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**HAPPY NEW YEAR**

**January 2020**

**AWAKENING TO THE DEPTH OF LIFE**

January is often regarded as the month of making (and often failing to keep) New Year Resolutions. But how will we know what resolutions to make if we are out of touch with the deepest parts of ourselves and our world? In the flurry of activity that most often accompanies the Christmas season, the connection with our core that the slower-paced winter season offers us is often lost. But January is still winter, and offers us the chance to connect with the deepest places in us—perhaps through dreamwork and contemplation, or through spiritual practices like chanting and meditation, or through the exploration of our creativity. Awakened by this connection, we can bring forth a genuine newness into the New Year.

Chris Bullock

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The Lighthouse November 2019  
A Newsletter for Friends of the Church

We are a spiritual community supporting each other in exploring our personal journeys regardless of spiritual path or belief. Our community is comprised of a rich field of individual and collective energies that is ever changing and evolving.

While we are accepting of diverse expressions of belief, we recognize the interconnectedness of all things and the power of love and appreciation. We hold reverence for all life.

We welcome those who wish to share their journey with us through their insights, reflections, experience and creative self-expression.

We are open to inspiration and recognize that our openness to others' ideas enhance our own awareness and expansion.

We meet our basic human need to socialize, bond, cooperate, celebrate and have fun, in a warm-hearted way, through a variety of events and activities.

We acknowledge our opportunity to be agents of change in the world and we encourage and support service to others through individual and group activity.

We share our sacred space with the larger community.

With gratitude, we live thoughtfully on the Earth with kindness and compassion for all.

We welcome you.

Working for You  
Your Board of Directors

Past President	Brian Martin	250-415-3518
President	Troi Leonard	250-384-8241
Vice President	Chris Bullock	250-532-3442
Inside Maintenance	Jacque Gerlach	
Secretary/Treasurer	Ron Rayner	250 474-2715
Outside Maintenance	Ron Rayner	250 474-2715
SDC Liaison	Peggy Muncaster	250-888-7664

Your Spiritual Directions Committee

Laurence Beal	250-380-6429
Sharon Ford	sharonagnes@gmail.com
Marilyn Smando	250-516-9687
D. Joan Thomas	250-721-4054
April Hambly	

Rentals Esther Hart 250-896-5933

Newsletter [cotoffice2017@gmail.com](mailto:cotoffice2017@gmail.com) Submissions due by the 21<sup>st</sup>.

## **SUNDAY SERVICE SCHEDULE for January**

January 5

Speaker - Matti Antilla, certified laughter yoga teacher

Moderator - Cathy ...

Meditation - April Hambly

Coordinator - April Hambly

Greeter - TBA

January 12 **Contemplation of Self in Social Context**

Speaker/Meditation - Dr. Chris Bullock

Coordinator: D Joan

January 19 **Reality Changing Insights**

Small group sharing on the topic: How does one relate with the occurrence of reality changing insights? Also being in and around this is the topic of integrating intuition as a living sense.

Moderator: Laurence Beal

Meditation: sound track

Coordinator: Laurence Beal

January 26 - **Inhabiting the communal spirit**

Community Service

Coordinator - Marilyn Smando

Moderator - Peggy Muncaster

Meditation leader – Laura Lane

Quote from Thich Nhat Hanh:

"It is possible that the next Buddha will not take the form of an individual. The next Buddha may take the form of a community - a community practicing understanding and loving kindness, a community practicing mindful living. This may be the most important thing we can do for the survival of the earth. "

Perhaps we are seeing the beginning of this community, worldwide. Whatever path we follow - Christian, Buddhist, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu indigenous, ancient or modern spiritual iterations - what is the common thread that connects us? What will cause ripples for all of us to stop and pay attention? How can we manifest love, compassion, kindness towards our fellow human beings through community?

## January 2020 INSPIRATIONAL EXPLORATIONS:

Inspirational Explorations (IE) Wednesdays in 2020 will begin on January 8, and run till the end of May. All sessions are held in the Church and begin at the NEW TIME of 7.30 p.m. Ideas for sessions are always welcome; please contact one of the coordinators mentioned below.

### —JANUARY 2020 PROGRAM: AWAKENING TO THE DEPTH OF LIFE

January is often regarded as the month of making (and often failing to keep) New Year Resolutions. But how will we know what resolutions to make if we are out of touch with the deepest parts of ourselves and our world? In the flurry of activity that most often accompanies the Christmas season, the connection with our core that the slower-paced winter season offers us is often lost. But January is still winter, and offers us the chance to connect with the deepest places in us—perhaps through dreamwork and contemplation, or through spiritual practices like chanting and meditation, or through the exploration of our creativity. Awakened by this connection, we can bring forth a genuine newness into the New Year.

--Chris Bullock

January 8: Dream Circle Workshop evening.(Facilitator: Pearl Gregor)  
Pearl Gregor will begin the workshop with a brief overview of her intentions and experience, telling her story of dreams, journals and meditations in about 15 minutes. She will then move to “Discovering the Deep Power of Dreams,” a deep and dynamic group process that brings together the experiences, wisdom and knowledge of the Circle participants. Come honor the dream and the dreamers. Come to ask questions like: what questions does the dream ask the dreamer? Come to learn about dream work, work with your own dreams and contribute to the circle of dreamers. You are asked to bring your journal, pen and perhaps crayons or color pencils to use in working with your dreams.

For details of Pearl’s biography, life, work and much more, click on <https://www.dreamsalongtheway.com> (Coordinator: Peggy Muncaster)

January 15: Hindu Mythology and Sacred Chanting (Facilitator: Vinod Bhardwaj)  
Vinod Bhardwaj will present and lead a combination of sacred chants, musical meditation, and stories. Vinod is a multifaceted personality, an engineer and planner by profession, but an ardent musician by nature. Before moving to Victoria ten years ago, he lived in Edmonton, where he was inducted into the Arts and Culture Hall of Fame. Vinod is a story teller as well, and loves to regale his audience with little stories from Hindu mythology, which have timeless messages. (Coordinator: Pat Miller)

January 22: Awakening to Depth: Poetry and Song Circle. (Facilitators: Chris Bullock and Hendrik de Pagter). A circle where presenters and audience interact in an intimate and safe setting. Bring a poem or song—either your own or someone else’s—or simply come to listen. The theme is offered as an invitation, not an essential requirement. (Coordinator: Chris Bullock)

January 29: Creative Awakening

This event will combine a talent show with an art and book exhibition, all set up between 7.10 and 7.30. Bring something to perform, or anything you would like to display (and sell, if you like), or do both. Or come as audience. Contact [chrisbullock@shaw.ca](mailto:chrisbullock@shaw.ca) to sign up for performing or exhibiting or both. Come and let’s make this a powerful awakening!!

### **HAPPY BIRTHDAY**

Jane Campbell	6
John Vanden Heuvel	11
Marvelous Trudeau	12
Laura Lane	13
Brian Martin	25
Esther Hart	26

**We Celebrate with YOU!**

### **GREATER VICTORIA ACTING TOGETHER: INVITATION TO COMMENT ON TEAM REPORTS**

Dear COT/CCL Members and Friends:

Our Church now has a year’s membership in Greater Victoria Acting Together (GVAT), a coalition of faith organizations, unions and activist groups working together to improve life for the more disadvantaged residents of Greater Victoria. Three of us from the Church attended the Delegate Assembly on November 24<sup>th</sup>, 2019, to witness the introduction of the 26 (at present) organizational members, and to hear and respond to reports from the two Action Research Teams (ARTs) (Housing and Mental Health) already established, and to applaud the formation of a third ART: on Climate Change.

GVAT is now inviting feedback from individuals and groups in member organizations to help the ARTs firm up policies to be presented to the GVAT Founding Assembly. **So I am inviting COT members and friends to send feedback to [chrisbullock@shaw.ca](mailto:chrisbullock@shaw.ca)** on the two reports below. I will work with Lorna, Laurence and Peggy to consolidate feedback into a report to be presented to the Board. But before the

reports for you to comment on, I am including a report on the highlights on the Delegate Assembly from Lorna Rennie. I am also inviting other members and friends of the Church who find the work of GVAT worthwhile to join the members of the Church already active in it.

–Chris Bullock

## 2. Highlights from the GVAT (Greater Victoria Acting Together) Delegate Assembly.....Lorna Rennie

Chris Bullock, Laurence Beal and I attended this powerful gathering today and I'd like to share some of my reflections, about the presentations, with our church members. (Our attendance, or at least Laurence's and mine, came about as a result of the presentation by Chet Phillips of GVAT which Chris organized recently at church.)

Organizers today really set the tone for the meeting, after opening statements and annual reporting, by asking a representative of each of the groups involved to line up on either side of the room and in turn at each mike, give their name, who they represented and the size of the group they represented. Ours may have been the smallest and others were in the tens of thousands.

Various speakers reported on the recommendations of the action resource team (ART) they were part of. There are currently two - the Housing ART and the Mental Health and Addictions ART (Chris has been working with the latter as you may remember hearing when Chet Phillips spoke at church.)

To provide background for their work, and further justification for their recommendations, each team invited individuals to speak about their experiences with either housing or mental health and addictions issues. This really brought home some of the dire situations in our community.

There were opportunities for questions and during this time, it was pointed out that the recommendations we were hearing about and which were handed out in print, were not laid in stone. More work will continue with, they hope, additional participation from those who feel drawn to help.

The big event will be the Founding Assembly campaign in April 2020 when there will be finalized action requests put to government officials from all levels. GVAT will strive to have an impressive turnout, to show we are a force to be reckoned with.

Chet Phillips, lead organizer, spoke at the beginning and the end when he was excited to announce the launch of the newest ART for climate action. All were invited to sign up to be part of this team and with some restraint exercised I did not do so. I will definitely help where and when I can as opportunities arise.

I really appreciated that GVAT is committed to starting and ending meetings on time and honouring everyone's time. They provided forms for feedback and diligently gathered them for compilation.

These are just my thoughts on the day and I don't speak for Chris or Laurence as I'm sure they have their own perspectives. However, I do want to reinforce that in my mind GVAT is an extremely important organization and one that I think the Church will be proud to have their name affiliated with. I met so many interesting and interested people and many were quite familiar with our little but strong community. My understanding is there is room for as much involvement as we want to have with no obligation to have any. Stay tuned.

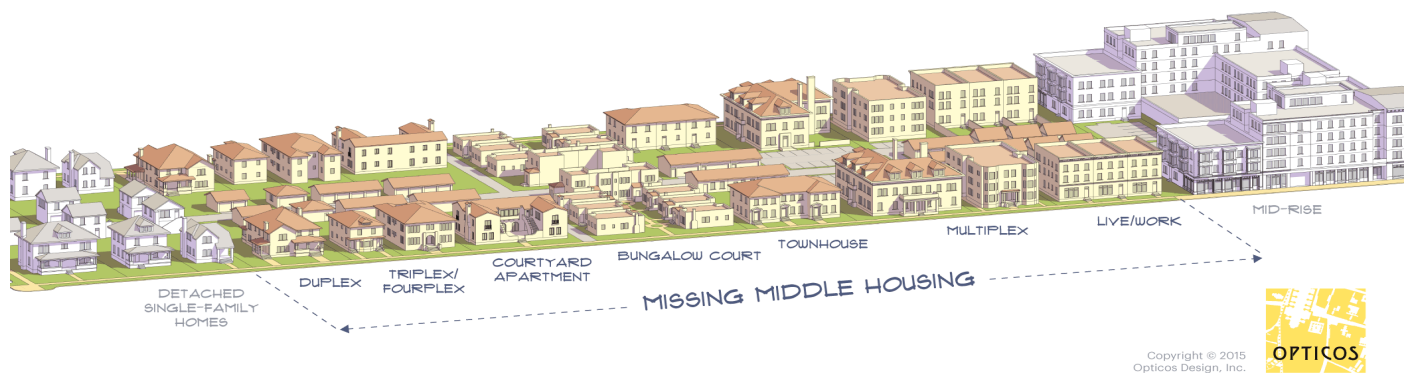
Lorna Rennie  
November 24, 2019

## 2. REPORT FOR COMMENTARY: ACTION RESEARCH GROUP ON HOUSING

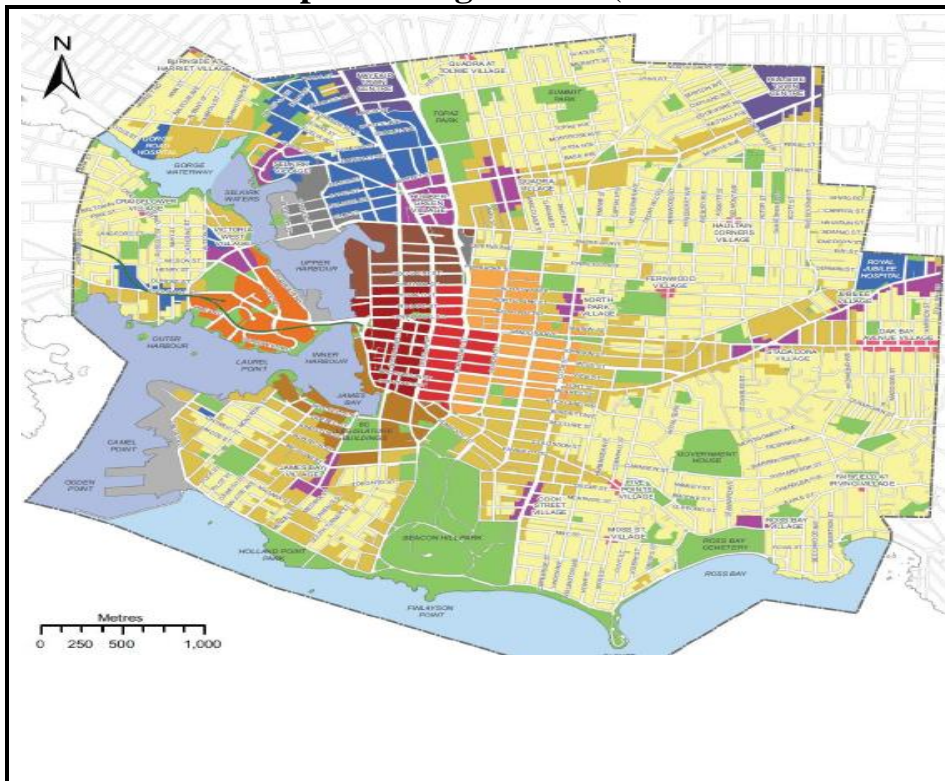
### GVAT Housing ART Recommendations

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Many current development policies discourage compact infill and increase its costs. GVAT recommends and will advocate for policy reforms to increase both subsidized and market-rate infill housing. The following graphics illustrate a significant part of the problem:



## Victoria Development Regulations (Victoria Official Community Plan 2012)



*Most land suitable for residential development in Victoria (excluding parks and industrial areas) is restricted to low-density housing (light yellow in the map). In these areas, regulations prohibit affordable housing types such as low-rise townhouses and apartments, and require at least one parking space per housing unit. These regulations drive up development costs and reduce affordability.*

### GVAT Housing ART Recommendations

We need more housing. Because we live on a beautiful island with a desirable climate, we will continue to experience high demand. Unmanaged, this could drive out all but the very wealthy from our communities. The combined imperatives of climate stabilization and economic prosperity mean we must densify. GVAT proposes to foster and sustain a new GHIMBY (Good Housing in Our Backyard) Movement in Greater Victoria. To this end, we will advocate with municipal and provincial governments for policies that do the following:

1. **Prioritize choice.** Owners, boarding guests, second suites, purpose built rental, townhouses, row housing, co-ops and co-housing are all viable and each has its place in resolving the crisis. Refuse to support short term holiday style occupancy like that offered by AirBnB. Support a variety of other occupancy models such as students living with seniors, second suites, boarding and rental. Ensure there are real remedies for tenants dealing with landlords who evict without real cause.
2. Help **increase affordable, energy efficient housing that is resilient** in the face of extreme weather and earthquake events, assist with implementing the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People, and improve mental health. This will include insisting that all housing programs meet the standards necessary to

reduce building greenhouse gas emissions and landfill destined waste, and increase resilience to extreme weather events.

3. Prioritize responses to the housing crisis aimed at **meeting the needs of the most vulnerable**, including: at risk youth, indigenous people, vulnerable seniors, young families and those with mental health challenges.
4. **Define “affordability” holistically** to include housing, transportation, and future operating costs, and the benefits of living in a walkable, urban neighborhood with good transit, food security and increased energy efficiency.
5. **Make public lands and land trust properties available for social housing.** Where appropriate, additional lands should be acquired for social housing, and municipalities should partner with churches and other organizations with land available for social housing development.
6. Encourage local governments to **take advantage of the provincial *Rapid Response to Homelessness* program**, which builds modular housing with integrated support services for people who are currently unhoused or at risk of becoming unhoused.
7. **Reform development policies to allow more compact infill.** These could include:
  - Increase allowable densities and heights to reflect OCP density targets.
  - Allow higher densities on corner and larger lots and major transit routes.
  - Reduce or eliminate parking minimums to reduce costs and use space well.
  - Reduce fees and approval requirements for smaller and moderate-priced infill homes.
8. **Improve affordable housing design** with contests and awards.
9. Encourage urban property owners to consolidate smaller parcels and parking lots into larger parcels suitable for **compact, mixed use development**.

### 3. REPORT FOR COMMENTARY: ACTION RESEARCH TEAM ON MENTAL HEALTH

#### **GVAT Mental Health and Addictions ART Recommendations**

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The BC Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions has recently published a report entitled “A Pathway to Hope: A roadmap for making mental health and addictions care better for people in British Columbia” ([Report](#)).

We urge anyone interested to read it because we find its analysis and recommendations to be both compassionate and clear-sighted. The report states that “British Columbians rate

their mental health as nearly the lowest in the country, despite being more physically active, eating more fruits and vegetables, and having generally healthier lifestyles... The reasons range from the personal to the global — from childhood and intergenerational trauma to the impacts of climate change... B.C. has the country’s highest rate of hospitalization due to mental illness and substance use.” And 17% of our children and youth have seriously considered suicide within the past year.

As the Mental Health and Addictions team has done its research, we’ve sought to identify where the obvious gaps in the existing system are and to begin to identify solutions that might fill them. As we’ve gathered information from background reading and consultations with experts, we’ve asked what policy and procedural changes could make the biggest real difference in getting more people in our community the care they need.

Yet at this time the GVAT Mental Health and Addictions Team also wishes to recognize a central fact that underlies the work we do. The system we have now, which harms and excludes so many, is a direct result of a particular philosophy of government. Called “neoliberalism,” this philosophy has led, since the 1970s, to deliberate, systematic disinvestment in things like housing and mental health care, along with many other government social programs. Non-profit societies have heroically sought to fill these gaps, but they too are chronically underfunded and end up feeling something like that old story of a boy trying to plug holes in a dike with his fingers. As more holes appear, it becomes clear that the best thing to do with ourselves, if we want to build resilient structures of care that do not fail so many, is not just to shove our fingers into the holes ourselves, but to use our power together to call for government to take back up its necessary role in a just society.

So, with your approval, we will call on all levels of government to invest in programs and policies that recognize that, like housing or basic medical care, access to a holistic, low barrier system of mental health and addictions care is not a privilege for the few but a right for all. This spring we will turn our own initial findings into specific policy recommendations, and so we’ve taken the Ministry’s 4 main focal areas as a framework for our own.

**Theme 1: “Improved wellness for children, youth and young adults:”** The Ministry estimates that “70% of mental health and substance use problems have their onset during childhood or adolescence. These illnesses cause significant long-term disability and are arguably the leading health problem children and youth in B.C. face” Our team calls for the following changes:

- A significant increase in emphasis on and funding for K-12 school counselors and a connected network of affordable family support services available for referral;
- Using the Foundry’s Victoria Youth Clinic as a possible model, establishing an accessible, affordable network of mental health and addictions care for children and youth throughout Greater Victoria.

**Theme 2: “Supporting Indigenous-led solutions:”** From the Ministry report: “...we seek to acknowledge and make amends for the harms of colonialism and support Indigenous peoples as they engage in their paths to healing. By ensuring Indigenous communities are full and equal partners in the design, planning and delivery of mental health, substance use and wellness services in B.C., we are upholding our commitment to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and responding to the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.” Our team calls for governments to:

- Partner in the development and abundant funding of First Nations led mental health and addictions treatment centers;
- Recognize fully the validity of and need for land-based and holistic treatment programs, for First Nations people, and everyone.

**Theme 3: “Substance Use: Better Care, Saving Lives:”** GVAT calls for:

- Recognition that recovery from substance use and mental health crises simply cannot occur without access to safe, supportive shelter. GVAT calls for rapid, partnership-based but government-led development of housing for unhoused and borderline unhoused people throughout Greater Victoria.
- Separate ministries must coordinate their services early and often to better serve people. Our frontline service non-profits do the best they can, and their work is heroic, but making a more cohesive and integrated system will require visionary government leadership and funding.

**Theme 4: “Improved Access, Better Quality:”**

- The shortage of doctors, including psychiatrists, in Greater Victoria, like all of British Columbia, means that far too many people go without the care they need. This shortage itself is a crisis. The provincial government must do whatever it takes to subsidize and facilitate getting as many new doctors here as it takes to adequately care for our citizens in need.

- Non-profits doing this essential work in the place of government should not have to struggle and scrap for funding but must be supported by government at a level that recognizes the state of crisis we are in and the critical role they play.
- Navigating the system of existing resources should not seem like wandering a labyrinth of access points and services. We call for creation of a central access portal where anyone can access wellness service that is low barrier with no referral needed. The central portal would consist of a host organization within a network of organizations who share service planning, evaluation and marketing. Peer navigators with lived experience would be onsite to link service seekers to support with access through a single phone number, website, and online and print marketing materials. Knowledgeable service providers will encourage self-referral through a simple online quiz.



Dear Church of Truth Community of Conscious Living,

It is with regret that today the Our Place Board of Directors announced that CEO Don Evans is leaving Our Place Society. Don has tirelessly led the organization over the last seven years in a period that saw unprecedented expansion in our shelters, transitional homes, employment advocacy, and addiction treatment.

In tendering his resignation, Don wrote:

“I am very proud of what Our Place has accomplished over the past 7+ years for our family members with the new addiction recovery, employment and health care services. These important achievements have taken a tremendous amount of dedication and hard work by a lot of people, and I am very grateful to everyone on my team, our partners, and supporters in the community, who stepped forward to contribute and assist in helping others. In my own life’s journey, I have learned that it’s important to know when to start and when to stop, as there will always be more to do in this field of

work. It's time for me to take a break to recharge my batteries, and then see how I can contribute to the community in a new way.”

The Board would like to add that Don is an incredibly hard-working visionary and they appreciate Don's leadership and his unwavering commitment, knowing that Our Place has benefitted greatly from his efforts throughout the capital region. Don is a true champion of the complex issues of homelessness, and leaves behind many important legacies. We wish him the very best.

A nation-wide search for a new CEO is already taking place. In the interim, Alf Eamer, the Director of Finance, will assume the role of Acting CEO.

The Board of Directors, chaired by retired judge Ernie Quantz, has great faith in the dedicated staff and volunteers and will be working closely with our leadership team. We will ensure the daily operation of Our Place Society's five locations is unaffected by this change and to continue the careful and impactful financial stewardship of your donations.

I want to personally express **heartfelt appreciation** of your continued support of people in need, through your donations to Our Place Society. Our Place is proud to be selected as one of MacLean's Magazine's **Top 100**, out of 84,000 Canadian registered charities!

Our services to hundreds of people in need depend on fundraising. We trust that you will continue to honour Our Place as your charity of choice to help improve the lives of vulnerable people struggling with basic needs. If you have any enquiries, please feel free to call me personally at 250 940 5067, or Kari Frazer Senior Advisor Donor Relations at 250 940 5068.

We look forward to the exciting next chapter in our journey together.

