

The Holy Cross/St. Patrick's Social & Eco Justice Committee
2023-2024 Annual Report

(Submitted by Yvonne Hsieh, May 28, 2004)

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

The Holy Cross/St. Patrick's Social and Eco Justice Committee (SEJC) currently has 14 active members. We met 8 times between September 2023 and May 2024 (7 times in person and once via zoom).

This has been an experimental year. Yvonne Hsieh stepped down as Committee Chair after serving in this role for six years. The Committee decided to experiment with a Rotating Chair system whereby a different member assumes the function of Chair for each month.

At the November meeting, our mission statement (first drafted in October 2016) was reviewed and re-approved by the Committee.

The SEJC Mission Statement:

1. promote "greener" practices within our parish; 2. advocate for a simpler lifestyle among our parishioners, in solidarity with the poor of this world; 3. organize parish activities to raise awareness of social and ecological injustice; 4. work with other groups within the parish, the diocese, and the Greater Victoria community – towards the Common Good.

Here are the **Highlights of Our Activities:**

2023

In September, the **Environmental Book Collection** moved from Holy Cross to St. Patrick's. The **Indigenous Collection** stayed at St. Patrick's. Books in both collections have been catalogued.

On Oct. 4, the PBS documentary "**The Sultan and the Saint**" was shown at St. Patrick's, on the Feast Day of St. Francis of Assisi, which also coincided with the end of the Season of Creation, celebrated by Christians around the world. 32 people attended this event.

Also in October, a **Tenant Starter Kit** (collected at Holy Cross) was delivered to the New Roads Therapeutic Recovery Community, a new facility operated by Our Place.

On Dec. 10, **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. 13 participants collectively wrote 37 letters at Holy Cross; 18 participants wrote 30+ letters at St. Patrick's.

2024

On April 14, the first in a series of bi-weekly **Planet Positive Tips** appeared in the bulletin of both parishes. These tips aim at encouraging our parishioners to take actions that are good for the environment.

Renewal of Holy Cross Parish Gardens

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

Participation in Community Events:

Throughout the year, SEJC members participated in many community events related to social and climate justice, or to promote ecumenical and interfaith solidarity. These included:

- Global Climate Strike to End Fossil Fuels rally in front of the Legislature (Sept. 15)
- Kristallnacht Commemoration at Congregation Emanu-El (Nov. 9)
- Ecumenical Service at Christ Church Cathedral with members of the Catholic, Anglican, United, and Ethiopian Orthodox Churches (Jan. 21)
- World Religions Conference on the theme of Kindness and Kinship (Feb. 4)
- Symposium on the Prophetic Vision of Bishop Remi De Roo and His Legacy on Social Justice (Feb. 24)
- Coldest Night of the Year Walk to fundraise for Our Place (Feb. 24)
- GVAT Civic Academy on Vacancy Control (May 5)
- Moose Hide Campaign March and Rally (Indigenous-led, nation-wide movement for the prevention of violence against women and children, May 16)

GVAT (Greater Victoria Acting Together)

St. Patrick's was one of the founding member organizations of GVAT, an alliance of faith groups, environmental organizations, unions, front-line service providers, student societies, and other non-profit groups – working to promote the Common Good in the Capital Region. **The SEJC also serves as the GVAT core team** at Holy Cross and St. Patrick's. GVAT actions are too numerous to mention in this report, but generally speaking, its advocacy work this year has involved increasing the supply of affordable and supportive housing, protecting tenants from renovictions and demovictions, conserving old-growth forests, improving public transportation and active transportation infrastructure, and increasing local food production. One SEJC member currently serves on the GVAT Board.

To learn more about GVAT campaigns and successes, go to its [website](#) and read its [2023 Annual Report](#). More info on the SEJC can be found on its [webpage](#).

We express **our deep gratitude to Fr. William and all parishioners** for their support throughout the year. **Please consider joining us!**