanya Taft's students) wrote 46 letters.

Unable to plan any indoor activities for the parish, we conceived a project to **transform our parish gardens into a more environmentally friendly space**. We initially thought of creating a food production garden, perhaps in partnership with the Shelbourne Community Garden. After consultation with Fr. William, Msgr. Michael Lapierre, Parish Council, and our office staff, we decided to simply work with the existing gardens, which were in urgent need of attention. Our goal is to gradually replace existing plants with drought-resistant, low-maintenance, pollinator-friendly ones. For this purpose, we hired Catherine Kavelaars to create a detailed map of the gardens and an inventory of current plants. John Seale volunteered to be our new Garden Coordinator and several parishioners have stepped forward to help. This project is ongoing.

Once again, the most important work the SEJC did this year was with **GVAT** (Greater Victoria Acting Together). The SEJC doubles as the Holy Cross GVAT "core team." Mary Nall serves on the Mental Health and Addictions Action Research Team (ART) and also represents Holy Cross on the Strat Hub and at Delegates' Assemblies. Linda Leone and Yvonne Hsieh both serve on the Climate Justice ART. Yvonne is also a member of the Housing ART and became a Co-Lead of this Team in February 2021. The other SEJC members support them in their work. GVAT actions and campaigns are too numerous to mention in this report, but generally speaking, its advocacy work has involved the prevention of adult and youth homelessness, conservation of old-growth forests, improvement of public transportation and active transportation infrastructure, formation of more efficient mental health crisis response units, and easier access to mental health and addictions services for both children and adults. **We regret the absence of a forum at which we can provide regular updates to the Holy Cross Congregation.** In spite of this, we were able to involve parishioners in GVAT initiatives (through bulletin inserts and announcements):

- Parishioners wrote letters to urge the B. C. Government to end the logging of old-growth forests and to transition the timber industry towards sustainable practices (July 2020);
- They were invited to virtual screenings of the 2019 documentary *19 and Homeless*, which sheds light on the sad plight of youth (mostly Indigenous) who have aged out of government care (Oct. 2020);
- They wrote letters in support of the re-zoning application submitted to the City of Victoria, for the construction of a new Anawim House for Women (Feb. 2021);
- They wrote letters urging the B. C. Government to provide contingency funding to school boards, so that programs vital to the mental health of students would not be cut (April 2021).

In light of current events, we will devote our efforts next year to **Reconciliation** with our First Nations sisters and brothers.