

COMMITTEE REPORTS

EMMAUS COMMUNITY

(INCLUDING ABBEYCHURCH AND WILD CHURCH)

The Emmaus Community is a neo-monastic community that takes vows of prayer, presence and simplicity. While our Covenanted Members live in Victoria, we have Companions as far north as Campbell River and even Discerners on Denman Island and even Dublin, Ireland (!).

All told, we now have 22 members, divided between Discerners, Companions, Novices and Covenanted Members. You can read more about us and about new monasticism at www.emmauscommunity.ca.

While 2020 had its obvious challenges as the various elements of our common life necessarily pivoted online, which is difficult for an intentional community who thrives on shared meals and in-person daily prayer offices! Still, we have done our best to continue to live into our commitment to presence with each other and in our contexts – including to continue to serve monthly meals at the Mustard Seed.

In addition to daily weekday prayer offices and meetings which have, for now, switched to zoom, our common life also includes the AbbeyChurch; our Sunday afternoon Eucharist (www.abbeychurch.ca) – which has seen growth due to livestreaming – and Wild Church Victoria, which is a burgeoning outdoor eco-centric expression of faith and has held virtual retreats and online offerings during Covid. AbbeyChurch now has about 70 adherents from across a generational spectrum. As a shared United Church ministry, we took on a part-time UCC minister this year, Rev. Katherine Brittain thanks to a one-time grant from the UCC.

Pre-Covid had meant that our daily prayer offices were limited to local members, but we now have people join us regularly from across the islands and inlets. Some of our members also started a BCP chanted compline, held twice monthly. We usually have (at least) twice as many on prayer offices as we did prior to Covid-19 – and have plans to continue some days online post-pandemic, as well as to continue to hybrid (online/in-person) elements of the AbbeyChurch.

Sadly, we closed the Emmaus Priory, including our chapel, library and hospitality / retreat space in 2020 due to Covid. Even with that, the seeds are being planted for where we will land as a community post-Covid.

We continue to create elixirs, brew beer and, this year, made Christmas baskets and prayer resources to seek to “live by the work of our hands”, inspired by the ethos of St. Benedict. We have plans to deepen this work in 2021-2022.

It has been a dream for us to have a residential monastery (“monastic hub”) as a place of embodied of discipleship for families and single folk who would “go from temple to table daily” (Acts 2). After years researching a model, 2020 saw our members register the Burning Hearts Housing Cooperative and begin to develop a business plan.

As such, we are currently looking for a site to develop. We had been in a 2-year conversation with Bishop Logan, Diocesan Council, the Executive Officer, Asset Management and a willing parish. In early March, Bishop Anna has informed us that we are no longer welcome to encumber Diocesan land with this vision – and we are now currently looking for other spaces.

In spite of this setback, it has been exciting to dream with VanCity, developers, other co-ops, the United Church housing strategists, builders, creative types, business consultants and others to develop the business and site model. We’re grateful for the Vision Fund encouraging us in this model by funding us!

Speaking of funding we continue to receive seed funding from both the United Church and the Synod (not drawn from parish assessments, but from other special funds, we are told) – as well as mission support from various parishes. We are truly grateful! Thank you all. In 2020 we achieved our goal of having around ½ of our budget coming from grassroots donations of our members.

New monastic and emerging communities tend to be good sites for vocational discernment. The Rev. Matthew Humphrey was raised up from Emmaus / AbbeyChurch and ordained a priest in Fall 2020, and there are currently two others in discernment. Currently, we have Meagan, Matt and Rob serving Emmaus as priests. Flowing from their monastic vows and ethos, these three are also now serving St. Matthias parish, all in a part-time capacity.

We’ve continued to develop and deepen our monastic formation processes; as well as articulate our evolving polity. Our formation for Covenanted Membership has evolved into a 9 month-discernment process and minimum 1-year Novitiate. This deepening of our formation and clearer articulation of our polity will continue, especially as we move toward the residential for some of our Covenanted members, which will require strong formation and clear community boundaries and processes.

One way that we connect with our denominations is to elect a Visitor from each. The Rt. Rev. Logan McMenamie (ACC) and Rev. Gail Miller (UCC) are our elected denominational Visitors.

We invite folks across the Diocese who feel called to a monastic-informed Way to consider either becoming a Covenanted Member in Victoria or a Companion from anywhere on the Island.



And we continue to be grateful for the support of the Synod and Vision Fund as we continue to grow and deepen our roots.

In Christ, along the Way

Marilyn Gough, EC - Prior and Synod Delegate

Rob Crosby-Shearer, EC - Formation Director

