

December 31, 2019

Dear St. Mary parishioner,

New Year's Eve is a time to look back on the year that was, and to look ahead to the year to come! It gives me great joy to do this as your incumbent. The trust, support and generosity that this parish has shown me since I arrived 3½ years ago makes my heart thrill. Thank you each and every one of you.

2019 has been a remarkable year at St. Mary's. We continue to create stability and a solid identity as a welcoming community. We are healthy; we continue to grow, slowly; and we are more than ever, seen as the centre of the community of Nanoose Bay. I say this because two women came a couple of weeks ago expressly to give that feedback!

Our monthly Community Dinners consistently bring in around 100 people. More and more, people are moving between tables speaking to their neighbours and new friends while enjoying tasty food.

Our fundraising efforts are now designed to double as community building efforts. Our Spaghetti Cabaret in May was sold out and featured hilarious and touching performances by our Hymn Sing group. The feedback from attendees was positive and the food was good too! People came forward that evening to say they would like to participate and contribute the next time we hold such an event – which we will in 2020.

In July, Shawnigan Lake School, (where I live on campus) graciously offered to host "A Celebration of Summer." They sent up two buses to bring parishioners and their friends to the school campus for a concert; tour of the grounds, gardens, museum; and, an afternoon tea. You were amazed – not only by the stunning setting, gracious welcome and concert in the chapel, but that this is the commute I make twice weekly!! We hope to be invited back next year.

Our Christmas Fair was the other big fundraiser/community builder and as usual it was a highlight of the year. Almost everyone in the parish contributed in some form. It's a wonderful event where people visit as much as they purchase.

Our deacon-in-transition, Cindy Corrigan was called away suddenly in November after serving here at St. Mary's for a year. She has gone to serve in a nearby parish (St. Philip, Cedar) so we thanked her and released her with God's blessing.

We've been busy this year! Two committees are active in two mammoth projects which will be realized in 2020:

- 1) *Pet Memorial Garden* – in the woods off the parking lot, we have been given permission to develop a peaceful place where pets' cremated remains can be scattered and their names recorded on a Memorial Board.

2) *Land Subdivision* – After years and years of hoping, wishing and planning, the Diocese has agreed not only to our subdividing the property, but also paying for the cost! Once the land is subdivided we can apply for official cemetery status on the church portion, and, in time, look at possible housing for our seniors on the other portion of land.

In 2020 we will celebrate 30 years as St. Mary's in Nanoose Bay. We will begin with a Sunday service presided over by the Bishop on January 12<sup>th</sup>. On January 30, mark your calendars for a special dinner and evening of entertainment.

Our Memorial Garden has a beautiful new sheltered Memorial Board. And the gardens there, and around the church, have been cleaned up and beautified. We have such generous and skilled volunteers.

And St. Mary's has turned the tide. We are ending the year in the black after years of deficit budgets. KAT is now working an extra day a week which will allow me to do less admin work and more pastoral and community work. I am delighted to have someone so supportive and fun to work with in the front office.

So 2020 is the year get our vision in focus: to focus less on money and more on working on what it means to be a Christian community. As we learn how to support each other and reach out to the community, we discover how generous we can be, and how abundantly giving our Creator is.

Our Bishop has called every parish in the Diocese to enter into a time of discernment from the Epiphany (this coming Sunday) until Ash Wednesday (February 26<sup>th</sup>) to “ask God to move in and through us as we seek to be shaped by the Spirit and move into God's future.” This is part of the Transforming Futures initiative.

Then during Lent, Bishop Logan is calling for an *institutional jubilee* in which we will focus on study instead of *institutional maintenance* – a time to learn and dream together. (For more information on this whole initiative, please read the January issue of the Diocesan Post available in the church entrance way and in the hall).

As the incumbent of St. Mary's, I can only say that I came here to change and improve the parish, and while I certainly have been able to contribute my gifts and leadership in meaningful ways, this parish has taught me how to love more. You give so much and are kind and supportive. What a welcoming group of people you are!

I am learning how powerful we can be when, together, we let the Spirit move and guide us. We are blessed to have one another, and to worship and learn together in these beautiful buildings, and to have found ways to contribute to the community of Nanoose Bay and beyond.

So from this sense of abundance and well-being, I wish you and yours joy and peace in the year ahead.

Yours in Christ, Selinde