



2023 Annual Report of The Crossing

@ Cathedral Church of St. Paul

Date: December 12, 2023

Priest's Report

Are you made “for such a time as this?” What a time it is in our world to be asking such a question, with war and genocide, poor policy changes and ever-rising consumerism of human bodies, it is a wild time to ask such a bold question. This is the question we were asking our community a couple months ago in addition to asking, “Do you need rest?” I wonder if Esther would have thought twice if she were asked if she needed rest when Mordecai persuades Esther to help. In the bible passage he says, “if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father’s family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?” (*Esther 4:14*) If her family wouldn’t perish, and if help would come from somewhere else anyway, would Esther want rest?

It’s what I wonder in our beloved community. Our beloved community that identifies as “an unlikely band of pilgrims and heretics, students and artists, mystics and activists, following the radical and subversive way of Jesus.” Our beloved community that has survived a pandemic and has fundamentally changed because of the exhaustion of our world. Our beloved community that strives for the flattening of a hierarchical system while simultaneously is financially very dependent on the generosity of the cathedral. When help comes from somewhere else, do we just want rest? Will we perish if we are doing our own work? Will our identity change if we don’t lead ourselves and work for justice for others?

Our annual meeting is typically in January, but we are having it early because I am leaving for sabbatical shortly and won’t be with you in January. This will also be my last annual report as I will be leaving permanently at the end of the school year in May. And through our community meetings and leadership restructuring conversations and our council and worship circle meetings and our small groups, I am reflecting on all that has come to pass.

Just 11 months ago we were celebrating getting half way through our 5 year vision, looking to the future of what we want to accomplish to get closer to that vision of being more easily found and known as a church that works towards justice, being an anti-racist community and having that be true and real and honest, being a living example of a healthy and whole Christian community without falling into toxicity and cynicism, and being strongly connected to one another, growing spiritually and communicating effectively. The new council set out to make sure that everything we had on our agenda was addressing and working toward that vision. Because we were well into our Program theme of Home: Building Belonging through Shared Stories, each council member

found their own area of Home Ownership. They owned something special about our vision with which they wanted to bring Crossing members alongside. I felt like we were on fire for this vision.

The Program theme was really feeding me in the beginning of the year. There has never been an Ash Thursday service that was as powerful as us cracking the mirror as we recited our Lenten Repentance Prayer. “For being Christian and racist, **forgive us.**” *Crack!* “For being Christian and homophobic, **forgive us.**” *Crack!* “You were hungry, **and we did not feed you.**” *Crack!* ... Representing the brokenness of the holy image of God, this mirror remained as a symbol of the God within us that we are aiming to repair. What a powerful community to do this repair with! I would not have asked for a better community, for I know it doesn’t exist. There is no better for this beautiful, holy, broken, whole, perfect work. You are The Crossing. You are all these things - beautiful, holy, broken, whole, and perfect. Whether you feel made for this time, or whether you need a nap, you are perfect.

There have been, of course, many more memories I would reflect on. Our new Program theme for 2023-2024- Embodied Care: God, Self, Community, Future - has led to a vulnerability we would not have been able to do if we hadn’t built our home together first. Spending time finding our Embodied God and caring for that God in all ways, has been a season of opening for us. And we will continue that vulnerable work as we turn toward our bodies in the next few months. We will also have new leadership and leadership styles in the coming year! While there are so many things to reflect on, we will have time to do this reflection together in the months after my sabbatical. Until then, I pray our beautiful community finds rest and creativity and inspiration and hope in the coming months, and that you find that you are made exactly for just a time as this. I love you all. Thank you for being The Crossing.

Faithfully submitted by The Rev. Tamra Tucker (Priest/Lead Organizer)

Five-Year Vision @ The Crossing

In September of 2020, The Crossing community met to envision our future. With the stability of a permanent priest and a renewed sense of grounding with the cathedral, we are ready to envision what and who the crossing seeks to be in the future. We created four 5-year goals and set smaller, achievable one-year goals that are attainable for a small congregation living in the midst of world-breaking pandemics. We believe our goals are specific to us, and complement our role as a congregation of the cathedral seeking to embrace brave change through reimagining our liturgy, building our relationships, and engaging our world.

Now three years into our Five-Year Vision, we reflect on whether this vision is still true for our current community as we are ever-changing.

In 5 years(by 2025):

We, the crossing, strive to:

1. Be known in the wider church and community as a church that works for justice and is a place of welcome for the marginalized. People don't have to look far to find us. We are a church on the margins.
2. Return to and deepen an expression of Christianity that is healthy and whole - we aim to be a model of Christianity that is a positive inspiration to others, a mender of the breach (not falling to toxicity and cynicism).
3. Be able to proclaim ourselves as an anti-racist congregation and have it be true and real and honest, with an emphasis on
 - strong mutual aid, and
 - more explicit conversations of money and resources - (i.e. reparations).
4. Create a thriving community culture with a strong network/ways to connect, building community (including through small groups) and growing spiritually.

In previous years, The Crossing has set one-year goals for the congregation, council, and priest for each of the four pillars. It is now time to revisit, review, and revise our goals so that we can meet or amend our 5-year vision.

Reflection Questions:

1. Does this vision still reflect the ideals and intentions of our community?
2. Where/Do you find yourself in this vision?

Council

2023 saw the Council taking on the work of looking at the changing needs for our community's desire for leadership. At the start of the year, the Council consisted of JT Minor (At large class of 2024), Karl LaClair (At large class of 2023), Rebecca Spangler (Chapter rep, class of 2024), Shruti Kulkarni (At large class of 2023) who left Council in October, and the Rev. Tamra Tucker (Priest and Lead Organizer). The Council met monthly primarily in person with the occasional meeting held on Zoom. The Council enjoyed their time together in person as it allowed for a stronger sense of camaraderie.

The Council spent much of their time looking at what the community was expressing with its continued low level of volunteer leadership. The Council held a couple of Community meetings after worship in the fall to address the community around the concerns of a lack of volunteer leadership. What was gleaned from these meetings was that the community was largely looking for a time of rest. The Council has begun reworking its leadership structure to best respond to that need expressed by our community.

The Council also did substantial work around preparing for Rev. Tamra's sabbatical at the start of 2024 by preparing a job description for the sabbatical priest and taking in applications from interested individuals. Council also began work on preparing to welcome a new priest in

charge after Rev. Tamra announced plans of leaving the Crossing in summer of 2024. The Council spent time contemplating what sort of priest we would like to take on the role after Rev. Tamra's departure.

At the start of the year, we continued to look over the Racial Justice Audit of Episcopal Leadership so that the Crossing could live more deeply into our commitment to being an Anti-Racist community. The Council also spent time this year conducting a Mutual Ministry Review to better help the Council be responsive to the needs of our community.

While 2023 was full of changes and challenges, our Council found tremendous joy in our commitment to our beloved community and better providing spaces to hear the needs and desires of the community. Council meetings were always full of laughter and an intentionality towards being ever more contemplative to the needs of the community.

Submitted by council member, Karl LaClair

Chapter Representative Report

Throughout the year, Chapter met both in person or on zoom, had ongoing discussions on the Racial Justice Audit, the "Fundraising Five" (steps which helped us discover ways to try to bring more people into the Cathedral both in person and financially) and the budget. Some highlights include:

THE BUDGET: In January, the Finance Team predicted a \$357,000 deficit by the end of the year primarily due to rising costs of utilities, employee benefits and the expiration of the Employee Retention Credit. Eventually the projected deficit was cut to \$229,000 due to a new grant. A request was made to draw an additional 2% to a total of 8% from the endowment which would be lowered to 6% in 2024. That request was denied because it was felt that we should not draw more than 6% from the endowment due to the market downturn/investment performances. A motion to commit to balancing the budget with an additional draw from the endowment only if the gap cannot be filled any other way, was approved. In June, we approved a provisional request to withdraw \$276, 989, for emergencies, which would be put back into the endowment once a loan has been received. As predicted, we have ended the year at a deficit. We ended the year with a discussion on the endowment which is 66% invested in Stocks, 34% in Bonds. The total endowment as of 9/20/23 was \$12.7 million. Performance year-to-date of the stock investment was 10.9% and of the bond investments was -.2 (negative .2%). They continue to look for mission aligned investments that correlate with the Cathedral's mission.

RACISM: We discussed the Leverages of Power section of the Racial Justice Audit, and Dean Amy explained the Episcopal Church's attempts at prioritizing efforts to combat racism. She also mentioned the discussion about the resolution that occurred at the diocesan convention. In July, Dean Amy informed us that they are looking to build a history committee to continue documenting the Cathedral's ties to the slave trade, create a display in the building, and work on a Land Acknowledgement.

EMERGENCY OPERATIONS PLAN: In February, we discussed the Emergency Operations Plan. Shortly thereafter, Operations Manager Matthew Jarrell and I met to discuss more accessible exit options and we settled on an Evac Chair. I discussed this with affected members of The Crossing (who were also integral in helping us figure out devices that could be used by the wider disabled community) and the Evac Chair was approved.

The Strategic Plan: At the end of the year, Chapter began looking for ways to adopt the Strategic Plan.

Submitted by Rebecca Spangler, Chapter Representative

Worship Circle

The Worship Circle helps guide The Crossing through the seasons of the church year in our Thursday Worship, summer House Church, and other liturgical events. We meet monthly to plan worship. We started the year with Rev. Tamra Tucker, Autumn Cutting, Penny Wilhelm, and Interim music director Jillian Carelli. In the summer, we bid farewell to Jillian and welcomed back our music director Jimmy Lim.

We have continued to worship upstairs in the Cathedral sanctuary, and we are eternally grateful for Sean Griffin's expertise, troubleshooting, and dedication to keeping us connected!

As the year began, we continued with our program theme of Home: Building Belonging through Shared Stories. Through Epiphany and Lent, we shared stories of housewarming - what it takes to make a house feel like a home - followed by home maintenance - what we do when there are cracks in the wall and how we rebuild.

During Holy Week, we once again collaborated with MANNA on a Maundy Thursday service which began with dinner at 6 in Sproat followed by worship in the sanctuary at 7. We also collaborated with the Cathedral on an Easter Vigil service. To follow our theme of Home Building through Sharing Stories, we invited a Bard, Kirsten Cairns, to Emcee our Easter Vigil Service. We had seven different communities contributing to the salvation story that we are all apart of and twelve (12) confirmands and folks being received into the Episcopal Church!

During Eastertide, our theme was open doors & radical welcome, and from Pentecost through the remainder of our program year, we reflected on "taking it on the road" - saying goodbye, leaving home, but also finding home wherever we go. In this time we said goodbye to our beloved Interim Music Director, Jillian Carelli and welcomed back our beloved Music Director, Jimmy Lim!

In August, we took a break from the cathedral space for our annual practice of House Church. This year's gatherings were held in places that felt like home. Our hosts led us in Pub Church at Democracy Brewing, writing at GrubStreet, sand art at Carson Beach, wagashi-making in North Cambridge, and evening prayer at North Point Park. Thank you to Isaac, Milo, Rebecca, Aurora, and Ken for hosting this year!

We returned to the Cathedral in September with a new program year theme about Embodied Care. In September, while Tamra was away, we spent time reflecting on the meanings of the words “embodiment” and “care.” We shared lay-led Agape meals on two of the three weeks. In October, we turned our attention to God’s embodied care - how God is embodied in the world, how we care for that world, how God cares for the world, and how we can embody God’s care. We continued exploring this theme through our extended advent season, and in the new year we will turn our attention to care for ourselves, for community, and for the future.

The worship circle would like to give two special shout outs in our worshipping community. The first is to Anthony & Aurora. In July, Anthony and Aurora started a new Taize service on Monday nights. It has offered a quiet peace to the busy start of the week for people in the community, provided chanting and silence and prayer. It has moved to once a month, every third Monday of the month. This space is entirely lay-led and simply, yet perfectly, done by our hosts, showing what is possible when our heart’s desires are met with an open door of opportunity. The second shout out is to our Music Director, Jimmy Lim, because he won’t acknowledge himself in his own report! ;) Jimmy’s commitment to this community brought him back from New York City and jumping into the changing times of leadership at the crossing while starting a new job at Berklee School of Music. His skill and expertise are invaluable, as well as is the rest of the band and, of course, our faithful Worship Circle. Please do thank all these people (Jimmy, Penny, Adam, Hunter, Cynthia, Autumn) when you see them! They are why we have The Crossing! And then join the Worship Circle, this is where the magic happens. Be magic.

Submitted by Autumn Cutting (worship circle member)

Music Report

2023 started with Jillain Carelli being the Interim Music Director, as Jimmy Lim was away to pursue his graduate studies in NYC. In July 2023, Jimmy came back and recommitted to his position, while Jillian planned to move to NYC for a career shift.

The Crossing band stayed the same from January through October 2023, providing much needed and appreciated stability in the ever-changing Crossing community. The band consists of Penny Whilhem on drums, Adam Theriault on guitar, Hunter Ryan on bass, and Cynthia Marr on keys/piano. However, in November of 2023, Penny had to take a leave of absence since her son that she was expecting to arrive in February 2024 arrived early in Arizona.

Penny will be on leave through March. We are in endless gratitude for JT Minor, a member of the community and council member, for stepping into subbing for Penny in the last month or so. The Crossing band in December 2023 is now in search of an interim rhythm/percussion player, and currently is having multiple temporary subs. Thank you JT and Matt Meyers! If you know a drummer looking for a temp gig, let us know!

The community committed in our last annual meeting to pay the band through the off month of August while the community is in House Church as a just and equitable way of paying our

staff, acknowledging the challenge musicians have to make a living during unpaid leave. We are excited for a new year and the possibilities of new band members, and are committed to work with the Sabbatical Priest during Tamra's Sabbatical from January to March 2024.

Submitted by Jimmy Lim, Music Director (w/ additions by Rev. Tamra)

Community

The beginning of this year continued with the energy of our Second Saturday events for community involvement heavily organized by our social work intern, Kristina Wilson. We had a paint night hosted at Michael's house, a Drag Brunch afternoon at Blend on Palm Sunday, an Open Mic Night in the Cathedral basement led by JT Minor. Kristina also spent a great deal of time organizing space for leaders to express their needs for spiritual rest and support while still wanting to provide Crossing members a space where they can rest as well. Kristina also worked toward a strategic plan to achieve our 5 Year Vision.

With the welcome of our new seminarian, we have had a new expression of joy in our midst! Isaac Simmons joined us as our seminarian in September, really jumping in while Rev. Tamra was away on vacation. Isaac has leaned into our tradition of 1-1s to offer pastoral and relational care to our crossing members and newcomers, and has led a small group in Pan Theology, finding God in all things.

Submitted by Rev. Tamra Tucker on behalf of the combined contributions from Kristina Wilson and Isaac Simmons

2023 Finance Update and Narrative Budget

We began the 2023 fiscal year without a treasurer hoping to find preferably two co-treasurers to lead our community in our moral document of budgeting for the year. We have not yet found those people! Due to this deficit of leadership, we've gotten by with Rev. Tamra's attendance at finance meetings, but have not had budget reports or planning at our council meetings.

As far as giving, The Crossing is far behind what our typical giving has been - recording a low that we have not seen in the last ten years of the crossing at \$5,437 whereas we were at \$30,645 the year before in giving and had pledged \$32,000 for the 2023 year. We aren't yet sure why there is this shortage, and there may be a distortion in what the giving algorithms are collecting. However, if this number is true, it is very concerning for our future plans for ministry to the weary, the artists and activists, the heretics and pilgrims that we hope to minister alongside.

All the more important is our pledge campaign this year, to show our commitment, not necessarily in dollars, but in number of pledges that we can gather together. Of course the number of dollars matters, whatever you give matters. And it matters more that we have a full

commitment from our members that can give even the humblest of offerings to show our commitment to this necessary ministry to those on the margins, to those like us.

There will be added expenses this year to include our Sabbatical Priest. For those that were not with the crossing community in 2018, the transitional council in 2018, when hiring the new priest-in-charge, requested to include in the crossing's budget (as is recommended in the Total Clergy Compensation workbook provided by the Diocese) a savings for a projected income for a Sabbatical Priest. This money would accumulate from 2018 to the time of Sabbatical to assure there was funding for a sabbatical priest in addition to keeping the priest's salary. This request was not approved by the Finance Committee of the Cathedral. This led the crossing council to understand that it would be an added up-front cost to include a salary for a sabbatical priest and would ultimately indicate a lower amount we could offer, and therefore less time we could request a sabbatical priest to commit to The Crossing. We recognize the financial constraints explained in the Chapter Rep report and understand that added savings did not seem feasible, and we recognize the loss of leadership hours for The Crossing due to the decision. This cost will be reflected in our 2024 budget and will hopefully be honored by the Chapter. There will be further budget discussions when the search committee begins their work to find a new priest and lead organizer for the crossing beginning in May of 2024. We continue our trust and gratitude in the Chapter of the Cathedral and all their difficult decisions when it comes to the vitality of the cathedral. And our care to our own giving will be integral to showing our commitment to our community thriving in the future.

Please give all the support you can to whomever takes on the precious and necessary work of tracking our finances through the sabbatical period and interim time of finding a new clergy person for the crossing! We give thanks also to the cathedral's continued support of the crossing and the willingness to assist with the deficit we project to sustain such a necessary ministry to the disenfranchised.

In absence of a treasurer, faithfully submitted by Rev. Tamra Tucker (priest/lead organizer)

To see the 2024 draft budget, [click here](#).

To set up your monthly giving to the crossing, [click here](#). Please be sure to click "Crossing Pledge" and not the capital campaign. Thank you!

Our Annual Meeting took place on Thursday, December 14th, called to order at 7:35pm by the Rev. Tamra Tucker.

We discussed our annual report, our vision, appropriate leadership structures for our size and capacity, electing our new leaders, and considering the draft budget that will be completed by our new treasurers and the Rev. Tamra Tucker before she goes on sabbatical and will be presented to Cathedral Chapter to be approved. We then adjourned at 9:14pm and headed to Democracy Brewing to celebrate all that we are and all that we've done and hope to do!

We voted to:

- ratify the Annual Report,
- continue holding our Vision as a community as a long term vision, no longer a "5 year" vision allowing for some rest in the coming year through our transitions,
- continue with a council model of leadership while instituting a supported scrum model to lighten the burden of council,
- elected new leaders! Michaye Ledford (at-large - 2 yr term), Milly Schmig (co-treasurer), and Anthony Bau (co-treasurer) join continuing members JT Minor (at-large) and Rebecca Spangler (Chapter Rep) on council for 2024, and
- decrease our seminarian line item in our draft budget and trust our new co-treasurers to tend to the draft budget with our Operations Manager at the Cathedral, Matthew Jarrell as they send the budget to Chapter.