

Report on Parish Questionnaire on Social Justice Issues in the Community of Victoria ad Region and Stated Personal Commitments to Contributing to Community Welfare

There were two questions posed to the congregation at St. John the Divine Victoria:

1. What do I care about?
2. How can I make a difference?

The questions were posed in the context of a sermon by Rev'd Larry Scyner on the Christian commitment to social justice and care for others and reminding parishioners of St. John's particular commitments in that regard both past and present. The spur to this initiative was the Parish's commitment to work together with other faith groups and with various community organizations under the banner of Greater Victoria Acting Together (GVAT) in advocating with government for specific policies to reduce economic and social inequalities and to improve care and support for marginalized individuals and communities in this region of Canada.

There were responses from 112 parishioners which we consider to be a very good and meaningful indicator of where members of the parish stand on these questions and as a firm basis for guiding us as a parish in feeding our social justice priorities into collaborative effort with others and in reaffirming our own parish commitments to particular social justice programs in which we are invested or may wish to add.

The following is a breakdown of the responses to the two questions posed:

Question 1 What do I care about?

The responses ranged from one or two priorities to longer lists. As there were no prescribed categories in reporting, and inevitably the categories chosen overlap we have tried to provide some breakdown and joinder of responses where that seems helpful to interpretation of these figures.

Homelessness and Affordable Housing – 76

Poverty – 46 (to which could be added **Food Insecurity (26)**; **Adequate Job Training and Education (21)** **Child Welfare and Adequate Daycare (19)**; **Adequate Health Care Access (14)**; **Inequality (12)**; **Social Isolation (8)**)

Addressing Addiction and Providing Adequate Treatment Access – 32 (this figure overlaps but is not co-extensive with **Mental Health (25)**)

Among other issues that received specific attention were: **Environment (16)**; **First Nations (12)** and **Refugees (5)** and with a lesser number: **Transit**; **Arts**; **Tax Reform**; **Electoral Reform**; **Animal Welfare**; **St. John's Court**; **Job Safety Benefits**

Question 2 How can I make a difference?

As we did not distinguish between present and future actions by respondents, we had no basis for making a distinction in reporting the number of responses in relative terms. We have organized the responses into three categories: **Personal**; **Cooperative**; and **Parish Responses** with explanatory notes where appropriate

Personal Responses

Prayer – 12

Living with integrity/Acting in love/Connecting – 12

Informed Voting – 9

Educating Self – 7

Cooperative Responses

Donating Time (Volunteering) – 48 (among programs and projects mentioned were: Out of the Rain; Food Bank; Refugees; Our Place; Together Against Poverty Society (TAPS); PWRDF; education for the needy; mental health advocacy; St. John’s Court advocacy; Strong Start; pain suffering support)

Donating Money – 32 (specific reference made to: refugees; young people; poor/homeless; Food Bank)

Lobbying Politicians and Media on Social Justice Issues – 44 (reference variously made to politicians at federal, provincial and municipal levels of government)

Educating Others - 10

Parish Responses

Working both within and outside the parish – 20 (other suggestions included: development of building to respond to needs of the marginalized; involving them more in parish life; sponsoring and supporting needy families over significant time periods; developing greater environmental sensitivity)

At a discussion on January 16 the GVAT Contact Group reviewed these findings. There was agreement that in addition to helping forward information about our priorities as Parish to GVAT (reserved for a later meeting), the responses provide support for social

justice and outreach programs to which the Parish is already committed and their continuation. In facilitating our work in these various ministries we believe (along with the *Quo Vadis* report) that a greater degree of coordination of these programs and the time and effort they require, as well as some vehicle for considering what new or revived initiatives (e.g. Aboriginal justice) we might commit to, would benefit the parish. It is with these considerations in mind that we developed a resolution to submit to Parish Council for a social justice and outreach working group that could undertake these functions and advise the clergy, wardens and Parish Council as appropriate (see attached).