

**The Holy Cross/St. Patrick's Social & Eco Justice Committee
2022-2023 Annual Report**

(Submitted by Yvonne Hsieh, Acting Chair)

"hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor" (Pope Francis, Laudato Si')

The SEJC currently consists of 10 members (8 from Holy Cross and 2 from St. Patrick's). We met 10 times (in person or via zoom) between June 2022 and May 2023. It's been another active year! Here are the highlights:

2022

In mid-September, the **Indigenous Book Collection** moved from Holy Cross to St. Patrick's, and a new Environmental Book Collection was launched at Holy Cross.

On Sept. 30, St. Pat's and Holy Cross Parishioners were encouraged to wear orange shirts to the special mass held at St. Pat's on **Truth and Reconciliation Day**. Other SEJC members participated in various reconciliation events held in different locations around Victoria.

On Oct. 2, Holy Cross and St. Pat's parishioners joined Fr. William in attending the **GVAT Homes for All Community Assembly** at Christ Church Cathedral. The event was planned to coincide with the municipal elections (Oct. 15). 6 mayoral candidates from Victoria, Saanich and Esquimalt publicly pledged to work with GVAT to implement its Housing Platform aimed at increasing the stock of affordable and non-profit housing, and at protecting tenants' rights. The Assembly drew 300+ participants in person, and 70+ on line.

On Oct. 22, a team of 5 Holy Cross/St. Pat's parishioners went to serve a **breakfast (sponsored by Holy Cross) at Our Place**.

On Nov. 16, the one-hour documentary ***In the Spirit of Reconciliation*** was shown at Holy Cross. This 2017 film from cinematographer-priest Fr. Larry Lynn features the personal accounts of residential school survivors in the Northwest Territories and their experience addressing their trauma. Dr. John B. Zoe, our invited speaker who was featured in the film and spoke to us via zoom, was the Chief Land Claims Negotiator for the former Treaty 11 Council of the NWT from 1994 until its conclusion with the establishment of the Tłı̨chǫ Government in 2005. He is now a senior advisor to the Tłı̨chǫ Government.

On Dec. 11, **Write for Rights sessions** were held at both parishes after Sunday morning mass, as part of an international letter-writing campaign organized by Amnesty International in defense of human rights around the world. 16 participants collectively wrote 54 letters at Holy Cross; 26 participants wrote 39 letters at St. Pat's.

2023

On Feb. 18, SEJC Acting Chair Yvonne Hsieh co-presented a talk with Amalia Schelhorn (First Unitarian Church of Victoria) on "**Laudato Si', GVAT and Saving Our Old-Growth Forests**" at the

dinner for Catholic university students hosted by Holy Cross. The goal was to raise awareness of Pope Francis's teachings on our duty to protect the environment, and to encourage participation in the upcoming rally on saving old-growth forests in B. C.

On Feb. 25, SEJC members and UVic students participated in the Indigenous-led **United for Old Growth march and rally**, as part of the GVAT contingent, along with 2,000+ other participants – to urge the BC Government to stop the logging of old-growth forests and assist logging communities in transitioning away from this extraction industry. See pictures of this very impressive downtown rally at the [GVAT website](#).

On April 11, a “**Fashion Show with a Difference**” was held at St. Patrick's, preceding the Used Clothing Sale happening later that month. This was a joint effort by the SEJC and the Catholic Women's League. As 5 models displayed their 10 outfits, the countries of origin (predominantly Asian) of the garments were identified and the negative human and environmental impact of the fast fashion industry was explained. Around 60 people attended the event; voluntary donations were made to Development and Peace. Attendees were encouraged to be conscious of the origins of their clothes, to buy less, to buy second-hand clothes and keep them longer, and to donate their old clothes.

Renewal of Holy Cross Parish Gardens

Members of the SEJC continue to assist our Garden Coordinator, John Seale, in the continual transformation of our parish gardens into a native plant, drought-resistant, pollinator-friendly green space.

[GVAT](#) (Greater Victoria Acting Together)

The SEJC also serves as the GVAT core team at Holy Cross and St. Patrick's. 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, increasing the supply of affordable housing, protection of tenants from renovations and demovictions, conservation of old-growth forests, improvement of public transportation and active transportation infrastructure, increasing local food production, formation of better mental health crisis response units, and easier access to mental health and addictions services for both children and adults. Holy Cross and St. Patrick's parishioners have been asked to participate in various letter-writing campaigns in the past. One involved writing 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). This supportive housing project is now complete.

To learn more about GVAT campaigns and successes, go to its website: www.gvat.ca.

We express **our deep gratitude to Fr. William and all parishioners** for their support throughout the year.