

STAFF REPORTS 2023

Scott Wall COMMUNITY

It's always an incredible privilege to come to this day each year, and reflect on where we've been. As always, I want to express my gratitude to my incredible staff colleagues, to our board, and to every person who has shared their energy, time, and affection with Commons. I'm still amazed that I get to work in such an empowering and imaginative community.

Here are a couple of highlights from my work in 2022-2023.

First, I've continued to develop and coordinate mid-sized learning opportunities, and it's been so exciting to see these spaces be meaningful for many of you. I was honoured to host an Expanded Theologies course late last spring, exploring often-overlooked perspectives with four practitioners from outside Commons. In addition to that series we've returned to our Theology of Work and Prayer Apprentice offerings that are always well-received, and run a couple of successful short term groups to partner with key teaching series this past year. All of these opportunities have been designed to facilitate more connection across Commons, and it has been so fun to observe the thoughtfulness and welcome of all participants as an expression of our commitment to expansive, Jesus-centred faith. There are more courses and short term groups like these in development, so let's keep learning together.

And second, I have continued my work as a liaison to our international partnerships with International Justice Mission and Hands at Work in Africa. This past year we placed more emphasis on developing stronger, local awareness for the advocacy that Hands at Work does, running events in the spring and fall. This focus will culminate in us sending a small team to Zambia in April, visiting the care workers and children that we support but haven't seen since 2018. You'll learn more this team as an extension of our partnership in the next few weeks — thank you again for all the ways you share this work with us.

Bobbi Salkeld FORMATION

Here are a couple of new initiatives I worked on in 2022 and an update on Commons Youth.

In March 2022, we launched The Commons Newsletter to invite people to dig into big ideas at Commons. Part of this initiative was driven by the need to create connections less dependent on social media algorithms. We want to give people an option to receive updates and spiritual formation content, whether they are following us on Facebook and Instagram or not. We've picked up new subscribers every month, with the current number being 221. The staff team has written about the meaning of liturgical seasons, the identity of Commons, and ministry updates that inspire readers.

A second initiative I had a lot of fun with in 2022 was a Purity Culture Reading Group. I ran the reading group twice due to interest. Each group ran for four weeks and had fifteen people (thirty total) who wanted to consider the harmful effects of purity culture in the church, how they are moving toward healing, and what it looks like to support one another in community. The conversations were lively, profound, and encouraging. In the following months, I've watched the connections made during those reading groups take shape outside facilitated spaces.

Finally, in 2022 youth at Commons grew. Junior high kids continued to meet on Sundays during the 10:30 service teaching time. Senior high students were encouraged to stay in the service on Sundays, with an added midweek gathering on Wednesdays. At the end of the year, we said goodbye to Larissa Amour, who moved on to pursue different work in the city. We are so grateful for how Larissa shaped ministry and pastored Commons Youth over the five years she was on the staff team.

What follows is an update on Commons Youth from **Alexandra Chubachi**.

Senior High youth continues to meet on Wednesday evenings and is led by me (Alexandra Chubachi), while Junior High meets during the 10:30 service on Sundays and is led by Braeden Wolf and Rachel Tita. On the last Wednesday of every month we have a combined group; it's been a great way to connect as a team and larger group. In February, we did a Shrove Tuesday/Ash Wednesday event and planned to bring in a weekly donation throughout Lent (Canned goods, loose change). It feels significant to connect with the rhythms of the broader church community and open up discussion for how the youth can connect with God in their every day.

Yelena Pakhomova GROUPS

After being on maternity leave for 12 months, it feels fitting to begin by quickly introducing myself. My name is Yelena, and the journey that eventually brought me to Commons started years ago in Kazakhstan, continued in Vancouver, BC, and then took the form of my joining the pastoral team here in 2018.

I serve Commons as a community pastor, and it gives me profound joy to help people find belonging and develop meaningful relationships in the community. Much of my work happens in the background, in the interweaving of our connections and interactions as a community outside of Sunday worship.

I am profoundly grateful to Laura Thiessen and Scott Wall, who jointly carried my responsibilities in 2022. One of the things that we discovered over the past year is that there is a need for short-term groups that meet around a specific theme for a limited time. These groups were well-attended, and the constraints of theme and time allowed for a more intentional and focused connection.

Two of my personal highlights from the past year included having my baby baptized on Palm Sunday and me jumping back in to preach a sermon in July.

Looking ahead, these are the things where I would like to invest my energy:

- Leaning into the potential of short-term groups
- Helping start new groups and community initiatives
- Working with our local partners
- Strengthening our small group leaders coaching
- Bringing my voice to Sunday services and groups curriculum

I am also very excited to bring Commons Dinners back, build a network of potential hosts, and explore other ways we can connect people over meals

It feels good to return to my work in this post-pandemic season when all of us are reassessing what kind of community we want to shape around us.

With deep gratitude for how we get to bring our full selves here.

Kevin Borst WORSHIP ARTS

A quick introduction of myself and my role here at Commons. My wife Alyssa and I have a three year old and a one year old, we love our little family. I have had the honor of working here at Commons since it began in 2014. My role here at Commons is Worship & Creative Pastor. This means I oversee our creative teams (music, production, and more) and the worship experience for our church community.

In so many ways 2021 felt like a rebuilding year. Now 2022 felt more stable and a year where we could step into the new community that God is building at Commons.

In 2022 I had the blessing of seeing our creative teams grow in relationships and abilities. There is a deeper connection I see in these teams, a care and love for one another. Their creative abilities have reached new heights as they reach towards a common goal of creating a space of worship for our community.

Our Production Team grew in their craft by refining their skills and reviewing our systems that create our audio video experience on a Sunday, all while growing closer to one another and helping each other develop. Our Music Team took a step forward in their musicianship. They narrowed in on the sound we want to achieve and took positive steps to work towards it. The team also successfully removed the need for music stands on our stage to bring our attention towards our presence while on stage. These are incredible teams and I am really blessed to work alongside them.

In 2022 we saw a shift back to higher attendance in the room compared to online, so a major project that was a focus of mine was moving our online experience to a stable position that required less volunteer and staff management on a Sunday. We invested in upgrades to our stage lighting to ensure our stage was lit well for not only in the room but for cameras. We had a major upgrade to our audio for the livestream, separate from our audio mix in the room we created a dedicated mix for the livestream. Our cameras are on robots now that can be remotely controlled from our video booth. Often running a camera broadcast needs several people to pull off, with the use of macOS we've been able to create a system that can be operated by one volunteer. Through all of these changes we have been able to bring our livestream setup to a space of excellence and stability moving forward.

Every Sunday here at Commons is an incredible moment of worship and looking at 2023 and beyond I am excited to see God growing our culture of worship.

Ashley Hill COMMONS KIDS

2022 was an exciting year for Commons Kids! The year started with a gradual return to in person services and the introduction of three valuable team members: Alexandra Chubachi, Patricia Chan and Lyna Markos. As the year progressed, we as a team made some impactful changes to the programming and the overall ethos to Commons Kids. We wanted our children's programming to be reflective of the Commons teaching in the larger community, and we felt that it was time to start creating our own curriculum. Whoa! This was a big undertaking for our team as we wanted to start our ninth season at Commons using our new curriculum. Creating new videos each week for the curriculum has been one of my favourite things about this year. While I am very happy with how we started in September, each week we are learning how to make our videos more engaging and accessible to kids and families.

Another one of our goals for 2022 was to establish more communication and transparency for parents and caregivers. We have committed to communicating to parents through a parent weekly email and posting our lesson plans and curriculum on our website ahead of Sunday services so parents can be involved with what their child is learning. What I loved most about 2022 and continue to love in 2023 is connecting with these amazing kids! Each one of them is uniquely and lovingly created by God. Thank you parents and caregivers for your trust and letting us get to know them. I am very excited to see what 2023 will bring!