

Update on GVAT (Greater Victoria Acting Together)

If you happened to be listening to the CBC at 7:20 am on April 30, you would have heard Gregor Craigie interview Chet Phillips, the Lead Organizer of GVAT, on the issue of moving the homeless population on Pandora Street and in Topaz Park into hotel rooms. As both **Holy Cross and St. Patrick's are member associations of GVAT**, we wish to keep parishioners informed of current developments.

GVAT (www.gvat.ca) is an alliance of 32 faith congregations, unions, and environmental, education and frontline service organizations (representing 70,000 members) – joining forces to tackle some of the toughest social justice issues in Greater Victoria. The **Holy Cross Social & Eco Justice Committee** (SEJC) doubles as the GVAT Core Team at our parish. Some SEJC members serve on the GVAT Steering Committee and on its three Action Research Teams (ARTs): 1. Housing, 2. Mental Health and Addictions, 3. Climate Action.

During the Covid19 crisis, GVAT is focusing its energy on protecting the homeless. It welcomes the provincial government's plan to gradually move the campers on Pandora Street and in Topaz Park into requisitioned hotel rooms, with wrap-around supportive services. GVAT is working to ensure that these residents will not be forced back onto the streets once the pandemic is over, and that similar housing and support will be extended to the remaining 80% of the homeless population in the Capital Region.

In his pastoral letter of May 1, Bishop Gary Gordon urges us to be particularly attentive to the needs of the most vulnerable in these abnormal times: "May the people of God no longer be satisfied with the old normal of 'showing up' in buildings. But rather, 'showing up' for the marginal, weak and scattered flock of our communities, to build a civilization of love – one sidewalk at a time, one vulnerable person at a time." Fr. William also co-signed a statement with other faith leaders, calling on the community to show compassion for the homeless campers.

If you missed Gregor Craigie's interview with Chet Phillips, you can listen to it [here](#). We will be hearing more about GVAT in the media. Take pride in the fact that parishioners from Holy Cross and St. Patrick's are part of the effort.

We could use a lot more help! If you are interested in learning more about [GVAT](#) and participating in its work, please contact **Mary Nall** (mnall@shaw.ca; 250-474-5252) or **Yvonne Hsieh** (yhsieh@uvic.ca; 250-385-8322).