

Chapter 7 -- "A Strong Lay Ministry" 1983-

In 1983 the Cathedral community choose to pick one of its own as the next rector. The Rev. Dr. Jim Cruickshank, vice principal and professor of pastoral theology at the Vancouver School of Theology, was a member of the congregation. A late convert, he was baptised at age 17, and after starting off a teaching career, decided to study theology at the College of Emmanuel and Saint Chad in Saskatoon. He later obtained a doctorate at Chicago Theological School. He built had built a church on the upper Fraser River at McBride, then became the first director of the Lay Training Centre at Sorrento, B.C. during the humanistic sixties. He had been at VST for ten years before being called to Christ Church. Bishop Douglas Hambidge installed him dean in March, 1983. A parish workshop the year before had decided it wanted a leader committed to "a strong lay ministry." Cruickshank knew the parish well--while at VST in 1975 he had been hired as a consultant to study it. His report encouraged lay involvement. Now as rector he wanted to go further.

First he had the congregation develop a "mission statement." Then, after a very lengthy process of consultation, the Cathedral's administrative structure was overhauled. Five major committees, or "ministry units" were established to take charge of implementing the the mission statement. Membership on the major committees -- worship, pastoral, societal, education, and financial -- came from among the leaders of about 40 parish groups. In turn, the leaders of the major committees made up most of the church committee. Then, the major committees begat other committees: a planning and communications advisory committee; a stewardship committee; a fund raising events committee; a centennial committee, which established three "task forces," one each for the past, the present, and the future); and so on. Each year before the budget was put into final form for presentation to the Vestry, a "budget interpretation workshop" was held to allow any parishioner to question closely the Cathedral's plans. In structure, and to a remarkable extent in practice, Christ Church Cathedral became a lay-led institution. The system required many hours-long meetings; it may not have been the most efficient structure possible, but it certainly was democratic.

In liturgical style, Christ Church Cathedral continued the diversity of the previous decade and a half. The small, traditional 1959 Canadian Book of Common Prayer remained in the pews, and was in use on Sundays at the 8 a.m. Eucharist and 4:30 p.m. Evensong. But much more use was made of the larger, green Book of Alternative Services which the Cathedral adopted as soon as it came out in September, 1985, for use at 9:30 a.m. and 11:15 a.m., the major Sunday services. Most of the wording of the B.A.S. was familiar, especially at the 9:30 family service, where a wide variety of experimental liturgies had been used for over a decade. In 1986, director of music Patrick Wedd ended nearly eleven creative years at Christ Church Cathedral to direct the Tudor Singers in Montreal; he was succeeded by Rupert Lang, who continued in the same tradition, presenting both the popular and folk style music of the 9:30 family service, and more traditional choral works at the 11:15. Lang often presented performances of his own Vancouver Children's Choir at the Cathedral.

The new choir director's first Christmas Eve Midnight service -- always a lavish affair -- was particularly eventful. The dean, who confessed to enjoying high ceremony, introduced incense to Christ Church. (How much higher could a churchman go?) Clouds of fragrant white smoke set off a smoke detector in a building which had never seen incense in its entire history, and an alarm heard only by the choir in the basement, which was preparing to march upstairs. Lang dutifully ordered them to process out of the building and into the alley. Fire engines pulled up outside just as the service was about to began.



Prince Charles and Princess Diana, the Very Rev. Jim Cruickshank, and Archbishop Douglas Hambidge, after worship, May 4, 1986.

When the Prince and Princess of Wales, Charles and Diana, came to Vancouver to open the 1986 World's Fair, they worshipped at the Cathedral. Cruickshank had hoped to give the Royals some exposure to the Canadian Anglican Church's liturgical reforms of the past decade by celebrating Eucharist. The couple's advisors would have nothing of it, so a traditional Morning Prayer service was held at 11:30 a.m. on Sunday, May 4, admission to the congregation by ticket only. At least the intersessions and the collect came from the B.A.S.

The early eighties saw major renovations to the Cathedral building, the first since 1940. These cost \$1,285,000, most coming from the annual payments under agreement with the owners of the neighbouring Park Place office tower, now owned by Bell Canada Enterprises Ltd. A renovations committee took charge after authorization by a special Vestry in February, 1981. The first phase, done in 1982, entailed the complete gutting and reconstruction of the lower floor of the building, including the upgrading of electrical, heating and ventilation systems, and installation of smoke detectors and fire alarms. While church offices were rebuilt, the staff operated for several months from the fourth floor of the Medical Dental building. The second phase, completed in 1986, including the creation a new meeting room, the Guild Room, which overlooks Park Place, a new sacristy (made possible by a donation from Sheila Powers), and acrylic covers to protect the outside of many of the stained glass windows. Landscaping now integrates the Cathedral with open space to the north. A special touch, thanks to the financial assistance of an anonymous parishioner, was the installation of three small Morris stained glass windows in the north wall of a new entrance off Burrard Street. Two are owned by the Cathedral, the third on loan for thirty years from the Vancouver Museum.

The new facilities made it easier to carry out the Cathedral's program, which continued to grow in scope. Under the direction of the associate rector the Rev. Dirk Rinehart, who joined the staff in August, 1984, groups studied the works of psychologist Carl Jung. Latin American liberation theology was one specialty of the Rev. Lynne McNaughton, who joined the staff as a student intern the following year, and later became deacon then assistant priest at the Cathedral. Several refugees have been sponsored by Cathedral parishioners: the Lai family, four "boat people" from Vietnam, who arrived in Vancouver in November, 1979; another refugee from Vietnam, Hue Leong, arrived in April, 1986; and an Ethiopian woman, Tiblez Zere, came to Vancouver with two young children in May, 1987.

An second Ethiopian family, the Ketemas, were given support by members of the congregation in 1988. The "Called to Care" group (now the the Societal Ministry Unit) began a series of English classes which have helped over 300 students since the fall of 1984.

About \$6.5 million dollars worth of low cost housing was created due to the efforts of a group formed after a parish mission in January, 1981, called the 127 Housing Society -- the name came from Psalm 127 which begins, "Unless the Lord builds the house, its builders will have toiled in vain." Under the leadership of Hilda Gregory and Cynthia Llwelley, the group began by putting up \$2,000 of their own funds as "seed money." With encouragement and assistance from the diocese, in June, 1986, the society was able to open Jubilee House, a new building to provide low-income apartments for about 90 people, mostly seniors, in downtown Vancouver. The society then set to work renovating a second building, Brookland Court, to open with 78 units in the spring of 1989. Funds for the two projects came from federal and provincial loans; the Cathedral provided \$3,000 to help furnish a common room at the first building, and plans to share the cost of a community worker for both projects once the second is completed.

Christ Church Cathedral, well known due to its location and the redevelopment dispute of the early 1970s, once again hit the headlines in the summer of 1984 with a "sit-in" of a group called the Alliance for the Safety of Prostitutes ("ASP"). After court cases limited the power of police to deal with street prostitution, "hookers" in the early 1980s began to solicit quite openly in Vancouver's West End. The sidewalk along Georgia Street to the south of the Cathedral, opposite the Vancouver Hotel, became a favorite area of solicitation. The Cathedral never objected, but residents in other areas of the West End complained of the nuisance, and in July, 1984, the British Columbia Attorney General obtained a Supreme Court injunction prohibiting soliciting west of Granville Street.

On Friday, July 20, a group of twelve ASP members remained in the church following the daily noon Eucharist. Tipped two days in advance, the Cathedral, aided by the Bishop Hambidge (the dean was out of town), was well prepared to handle the protest and resultant media attention. The women were asked to leave. When they refused, arrangements were made for their occupation. After an initial press conference (at which most of the women wore masks), the church was kept locked for the rest of Friday and Saturday--protesters inside, their supporters and the media outside. Several parishioners remained on duty inside the church, played Trivial Pursuit to pass the time, and occasionally engaged the ASP members in friendly conversation. On Sunday the church was open for services as usual. The protestors attended the 10:30 a.m. Eucharist, the following coffee hour, and spoke before about 70 members of the congregation in the afternoon. The sit-in continued until noon on Monday, when, after a Eucharist and another press conference, the protestors left peacefully, holding balloons.

Although the dozen women were portrayed as "hookers in the House of the Lord," -- they did not discourage this characterization -- only two were or had been prostitutes. The protestors had made their points (to little avail, it turned out -- the injunction was later upheld). The Cathedral, while not condoning prostitution, presented itself as a place of refuge and concern. Before leaving, the group was asked by a reporter if it would return, and the reply was, "Only to pray."

By the fifth year of Cruickshank's tenure, several parish goals had been met. The ministry units had been set up. Lay involvement became the integral to the Cathedral's operation. Renovations to the basement were successfully completed. For several years the budget was balanced. Educational programs of Bible study and spiritual growth were frequent. But much remained to be done. In the surrounding skyscrapers, the business community had not been significantly engaged--although efforts were being made in conjunction with St.

Andrew's Wesley United Church. Communication had to be improved, both inside the parish and to the outside community. How to engage in evangelism -- spreading the gospel and drawing people in -- in a meaningful, and faithfully Anglican manner, was a problem hardly scratched. However it was becoming increasingly evident that more recruits were needed to keep the Cathedral viable. Regular giving (by envelope subscribers) dropped steadily in number and amount from 1985 through 1988, despite the Vestry's voting to raise the goal for giving from 4 to 5 per cent of gross income. Although the church might still fill for feast days and special services, attendance could appear spotty on regular Sundays. "Our financial base is too small for our staff and program," stated the dean in 1985. "We must bring in new members. If we don't, we face hard decisions..."

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Christ Church Cathedral has seen many changes in one hundred years. Begun as place where a particular style of low church liturgy could be practiced, after initial difficulties it grew quickly as Vancouver grew, becoming the diocesan cathedral because of its vitality and central location. It provided a focus for people of British stock for several decades which included two World Wars in which Britain was perilously engaged. During the Great Depression it was a refuge not so much for those suffering economic deprivation, but for those who continued to hold material goods but were confused and disoriented by events. After the Second World War it struggled to survive in a downtown location, finding financial security by creatively exploiting its location. Barring disaster, the building will stand on the corner for decades to come. Yet as Christ Church headed into a new century, it still was struggling to find ways to increase the size of its congregation, and define its mission to the city.



Christ Church Cathedral, 1989

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