

THE CATHOLIC WOMEN'S LEAGUE OF CANADA



*100th and 101st
Annual National
Meeting of Members Program
and 2020 Annual Report*



Care for our

Common Home

Mission Statement

The Catholic Women's League of Canada calls its members to grow in faith, and to witness to the love of God through ministry and service.



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Greetings

Anne-Marie Gorman

National President and Chairperson of International Relations



My dear sisters in the League:

Where there is a will, there is a way! While the League had been unable to meet in person for the 100th anniversary of this dearly beloved organization, I am happy to say we have researched, reflected, and found a way to meet in 2021, all after seeking legal counsel. It will be a unique gathering, but it will be a gathering, where members from one end

of the country to the other will be able to be present virtually.

I welcome all of you, seasoned attendees and first-time attendees. The information contained herein will be a composite of all the work and service that has been done during a year of uncertainty brought on by the global COVID-19 pandemic. While you will be gathering virtually, it will be a unique opportunity to share the good news of this national organization, a vital entity in the church and country.

There is hope that this year most of you will meet from the safety of your homes while the legal requirement of at least three members' physical presence in one space is fulfilled—i.e., three members in the national office space. You will have learned that truly all things are possible. Neither age nor particular skills will prevent members from being together while still apart.

What a journey this has been. As you listen to the reports, you may be comforted by the singlemindedness of the membership in keeping the faith, solving the challenges of the environment, and serving our neighbours throughout this unique year of the Lord.

May God bless all the gifts you have shared with your sisters and brothers; may all who have educated us in how to continue with our work in unique circumstances be blessed; may God bless the 101 years of The Catholic Women's League of Canada, and may our

envisioned future be realized with God’s help and the intercession of our patroness, Our Lady of Good Counsel.

Most Rev. Stephen Jensen
Bishop of Prince George
National Spiritual Advisor



Dear delegates to this year’s annual national meeting of members,

The extraordinary times we lived through in the last year presented many “lessons” that will take us time to fully appreciate. One that is obvious to me already is that the work of the League continues in modified forms but with the same commitment to serving God and Canada.

The national leadership has shown care and creativity in responding to the problems councils at all levels face due to pandemic-related restrictions on normal operations. There have been no easy solutions, but the determination to support the membership is unwavering.

I hope this new experience of a virtual gathering will inspire members to renew their efforts at every level to continue the vital mission of Catholic women in society.



100th and 101st Annual National Meeting of Members Program

* all times indicated are Central Daylight Savings Time

Sunday, August 8

We ask members to attend mass at their parish and pray particularly for The Catholic Women's League of Canada, its members and for the success of the online national annual meetings of members.

Monday, August 9

8:30-12:00 p.m. 2020 Annual Meeting of Members

- Prayer for the Annual Meeting
- Call to order
- Opening remarks
- Greetings from Cardinal Gerald Lacroix
- Introduction of head table
- Notice calling meeting
- Credentials report
- Adoption of standing rules
- Approval of agenda
- Report of national president (2020)
- Ratify decision deferred 2020 AGM
- Approval of previous minutes (2019)
- Report of secretary-treasurer (2019)
- Recognition of New Life Members
- Registration report
- Announcements
- Angelus and Grace
- Adjournment

1:30-4:30 p.m. 2021 Annual Meeting of Members
Session 1

- In Praise of Nature
- Call to order
- Opening remarks
- Notice calling meeting

- Credentials report
- Adoption of standing rules
- Approval of agenda
- Correspondence
- Report of pre-convention meeting
- Reports of provincial presidents
- Report of national president (2021)
- Presentation
- Report of spiritual advisor
- Announcements
- Closing prayer
- Recess

Tuesday, August 10

8:30-11:30 a.m. 2021 Annual Meeting of Members
Session II

- Morning Prayer, Divine Office
- Credentials report
- Report of secretary-treasurer
- Report of executive director
- Report of spiritual development chairperson
- Report of organization chairperson
- Report of Christian family life chairperson
- Report of community life chairperson
- Report of education and health chairperson
- Report of communications chairperson
- Report of resolutions chairperson
- Report of legislation chairperson
- Report of laws
- Report of international relations
- Announcements
- League Prayer
- Angelus and Grace

- 1:00-3:00 p.m. 2021 Annual Meeting of Members
Session III
- Ceremony to Archive Resolutions
 - Presentation by 2022 convention committee
 - Presentation of implementation committee
 - Announcement of 2022/23 theme
 - Approval of previous minutes (2020)
 - Other business
 - Registration report
 - Memorial service for deceased members
- 3:15-4:15 p.m. 2021 Annual Meeting of Members
- Election of national officers
 - Installation of national officers
 - Adjournment
- 5:00-6:00 p.m. Closing Mass



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Business Sessions Agenda

2020 Annual National Meeting of Members

1. **Call to order:** National President Anne-Marie Gorman
2. **Opening remarks:** Anne-Marie Gorman and National Spiritual Advisor Bishop Stephen Jensen
3. **Introductions:** Anne-Marie Gorman
4. **Notice calling meeting:** National Secretary-Treasurer Janet McLean
5. **Credentials report:** Janet McLean
6. **Adoption of standing rules:** National Chairperson of Laws Margaret Ann Jacobs
7. **Adoption of agenda:** Anne-Marie Gorman
8. **Report of national president (2020):** Anne-Marie Gorman
9. **Ratify decisions deferred to 2020 AGM:** Anne-Marie Gorman
10. **Minutes of the 99th annual national convention:** Janet McLean
11. **Report of secretary-treasurer (2019):** Janet McLean
12. **Registration report:** Registration Chair Amanda McCormick
13. **Adjournment:** Anne-Marie Gorman

2021 Annual National Meeting of Members

1. **Call to order:** National President Anne-Marie Gorman
2. **Opening remarks:** Anne-Marie Gorman and National Spiritual Advisor Bishop Stephen Jensen
3. **Notice calling meeting:** National Secretary-Treasurer Janet McLean
4. **Credentials report:** Janet McLean
5. **Adoption of standing rules:** National Chairperson of Laws Margaret Ann Jacobs
6. **Adoption of agenda:** Anne-Marie Gorman
7. **Correspondence:** Janet McLean
8. **Report of pre-convention meeting:** Janet McLean
9. **Reports of provincial presidents:**
 - a. **Alberta Mackenzie:** Judy Look
 - b. **B.C. & Yukon:** Sharon Geiger

- c. **Manitoba:** Janet Brunger
 - d. **Military Ordinariate:** Allison Klemen
 - e. **New Brunswick:** June Brown
 - f. **Newfoundland and Labrador:** Judy Hodge
 - g. **Nova Scotia:** Joline Belliveau
 - h. **Ontario:** Colleen Perry
 - i. **Prince Edward Island:** Marilyn Gay Garvey
 - j. **Quebec:** Rosa Lam
 - k. **Saskatchewan:** Chantal Devine
10. **Report of national president (2021):** Anne-Marie Gorman
 11. **Report of spiritual advisor:** Bishop Stephen Jensen
 12. **Credentials report:** Janet McLean
 13. **Report of national secretary-treasurer:** Janet McLean
 14. **Report of executive director:** Kim Scammell
 15. **Reports of national chairpersons:**
 - a. **Spiritual development:** Shari Guinta
 - b. **Organization:** Fran Lucas
 - c. **Christian family life:** Pat Deppiesse
 - d. **Community life:** Marie Rackley
 - e. **Education and health:** Faith Anderson
 - f. **Communications:** Doreen Gowans
 - g. **Resolutions:** Cathy Bouchard
 - h. **Legislation:** Betty Colaneri
 - i. **Laws:** Margaret Ann Jacobs
 - j. **International Relations:** Anne-Marie Gorman
 16. **Ceremony to Archive Resolutions**
 17. **Presentation by 2022 convention committee**
 18. **Presentation of implementation committee**
 19. **Announcement of 2022/23 theme:** Fran Lucas
 20. **Minutes of the 100th annual national meeting of members:**
Janet McLean
 21. **Other business:** Anne-Marie Gorman
 22. **Registration report:** Registration Co-chair Katrina Stratton
 23. **Elections:** Margaret Ann Jacobs
 24. **Adjournment:** Anne-Marie Gorman

Standing Rules of the 100th and 101st Annual National Meeting of Members

Registration

1. Each person attending the meeting of members shall register through national office on or before July 31, 2021.
2. Registrants shall be classified as voting delegates [provincial presidents], accredited delegates [national officers, provincial accredited, diocesan accredited, honorary life members, life members], CWL members, or spiritual advisors.
3. The national secretary-treasurer, at the beginning of the first business session, shall provide a credentials report of the number of voting members (voting and accredited delegates) registered for the annual meeting of members. When adopted, the credentials report shall be the official roll of voting members.
4. At the beginning of each session, the national secretary-treasurer shall announce the number of voting members present in the session.

Publicity

5. Official public statements of national council shall be released by the national president or the national administrative committee only. Interviews about the work and policies of the CWL shall be at the discretion of the national president.
6. All publicity shall be under the supervision of the national chairperson of communications. News items are to be submitted to her for approval, prior to release.

Debate

7. The mover of a motion, or her designate, may speak to open and close debate. No other member shall speak more than once on the same motion on the same day, or longer than three (3) minutes without permission of the assembly granted by a two-thirds vote without debate.

8. Voting members shall be given priority to speak over non-voting members. A voting member wishing to speak shall signal her intent by using the “raise hand” function. Upon being recognized by the chair, her microphone will be unmuted, and she will begin her intervention by stating her name, status, diocese and province.
9. Non-voting members wishing to speak may use the “raise hand” function. Time permitting, and at the discretion of the chair, non-voting members may be recognized and given an opportunity to speak.

Voting

10. All voting members must sign in to the DirectVoteLive voting system at least thirty (30) minutes before the opening of each scheduled session. The total voting members signed in at least fifteen (15) minutes before the scheduled session will be announced by the national secretary-treasurer at the beginning of each session.
11. All voting and non-voting members are encouraged to sign in to the GoToWebinar meeting platform at least thirty (30) minutes before the opening of each session to test their audio and video functions before the session begins.
12. Voting shall take place electronically. All voting members will be required to use the approved voting software provided to cast their votes.

Motions/Resolutions

13. Resolutions will not be entertained in a virtual meeting setting due to limitations on debate.
14. Substantive motions shall be prepared and submitted in advance of the session to the executive director at executivedirector@cwl.ca. Motions from the floor, without prior filing by e-mail, will not be entertained.
15. The motion must clearly state its purpose, the formal wording to be considered, the name and delegate status of the mover and the name and delegate status of the seconder.

16. The executive director shall immediately share the motion with the national president, parliamentarian, secretary-treasurer and executive secretary.
17. Amendments will be accepted by having the amendments e-mailed to executivedirector@cwl.ca in advance of the vote on the main motion. The precise wording of the amendment and the name of the mover and seconder must be included.
18. Any motion adopted at this annual meeting of members shall become effective at the adjournment of the convention unless an alternate time for the action to become effective has been stipulated in the motion.

Miscellaneous

19. Registrants are asked to refrain from taking screen shots and/or electronic recording of the meeting proceedings. Copyright laws forbid the electronic recording of speeches or sessions.
20. No appeals for support or collections of any kind shall be made unless a written request, clearly stating the purpose and identifying the persons making the request, is presented in advance to the national president and approved by the national executive.
21. Minutes:
 - i. The national president shall appoint a minutes review committee to verify the minutes of all meetings.
 - ii. The national executive shall approve the minutes of this meeting at its winter meeting. If corrections are necessary after approval, they may be made by motion at the next annual meeting of members.
22. The national executive shall adopt the audited financial statements at its winter meeting. These approved audited financial statements will be presented to the assembly by the national secretary-treasurer.

Voting

- Provincial presidents shall have the power to vote on all questions.
- Accredited delegates may vote on any question except the election of officers, amendments to the *Constitution & Bylaws* and increases in per capita fees.
- A parliamentarian (advisor on procedure and rules) may be appointed for the annual meeting of members at the discretion of the national president.



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2021 National Elections Procedure

National elections are conducted in accordance with the *Constitution & Bylaws*, Part XVI, Section 5, and the *National Manual of Policy and Procedure*.

1. Voting delegates shall be seated in a way that ensures balloting secrecy.
2. The election of officers is conducted within the context of a liturgical service and according to the Rite on the Occasion of the Election of Officers as outlined in the *Ceremonies Booklet*.
3. A complete slate of candidates shall be posted at the commencement of elections.
4. The president shall remain in the chair to preside over the convention, which is still in session. At the request of the president, the elections chairperson provides a brief overview of the elections procedure and introduces the candidates for office.
5. Prior to voting, the executive director, acting as secretary of elections, will show each voting delegate her province's nomination form.
6. Each voting delegate (presidents of each provincial council or their designate) carries an instructed ballot on the first ballot only. On the second through fourth ballots, where necessary, each voting delegate carrying an instructed vote exercises a free vote.
7. Any voting delegate not carrying an instructed vote forfeits her privilege to vote on any ballot for that office.
8. Election shall be by ballot vote unless
 - a. There is only one candidate for office or only the required number of candidates for standing committees.
 - b. The nomination forms indicate a clear majority for a candidate (candidates in the case of a plurality vote).
9. A member may be a candidate for more than one office and, when elected to an office, her name shall be stricken from the candidates list for all other officers. When this happens, voting

delegates who have been instructed to vote for this candidate are released from their instructed vote and may vote for the candidate of their choice.

10. Where balloting is required, the election committee will distribute ballot slips to each voting delegate for completion.
11. The election of officers, with the exception of chairpersons, shall be by majority vote.
 - a. If a majority vote (more than half) has been obtained, by nomination AND no voting delegate has been released from her instructed vote, no ballot shall be taken. The president shall declare the candidate elected.
 - b. If any voting delegate has been released from her instructed vote as a result of the withdrawal of a candidate or the removal of a candidate due to her election to another office, a first ballot shall be taken. If the first ballot produces a majority, the president shall declare the candidate elected.
 - c. When no majority vote has been obtained on the first ballot, a second ballot will be taken and, if necessary, a third. It shall be the decision of the voting delegates as to whether the results of any ballot shall be made available for their review.
 - d. If three ballots fail to produce a majority vote for one candidate, the candidate receiving the highest number of votes shall be declared elected. In the event of a tie vote on the third ballot, a fourth ballot, using on the names of the tied candidates, shall be taken.
12. The election of chairpersons shall be by plurality vote.
 - a. The elections chairperson announces the number of chairpersons required to be elected. Chairpersons are not elected to a specific standing committee. Standing committees are assigned by the incoming national president at the post-convention executive meeting.
 - b. If the nomination forms indicate which candidates have the highest number of votes, without a tie for the final position, AND no voting delegate has been released from her instructed vote, no ballot shall be taken. The president shall declare the candidates, in alphabetical order, elected.

- e. If any voting delegate has been released from her instructed vote as a result of the withdrawal of a candidate or the removal of a candidate due to her election to another office, a first ballot shall be taken. Voting delegates indicate the names of the candidates for whom they wish to vote on one ballot. They may vote for the required number or less. Voting for more than the required number of candidates results in a spoiled ballot. If the first ballot results in a list of candidates with the highest number of votes and without a tie for the final position, the president shall declare the candidates with the highest number of votes, in alphabetical order, elected.
 - f. In the event of a tie involving the final position of the required number, balloting will continue, with all of the candidates listed, until a ballot results in a list of candidates with the highest number of votes and without a tie in the final position. It shall be the decision of the voting delegates as to whether the results of any ballot shall be made available for their review. Once a ballot indicates a list of candidates with the highest number of votes and without a tie in the final position, the president shall declare the candidates, in alphabetical order, elected.
13. When results of the election have been duly recorded, the nomination forms and the ballots shall be destroyed.

The Catholic Women's League of Canada

Annual Report 2020

(Contains full reports of national officers
and provincial presidents)



Anne-Marie Gorman

National President and Chairperson of International Relations



As 2020 was unlike any year in the 100-year history of the League, it was essential that the reports of the 11 provincial presidents be compiled with all the salient points that gave an accurate and true snapshot. The year began as any, but the business of the League was soon diverted towards dealing with a global pandemic, commonly known as COVID-19. This insidious virus took over all aspects of the organization and required new ways of communicating and operating if, in fact,

this would even be possible. The provincial councils demonstrated leadership and stellar faith, as would be evident in this report. Much of what proceeds is reported more extensively by the respective standing committee chairpersons.

To a provincial president, the tone of each report was positive and realistic. While unable to physically attend events, conduct regular meetings and report fundraising efforts from the parish councils in the customary ways that had been used for decades, the provincial leadership found new and creative ways to continue their respective missions.

It was a year of education. The leadership realized early that if the provincial councils were to function, they had to learn how to communicate with members using technology. While not perfect, every provincial council used one or more of the many ways to connect virtually through GoToMeeting, Zoom, or other platforms. In areas where Internet service was inadequate or non-existent, the leadership used the telephone and photocopied materials to do the best they could at keeping councils informed. Through e-mail and on paper, information was communicated to all diocesan and parish councils that comprise the respective provincial councils. One provincial council hosted a monthly Zoom teleconference for members to receive updates and, just as importantly, to be

“together.” All presidents looked for resources for guidance for their membership.

The second year of implementing the planning strategically process began to see the rollout of much-awaited materials. The Welcome Program was really welcomed in the provincial councils that were able to use it. It was anticipated that once parish councils were able to meet, it would be an excellent resource. The feedback was very positive. While membership declined, some parish councils welcomed new members, so there was an ebb and flow to the year regardless of the hardship resulting from the pandemic. New members tended to be anywhere from their thirties to their fifties. Significantly, some parish councils gained more new members than in many previous years. Parish councils’ creativity was demonstrated through drive-through membership events in some areas.

Presidents reported spending much time in the early weeks and months of the pandemic, reassuring members the League was still very much active since many assumed the organization had temporarily shut down. Nothing could be further from the truth, as was evidenced in the reports.

Parish council members became more aware of each other, and members became more aware of people in their parishes and communities regarding the corporal and spiritual works of mercy. The isolation and loneliness that came to people were mitigated by members reaching out to their sisters and brothers. All efforts were made through telephone chains and outdoor meetings of small groups of physically distanced members to bring some semblance of normality and supplement the necessary virtual teleconferences. The shutdown gave councils time to educate themselves more fully on the *National Manual of Policy and Procedure*, *Executive Handbook* and *Constitution & Bylaws*. Parish council presidents visited the national website and Facebook page more often than previously. *The Canadian League* magazine continued to be the asset that reaches all members—it was reported to be read and used for parish council meetings. Resources on the national website were downloaded and used extensively to inform and educate members. Communiqués from national officers were a considerable source of information for

direction, and parish bulletins, the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops and the Vatican websites, and Google searches were great resources. The number of parish and diocesan councils with policy books varied. All noted it was important to have one, but some needed assistance in preparing. *Robert's Rules of Order* and local newsletters were used extensively.

Priorities for the year included supporting the national theme, *Care for Our Common Home*, with additions to support the provincial councils' themes, such as *Loneliness* and *Building Relationships and Effecting Change*, and goals such as those related to mental health. Parish councils wrote a myriad of letters to provincial and federal government officials on life issues, especially regarding the extension of medical assistance in dying (MAiD), specific letters regarding Bill C-7 *An Act to Amend the Criminal Code (medical assistance in dying)*, protecting palliative care and hospice sites from MAiD, and rights of the pre-born. Petitions on these issues were prepared and submitted to provincial and federal levels. Military Ordinariate Provincial Council reported weekly discussion sessions with its executive team on the book, *Joyful Momentum: Growing and Sustaining Vibrant Women's Groups* by Elizabeth A. Tomlin.

Parish councils generally noted having the support of their spiritual advisors, whether they were the parish priest, a deacon, a religious or laywoman. Sadly, many advisors were unable to attend meetings due to their extensive duties, or there lacked a tradition of the advisor's presence at meetings. Having said this, one spiritual advisor hosted a virtual daily rosary for members, while another provincial spiritual advisor provided a weekly spiritual message. The spiritual advisors' support is one of the key elements to successful councils, so this was one challenge that would need to be addressed.

The overwhelming challenges reported were a lack of prospective leaders, inability to fill executive positions, recruitment, declining membership, and a lack of training and education of members and future and current leaders. Most provincial councils were able to fill all executive positions, thankfully. Disbanding of parish councils and the amalgamation of councils also posed challenges since decisions had to be made about how to proceed. The cancellation of

the League's centenary celebration in Montreal was a huge disappointment to all but especially Quebec Provincial Council. The council had prepared for several years and was ready to welcome members from across Canada. Most provincial councils reported a lack of parish council policy manuals. Also, while most believed having a policy manual is a good idea, all said they would need instruction, something for future assistance. B.C. & Yukon Provincial Council reported one of its diocesan councils had a workshop available for presentation for parish councils seeking help in preparing a manual.

Generally, councils provided very little funding for members to attend conventions at other levels. There was little in-person gathering for any meetings, but traditionally, parish councils offered little or no financial support for diocesan or provincial conventions, the most considerable amount reported being 15%.

While there were unprecedented circumstances, the provincial councils accomplished the most impressive things. Councils at all levels returned to their most fundamental and important spiritual roots. One provincial council summed up what all had stated, "The pandemic made us thirst for spiritual fulfillment." While the national chairperson of spiritual development and national secretary-treasurer have reported the spiritual and corporal works of mercy of the membership and how this translated into financial generosity, and all standing committee chairpersons reported incredible accomplishments in light of a unique year, what flowed throughout every provincial president's report, was that without question, members returned to their most important work—prayer. Councils at all levels kept members together while apart through prayer services, daily and weekly rosaries, retreats, and celebrations of life in cemeteries. As one president noted, there was an expression of pride and joy in being "part of a faith-based organization where members demonstrated their faith in serving God and neighbour... [where] work was accomplished in an harmonious and cheerful manner." The pandemic may have curtailed regular parish council activities, but what was gained through much more communication between and among members was not only remarkable but inspired. Members returned to the most important aspect of being Catholic

Christian women, and it showed. Another president noted, “In many ways [the pandemic] brought the ladies closer together.” Leaders were responsible for all the good things the League represents, “community, collaboration, sisterhood, support, spirituality, forgiving, together, helpful.”

For the national president, the year began with monthly administrative teleconferences and implementation committee teleconferences and the in-person national executive/board meeting in Toronto in February. Also, in February, I was able to travel to Winnipeg for Manitoba Provincial Council’s annual day of celebration, with the theme *Laudato Si’* and present to my League sisters there. I sat in on many working group teleconferences of the strategic plan to listen to the exciting work being done. When March arrived, the League went into a new level of decision-making dictated by the onset of the pandemic. While the board naively expected June to be the return to regular League activity and gatherings, after several teleconferences with the administrative committee, the results meant no annual conventions at any level. While I registered for the National Presbyterian Women’s Gathering to be held in May and planned to attend the National Council of Catholic Women’s centenary in Baltimore in August, they were ultimately cancelled. Milestone anniversary greetings and report book messages for diocesan and provincial councils were completed.

The year’s emphasis could be summarized by the following:

- 1) Learning how to live within a pandemic-strained country while continuing to serve and communicate with members and how to continue to work diligently within the legal framework through virtual teleconferences. The most significant and necessary decision was to extend each executive’s term by one year (the 2018-2020 national officers would conclude their term instead, in 2021).
- 2) Moving forward with the strategic plan through attendance at working group teleconferences and monthly implementation committee teleconferences, and the requisite amendments procedures and instructed vote.
- 3) Mitigation of medical assistance in dying.

- 4) Learning more about what governance meant as a national board.
- 5) Connecting members through retreats, webinars for education, and personal growth, especially regarding the theme *Care for Our Common Home*, particularly from a spiritual context.

Webinars:

- ecological conversion
- “Praying for our Lives: The Examen” by Becky Eldredge
- speaker series to replace the keynotes planned for August 2020, sponsored by national council
- “A Fireside Chat” with the honorary life members, sponsored by national council
- “The Power of Values Thinking: How to Give Members What They Really Want” by David Allison, sponsored by the Canadian Society of Association Executives (CSAE)
- “Can a Catholic really Evangelize at a time like this?” with Josh and Lisa Canning and Michael Dopp, sponsored by U Evangelize
- “Solidarity and Synodality: Thinking about the Church in the time of the Coronavirus,” by Fr. Gerard Whelan, SJ, sponsored by the World Union of Catholic Women’s Organisations (WUCWO)
- WUCWO Day celebration
- *Laudato Si’* week
- “Leading into our New Future: Canada’s Recovery Plan and Christian Charities,” sponsored by Global Leadership Network Canada
- board education on strategic planning by Michael Anderson, sponsored by CSAE
- governance webinar by Donna Dunn of Tecker International
- “Women in Mission” by National Spiritual Advisor Bishop Stephen Jensen (Prince George), sponsored by national council
- “How to Complete an Annual Report,” sponsored by national council

- “*Fratelli Tutti*” by Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle
- “This is a Time to Go Slow... a Time to Pause on the Advent Journey in a Time of Uncertainty,” a spiritual retreat by Rev. Con O’Mahony, sponsored by national council
- “Online Membership—Everything You Need to Know,” sponsored by national council
- “Witnesses of Hope,” sponsored by Catholic Near East Welfare Association

Appointments: *Ad hoc* committee on life membership (Honorary Life Member Vivian Bosch (chairperson), life members Eleanor Arless, Glenda Klein and Suzanne Kiazzyk) and the national amendments committee (National Past President and Chairperson of Laws Margaret Ann Jacobs (chairperson), honorary life members Claire Heron, Joan Chesser and Velma Harasen, National President-Elect and Chairperson of Organization Fran Lucas, Executive Director Kim Scammell, and I). Reports and recommendations were submitted to the national board for consideration at its fall teleconference.

Correspondence: Correspondence was written regarding Bill C-7 *An Act to amend the Criminal Code of Canada (medical assistance in dying)*, the ongoing review of the Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace, members’ issues of concern, Adventures with Anne, greetings to provincial and diocesan councils for milestone anniversaries, welcome and thank you letters to working group members, and a two-page summary of the League for Most Rev. Luigi Bonazzi, apostolic nuncio to Canada.

Meetings and decisions: Regular monthly administrative committee and implementation committee teleconferences were held. Others included virtual conference calls with provincial presidents, virtual national bursary committee, board and finance committee teleconferences, and meetings with the Catholic Health Alliance of Canada, and with the corporate lawyer regarding partially-virtual annual meetings. Some decisions made included those regarding annual meetings of members—fluid due to pandemic data, postponements and cancellations (and continual review), and the centenary committee—how and when to celebrate.

Regular tasks: Reviewed all communiqués and magazine article content as part of the communications committee, appointed members to committees, attended subsequent meetings, wrote articles for *The Canadian League* magazine, wrote spring and fall parish memos, met with the executive director, and completed reports, including the 2019 annual report from reports of 11 provincial presidents and an annual report review.

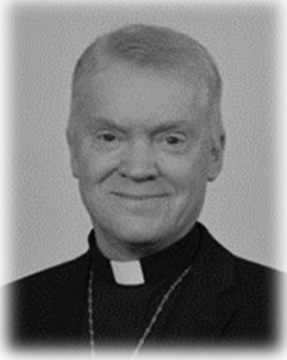
Special: Summer Speaker Series invitations and presentation; virtual celebrations: Military Ordinariate Gathering Day, Toronto Diocesan Council celebration, and Montreal Diocesan Council celebration; interviews with Catholic newspapers.

While staff falls under the work of the organization chairperson, I must note the executive director managed the League’s operations under very adverse conditions while keeping the staff safe and working. All faced numerous challenges due to Manitoba’s shutdown but managed to continue to complete work for the organization, answer members’ questions, and myriad other duties as required. Thankfully, technology allowed conditions to be such that the staff could work remotely while intermittently being permitted into the office for printing, mailing and other tasks unable to be completed remotely. The organization could not have continued to operate in 2020 had it not been for Kim’s leadership, creativity and deep faith.

With the continued guidance of the Holy Spirit and the intercession of Our Lady, the entire organization has managed throughout a very difficult time. Members learned the organization could survive only with prayer and faith in the need for the continuance of this national body we simply call the League.

“For God and Canada”

Bishop Stephen Jensen **National Spiritual Advisor**



The restrictions on travel and gathering brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic curtailed much of the League's activities at the national level. Nevertheless, some undertakings were possible.

On September 15th, I gave an online presentation to about 500 members on the topic, *Women in Mission*.

I produced articles for the fall, winter and spring issues of *The Canadian League* magazine.

Though in-person gatherings were cancelled, I participated in the fall, winter and spring teleconferences of the national executive/board, via GoToMeeting.

Kim Scammell **Executive Director**



National office is responsible for the daily administration of League affairs at the national level. This is done to allow the national executive to focus on projects and priorities in keeping with objects of the League and to allow timely response to current issues.

In the course of an ordinary year, all operations run effectively; however, 2020 proved to be a challenge on many levels. This report will focus on the three main challenges and the solutions used to overcome the challenge.

Staffing

With the onset of the New Year came the first challenge of having more than one-half of the office as new staff. The membership coordinator, office assistant, data entry clerk and shipper/receiver were all employed from near the end of fiscal 2019 into early in the New Year. With such a significant turnover in staffing, training efforts became the primary focus and investment of hundreds of

hours of the long-term staff, i.e. myself as executive director, the executive assistant and the senior accounting clerk.

Because the League's operations are built on multiple layers of policy and procedure, because it has a biennial activity cycle, and because staff are bound by all adopted rules and procedures, orientation and familiarization could not happen in a short period of time. Some training had occurred in late 2019 to cover the basic roles and functions of the new staff, and training continued throughout 2020. Towards the end of the first annual cycle, the new staff were becoming more comfortable with their roles and responsibilities. They began to have a foundational understanding of where they fit and the role they play in terms of the League as a whole. These understandings would form the basis of an efficient and cohesive team in 2021.

Membership

From the beginning of 2020 and lasting until about mid-spring, the national office was challenged greatly with online membership administration. Parish councils across the country were concerned that their administrative requests were not being addressed by staff. These administrative requests included the addition of new members, requests for transfers, requests for years of service, and even notification that a membership payment had been set up. In fact, the same requests were submitted multiple times, and confusion rightly existed about the lack of follow-through at the national office. Parish council leaders began to believe that inadequately trained and unresponsive new staff were the cause.

Once the situation was thoroughly examined however, and with the assistance of two of the parish administrators who were willing to resend their requests, it was determined requests were not being received at the office, even though automated confirmations were being received by the administrators. Messages were being sent but not received, causing confusion and grievance with many administrators.

To understand the solution, one must first understand the system. All requests go through four layers of software and their requisite providers—the membership software, the cloud-based data provider,

the e-mail server and the Internet service provider. An analysis was completed to determine where the requests were being dropped. The results reflected that the League's Internet service provider was dropping about 75% of the requests that originated from the membership software, presumably identifying them as scams. The solution came by way of reprogramming the membership software. Requests no longer rely on multiple providers before they land in staff e-mail inboxes. Instead, the system keeps an internal log of requests that allow the staff to view and attend to each request. It also allows a permanent record of which requests have been completed and which remain open.

Once the solution was implemented, it took many months and the eager cooperation of parish administrators to forward previously made requests to office staff to finally complete the 2020 membership; however, I am proud of how the staff handled this adverse situation with gentleness and patience. They were able to bring the office back within the established expected timelines of five business days for processing.

Office Shutdown

On March 30th, the Province of Manitoba ordered all non-essential business closed effective April 1st to address the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. Staff were given one day to move their offices to their residences, including any relevant files they could transport along with their desktop computers. At the time, it was believed to be a temporary measure set to end on April 14th. Staff were prohibited from being in the office with the exception of dropping off and picking up work, which they did once a week.

When it became apparent the office closure would not be temporary, laptops were purchased for all staff for ease of transportability between their home and work offices. The staff was most grateful for the support of the national administrative committee that provided the laptops and other small needs (e.g. printer toner, backrests, etc.) to aid staff while they worked from home.

On May 11th, a partial reopening was allowed, and salaried staff returned to the office one day per week each. This action allowed more access to the equipment that had been unavailable to them,

such as the high volume printer, scanner, fax machine, postage meter and all computer equipment and reference material. For the membership, it meant the telephone system was again functional, allowing staff to receive incoming calls. Casual staff were laid off as the busy season was soon to end. To comply with the health authority, the office remained closed to the public, including members and suppliers.

When the first wave began to wane, staff were designated two days each at the office beginning June 1st, on a buddy system basis. Casual staff were recalled to address the backlog in work that could only be done at the office (archival and informational requests, printing membership cards, etc.). They rejoiced in the opportunity to interact and to have increased accessibility to the equipment and other resources, i.e. archives, office supplies, files. On June 22nd, the Province of Manitoba became more confident that the pandemic was under control. It reopened businesses further which allowed staff, including casual staff, to resume work in the office.

When the second wave came, staff were once again directed to work from home to comply with the second shutdown of non-essential businesses. This time, the staff were more prepared. Files and laptops were packed, and staff once again set up their workstations in their home office, basements, and kitchen and dining room tables. The 4:1 work from home arrangement continued until the end of the fiscal year.

Throughout it all, staff remained good-humoured and patient, keeping each other safe and complying with all orders. They remained flexible and accommodating during difficult circumstances. They worked at kitchen tables, they worked without access to printers and other equipment, and they worked with children close at hand when child care centres were forced to close.

Staff have sustained their dedication even in the face of a lack of social interaction, facing their own uncertainties and fears, while being supportive and understanding of the angst of leaders who were unable to lead in traditional ways and members who were unable to participate. Kudos to them and to all of you, our dear members.

Together we have managed this adversity, we have adapted, and we have grown in innumerable ways.

Janet McLean
National Secretary-Treasurer



Secretary

Despite the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, secretaries showed resilience, ingenuity, creativity and professionalism. Positive side effects included learning new technology while adapting to virtual teleconferences, having more time to organize files, starting newsletters to

keep in touch with members, gaining a better understanding of important League work being done, and gaining insights and interest in issues beyond the parish.

The annual survey indicated one-half of secretaries were elected. Secretaries had the *Handbook for Secretaries* (72%), the *Personal Letter Writing Guide* (49%), and maintained a motion book (47%). Sixty-one percent were signing officers, 87% maintained an updated executive list for their parish council and 80% received written reports at least some of the time. To help them do a better job, secretaries had several suggestions for their sister members. These included answering e-mails sent to members by the secretary, always providing a written copy of a report presented and speaking slowly and clearly, whether at an in-person or virtual teleconference. An excellent suggestion for all secretaries was to have a competent proof reader. One secretary suggested it would be an eye opener for members to sit in the secretary's chair to get a better understanding of the position and, perhaps, become less critical and also learn more about the League.

The League's executive secretary performs the bulk of secretarial services required at the national level, as well as numerous other duties, and I commend her for her good work on my behalf. I prepared two memos for parish secretaries, one on recording of minutes and the other on recording notes to be taken at virtual

teleconferences. Two joint communiqués (for secretaries and treasurers) were sent, one with updates on decisions made at the fall executive teleconference and one with further details on notes for virtual teleconferences and a guide for budgets and expenditures during the pandemic, as well as the procedure for ratifying decisions as motions at the first in-person meeting to be held. Three articles were prepared for publication in *The Canadian League*.

Treasurer

While activities were greatly reduced, treasurers still worked hard maintaining council records in good order. Bank statements, chequebooks and deposit books were used by a majority of treasurers, 48% also used ledger/columnar books and 18% used a computer program to keep financial records. Membership fees range from \$20.00 to \$40.00 with the average being \$27.60. Approximately one-half of parish councils had their books examined once per year while others report conducting a review when the executive changed every two years. Most councils had three signing officers with 99% requiring two signatures on all cheques. Sixty-five per cent of councils prepared a budget which helped them manage funds throughout the year.

Normal fundraising activities were suspended because of the pandemic; however, members used their talents to make masks, hold virtual bake sales or host walk-a-thons in order to raise funds. Many volunteer hours were spent helping organizations which supported those in need. Some councils were fortunate to have a reserve of funds which allowed them to continue supporting many worthwhile causes. Other councils were able to redirect funds not needed for conventions or workshops to those in need. Because of increased financial needs locally, more funds were directed to these causes.

Donations from parish councils to the national voluntary funds totalled \$75,054 and the national bursary fund received \$6,960. Donations to parishes totalled \$642,762 and other donations were \$1,126,309, for a grand total of \$1,851,085 from councils that reported. This is truly impressive, particularly in light of restrictions that were in effect. All members can be rightfully proud of these achievements. Together with volunteer hours and prayers offered,

members helped make life better for so many. Well done good and faithful servants.

This was an especially busy year because of the extraordinary circumstances faced, and numerous virtual teleconferences of the national administrative committee were held during the year. While national office staff was required to work from home for much of the year, the senior accounting clerk ably performed the League's day to day accounting duties. Monthly bank statements, investment statements and financial reports were sent to me for review. The budget for 2021 was prepared and revised, and a virtual teleconference was held with the implementation committee to review costs. The annual five-year financial forecast indicated it would be necessary to increase the national per capita fee to maintain the long-term viability of the League. Letters and e-mails were sent to those members who had written with comments on the proposed increase. All year-end audit documents were fully reviewed as were the annual financial statements prepared by the League's auditor before being presented to the national executive/board for review and approval. Two memos were prepared for parish treasurers and a communiqué was sent on membership fees, insurance and budgets.

The League's audited financial statements showed an excess of operating expenditures over operating revenues of \$40,878; adding investment income of \$180,082 resulted in a positive difference between revenues and expenditures of \$139,204. The major contributing factors to the reduction in income were a drop in membership revenue of \$61,100 and reduced revenue from product sales (net of cost of goods) of \$33,238. Miscellaneous revenue of \$47,838 consisted of various federal and provincial wage subsidies due to the pandemic.

Variances in expenditures from the previous year were also experienced. As parish councils were required to pay a per member premium for general liability insurance, the net cost of insurance was \$7,180 compared to \$43,594 in 2019. Convention costs were minimal as no convention was held and no international conference was attended. National executive expenses were down as only one in-person meeting was held and no government visit could be made. Strategic planning was \$166,875, up from \$37,361 the previous

year, but considerably lower than budgeted as the marketing campaigns were only begun late in the year. The magazine was under budget despite the fact that a much larger fall centennial issue was produced. In operating costs, more computer support was required due to the age of the operating system, professional fees were higher because of legal counsel related to the pandemic, and printing was higher because of documents required for the instructed votes and 2019 report books prepared for all councils.

The executive director is to be commended for her assistance to me in all financial matters, strategic planning, budgeting, cost-based accounting and her excellent management of the national office. Secretaries and treasurers at all levels are also to be commended for their diligent and continued service to their councils. As one secretary commented in her report (acting as secretary) “has enabled [her] to grow further in a spiritual and personal level as a result”. May we all continue to grow and flourish on a spiritual and personal level as sisters in the League.



Shari Guinta

National First Vice-President and Chairperson of Spiritual Development



Subcommittee: Mary Lou Watson and Gloria Lundberg

Activity for the National Chairperson

- Two webinars were arranged and offered to members. One was *Women in Mission* by National Spiritual Advisor Most Rev. Stephen Jensen (Prince George), and *This is a Time to Go Slow... a Time to Pause on the Advent Journey in a Time of Uncertainty* by Very Rev.

Cornelius O'Mahony.

- Prayer services were created for administrative committee and executive/board teleconferences with the parish, the ill and clergy in mind.
- A Good Friday memo was sent to provincial chairpersons to offer prayers, thank them for their kind notes and touch base.
- Five communiques were prepared, including one focusing on the League's National Day of Prayer for Canadian Home Missions (October 1st), and suggesting councils read *Protecting Minors from Sexual Abuse: A Call to the Catholic Faithful in Canada for Healing, Reconciliation, and Transformation*. Another communique focussed on the Feast of Our Lady of Good Counsel and offered prayers for Nova Scotia as the province experienced an unprecedented violent incident and finally, a communique offering resources for Advent.
- Articles were prepared for *The Canadian League* that received positive feedback.

The COVID-19 pandemic made League work difficult, with most parish councils unable to meet in person. However, reports showed there was creativity and ingenuity when it came to activities. Many councils held teleconferences, prayer services and retreats virtually.

All provincial councils reported the submission of reports was down, some by more than 50%.

Spiritual Growth of Members

Planting a tree to celebrate the League's 100th anniversary took place across Canada with special prayers and blessings to go with it. Other activities included:

- spiritual bouquets collected and sent to life members in one province
- online adoration, rosaries, divine mercy chaplet novena, stations of the cross and Eucharistic celebrations
- prayer and prayer services led by spiritual advisors
- book studies

Those parish councils that could attend in person gathered at mass and others virtually through online meeting platforms. For those that met in person, more than 90% spent at least one-third of the meeting with a spiritual aspect, with spiritual advisors attending most meetings.

Study of Catholic Teachings

Resources from the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCCB) were used, especially regarding Bill C-7 *An Act to amend the Criminal Code (medical assistance in dying)* with action to be taken by members. Bishop Jensen was mentioned, as some parish councils used and discussed his recorded online webinar *Women in Mission*. Various online resources were mentioned, including the study of Pope Benedict XVI's encyclical *Deus Caritas Est*.

Councils continued to study Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si'*, though not as much. However, bible and scripture study, the rosary and other prayers were certainly popular. The theme prayer also seemed quite popular. One provincial council reported hosting an ecological rosary.

Role of Women in the Church

Women continued to be involved in their parish and diocese and served on different boards and associations. B.C. & Yukon Provincial Council and members across Canada rejoiced when

Honorary Life Member Barbara Dowding (2014-2016) was appointed chancellor of the Archdiocese of Vancouver!

Although varied and creative webinars and workshops were offered, there were remarks regarding the need for training and development.

Pope Francis announced officially through the wording of canon law that “laymen” had been changed to “lay persons,” allowing for official transition for women to proclaim the word and participate in liturgical celebrations throughout the church.

Evangelization and Mission Assistance

Parish councils continued to support missions. The permanent voluntary fund for Catholic Missions In Canada (CMIC) was supported, and articles from its magazine were read and shared. Esk-Omi Missions and the League’s National Day of Prayer for Canadian Home Missions were mentioned and supported.

Lay Ministries

Members supported and were active in their parishes and various ministries in their communities. They participated in choirs and pastoral councils, as lectors, Eucharistic ministers, ministers of hospitality, finance council members, liturgy committee, catechists, lay religious boards, prison ministry, shut-in/nursing home ministries, and much more.

Ecumenism and Interfaith Endeavours

Support for Week of Prayer for Christian Unity was mentioned often, as was Women’s Inter-church Council of Canada and World Day of Prayer. LifeChain and inter church-faith activities in support of life were participated in along with prayer vigils. Three unique activities reported from Saskatchewan Provincial Council were:

- a visit to a Jewish synagogue with an archbishop and a Jewish rabbi
- attendance at a blanket ceremony and an Indigenous awareness ceremony
- a tour of a Muslim mosque and information tour

Resources Reported

- League websites (diocesan, provincial and national)
- Vatican website

- *Laudato Si'*
- communiques
- online webinars
- *The Canadian League* magazine
- *CWL Prays* handbook
- 12 Hours of Prayer for Palliative Care
- Catholic Near East Welfare Association website
- CCCB website

Other

Practical and inspirational material received from provincial and national chairpersons and information on the national website was important.

The pandemic underlined and spotlighted the fact that members needed to keep in touch. It was a lonely time for many. Not everyone had a computer, and mail and telephone calls were still good ways to stay in touch. It was a challenge to reach out to members in new (and old) ways.

Workshops, training, information on preparing workshops and liturgy study were suggested, as was an activity calendar outlining events throughout the year. Also suggested for parish councils was a member prayer calendar, where members' names were put on a calendar, and the rest of the council prayed for them specifically on that day.

Fran Lucas

National President-Elect and Chairperson of Organization



The League experienced a completely different year due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Members' lives and League activities changed. Although gatherings of any type—meetings, conventions, celebrations, fundraisers—were non-existent or carried out in a different format, members stayed strong in words and actions adhering to gospel values. The

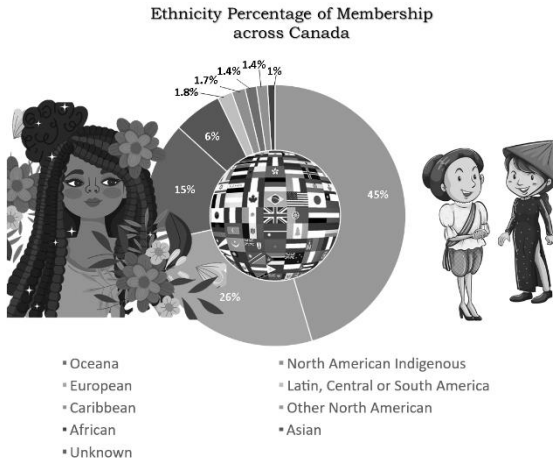
implementation committee for the strategic plan and its nine working groups continued their tasks in earnest with the release of the Welcome Program.

Recruit Members and Maintain Membership

The membership at year-end was 70,660, with parish councils ranging in size from one to 279 members. While personal invitation continued to have the best results for recruiting, the second most effective method changed from the previous year (advertising in bulletins) to presentations at mass. The top four ways to engage members remained the same—welcoming members at meetings, initiating personal conversations, sending invitations to participate in activities, and providing a new member kit. It was a challenge for some parish councils to present service pins, although creative workarounds were found through personal delivery or in parking lots while maintaining physical distancing. Sending cards and e-mails, making telephone calls and Facebook and Twitter usage increased. Special celebrations and reaffirmation ceremonies were put on hold but would be celebrated when possible.

It was surprising to see the success of many parish councils in recruiting new members, including younger women! Several parish councils reported that 50% or more of their new members were under 40. Original ideas ranged from recruiting while checking women in for mass to inviting women to pick blueberries as part of a fundraiser!

There was some apprehension to reporting on questions surrounding ethnicity. The working groups required this information for their research and outcomes. At the national level, this information was important to say confidently, “The League was ethnically diverse.” Without those statistics it could have only been guessed that the League was diverse. This information obtained indicated that it was; however, it could certainly do better. Members were encouraged to help ensure diversity continued to be a priority.



Of the 1,162 parish councils in Canada, 52.7% completed the organization annual questionnaire and 76% of responding councils had the organization position filled, 60% filled by appointment.

Leadership Development

GoToMeeting and Zoom were new buzzwords and became common platforms that members and councils learned and repeatedly used for much of what they did. Other terms like “share,” “organize,” and “presenter” became very familiar. Members participating in implementation committee working groups found that along with getting their many tasks accomplished, their involvement resulted in personal development through collaboration, research work, writing and creating spreadsheets and graphs. Provincial presidents-elect developed knowledge and skills during months of work on an executive orientation workshop.

Presenting or participating in webinars, virtual teleconferences and retreats were opportunities for enhancing skills and staying engaged. Many parish councils reported individual members served on as many as three levels of the League at one time. It was refreshing to see collaboration among the provincial level, with many councils extending invitations to each other’s webinars. Military Ordinariate Provincial Council’s executive officers were paired with a base president to offer support and build a relationship of accompaniment while reinforcing sisterhood.

A few parish councils indicated members had taken the Catholic Women's Leadership Foundation's training and applied their knowledge in their council or on a working group.

League Resource Material

Although there were no questions on this category, it was reported that Welcome Program presentations were held with positive feedback. Webinars and other online events like the Summer Speaker Series were offered by the national council. Online access of national resources seemed to increase.

Annual Reports

Parish councils appreciated the shorter version of the annual report survey and ease in completing it. Military Ordinariate Provincial Council rejoiced when 256 of 260 potential reports were completed. Yet, only 52% of all parish councils completed the organization questionnaire. Some felt they had little to report based on parish council inactivity, so chose not to report. A significant number of parish councils established guidelines for completing annual reports, and some were fortunate to meet in person to complete the reports.

For all positions, in 2019 the average response rate was 51.9%. For 2020, the average response rate was 49.8%, representing a drop of 2.1% in reporting.

Life Membership

The League's 15 honorary life members and 335 life members continued to be recognized as those with a wealth of knowledge; however, there was minimal opportunity to call on their service. Many life members participated in the *Fireside Chat* with honorary life members, planted a 100th anniversary tree, wrote letters to government, presented a resolution workshop, delivered Christmas cards and prayer shawls to nursing home residents or made face masks. National Life Member Liaison Ann Doucet kept information flowing, and prayer requests encompassed the biggest portion of e-mails to her. Ann sent out nearly 100 cards for various occasions. For the second year, Ann wrote biographies and collected photographs of the new life members for inclusion in *The Canadian League* magazine.

Honorary Life Member Barbara Dowding (2014-2016) became chancellor of the Archdiocese of Vancouver. Honorary Life Member Ardis Beaudry (1984-1986) and Life Member Rose-Marie McCarthy of Edmonton published the book *WINning: The Trials, Tribulations and Triumphs of Opening a Women's Shelter*. At the winter meeting, the national executive/board accepted the following 17 new life members:

Janet Brunger	Winnipeg, Manitoba
Glenda Carson	Dartmouth, Nova Scotia
Madonna Clark	Fredericton, New Brunswick
Lea Colbeck	Viriden, Manitoba
Doris Dickson	Perth-Andover, New Brunswick
Elizabeth Doyle	Dartmouth, Nova Scotia
Irene Gallant	Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island
Patricia Hannan	Montreal, Quebec
Colleen Holloway	Richer, Manitoba
Karen McDonald	Sudbury, Ontario
Alice Noble	Candiac, Quebec
Sandra O'Connell	Sydney, Nova Scotia
Carol Schlachter	Brooks, Calgary
Joanna Sisk	Ottawa, Ontario
Carol Lynn St. James Fascia	St. Constant, Quebec
Wendy Tedford	Douro-Dummer, Ontario
Patricia Weller	Douglas, Ontario

Success Story

Saskatchewan Provincial Council reported an inspiring story of signing up 53 new members in one parish council because of the encouragement of its parish priest, a former provincial spiritual advisor. Sounds like a challenge to all other spiritual advisors!

FAITH — SERVICE — SOCIAL JUSTICE

Membership Statistics for the Year Ended December 31, 2020

Provincial Council	Jan 1 2020	New	Reinstated	Did Not Renew	Paid Members	Deceased	Dec 31 2020
Alberta Mackenzie	9,101	441	154	776	8,920	106	8,814
B.C. & Yukon	8,386	462	228	958	8,118	117	8,001
Manitoba	2,104	53	21	164	2,014	29	1,985
Military Ordinariate	263	17	9	26	263	7	256
New Brunswick	1,714	28	7	144	1,605	40	1,565
Newfoundland and Labrador	491	8	4	47	456	9	447
Nova Scotia	3,560	52	26	261	3,377	67	3,310
Ontario	41,366	1,425	762	4,705	38,848	646	38,202
Prince Edward Island	1,774	29	21	115	1,709	31	1,678
Quebec	837	26	3	71	795	15	780
Saskatchewan	5,867	175	71	394	5,719	97	5,622
Total	75,463	2,716	1,306	7,661	71,824	1,164	70,660

Council Statistics for the Year Ended December 31, 2020

Provincial Council	Jan 1 2020	New	Reactivated	Amalgamated	Unpaid	Inactive	Disbanded	Dec 31 2020
Alberta Mackenzie	155	-	-	-	3	-	2	150
B.C. & Yukon	125	-	1	-	-	-	-	126
Manitoba	47	-	-	-	1	-	-	46
Military Ordinariate	13	-	-	-	-	-	-	13
New Brunswick	38	-	-	1	-	-	2	37
Newfoundland and Labrador	18	-	-	-	1	-	-	17
Nova Scotia	67	-	-	-	-	-	1	66
Ontario	529	-	5	-	3	1	4	526
Prince Edward Island	33	-	-	-	1	-	-	32
Quebec	18	-	-	-	-	-	-	18
Saskatchewan	133	1	1	-	1	-	3	131
Total	1,176	1	7	1	10	1	12	1,162

Pat Deppiesse

National Chairperson of Christian Family Life



In his book *A Tale of Two Cities*, Charles Dickens wrote, “It was the best of times, it was the worst of times... .” It seems to me these words were certainly applicable this year with the influence of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Despite the hardships of having their beloved churches closed to gatherings of any kind, councils not meeting together, not being able to fundraise, etc., it brought out the best in members. They learned to journey through technology via Zoom and GoToMeeting, Facebook and YouTube, online masses, virtual rosaries and stations of the cross, and any other ways they could to greet each other and keep up to date, and this was a blessing.

I will elaborate on the annual report statistics and comment on those that amplified achievements or noted trends of parish councils. Nine provincial Christian family life annual reports outlining the amazing amount of work members were still able to perform were received. As I read the reports, I learned members were alike and strived, despite shut-downs, physical distancing, social isolation, mask-wearing and hand sanitizing, to do what they could to keep things as normal as possible. Members excelled at role-modelling with an incredible commitment to helping their neighbours, friends and parishioners. The provincial reports were heartwarming and informative.

While there were 1,162 parish councils, only 590 reports from Christian family life chairpersons were received. Sixty-seven per cent of reporting parish councils had the position filled, with 55% appointed and 45% elected. The position was vacant in 33% of parish councils.

Marriage and Family

Of the five areas of involvement in programs for family enrichment (e.g., marriage preparation courses, marriage encounter weekends,

programs for single parent families, programs to support happily married couples and encounter weekends for engaged couples) suggested for parish council involvement, 89% of parish councils reported they did not promote them. Perhaps this may be the focus of other parish organizations and no longer a League initiative at this level.

Twenty-three per cent of parish councils supported people suffering from domestic abuse, while 78% reported they had not. However, chairpersons reported so much good work in the remarks, especially by generously donating financially and materially to shelters and transition houses. Members knew where to refer those affected to safe places where they could receive help. The question may have been misunderstood as it appeared many more parish councils were active in this area than the 23% that responded affirmatively.

Ninety per cent of chairpersons reported members did not attend workshops or seminars on family life. Similarly, 94% of parish councils did not celebrate or organize events for National Family Week sponsored by Families Canada. Because of the pandemic and physical distancing requirements, families were challenged to find new ways of connecting. This was an area where parish councils could perhaps concentrate their efforts going forward, especially in the aftermath of the pandemic.

Sanctity of Life

The League is a pro-life organization; however, 55% of parish councils did not hold membership in their local pro-life organizations. Members supported Life Chain (36%), pro-life masses (28%), March for Life (24%), 40 Days for Life (22%) and pro-life walks (20%). Thirty-eight per cent of parish councils did not participate in any of these initiatives—hopefully, this was a result of the pandemic restrictions. This would be another area where parish councils could improve, particularly when restrictions relax so that members could go on these important walks for life.

Ninety-six per cent of parish councils had not sponsored or attended a presentation on Pope John Paul II's literary series, *Theology of the Body*. Eighty-six per cent of parish councils reported they did not ensure members had a copy of the pro-life brochure available from

national office, while 74% did not have copies available in their vestibule. Though 94% of chairpersons reported their parish council had not met with pro-life legislators, 57% had written letters to inform legislators of the League's position on abortion and euthanasia. Seventy-five per cent regularly prayed for the protection of life.

Parish councils (56%) acted on Resolution 2019.01 Canada to Honour its Commitment to the United Nations *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, which urged the federal government to provide legal protection to children before birth. Many wrote letters to their members of parliament voicing opposition to the amendments to Bill C-7 *An Act to amend the Criminal Code (medical assistance in dying)* and to pray for the protection of life at all stages. Thousands of rosaries were said for the protection of life from conception to natural death.

Ministry to Youth

Almost all parish councils (98%) had not yet worked on the 2022 World Youth Day in Lisbon, Portugal. Fifty-nine per cent had not participated in any youth activities in their parishes (understandable at this time), and most (98%) did not have a Catholic Girls' League in their parish. Parish councils (40%) helped with catechism classes; however, these activities were suspended due to the pandemic.

Ministry to Disabled, Seniors, Widowed

Most parish councils (86%) did not participate in support groups or respite for caregivers. Parish councils instead called those affected (77%), prayed for the disabled (72%), visited with communion (70%) and sent cards (52%). Because of the pandemic, many members felt isolated and lonely.

Ministry to Separated, Divorced

Few parish councils (3%) sponsored and attended informal presentations on the annulment process, while 5% purchased copies of national's *Annulments Today—Merciful and Just* brochure to place in their vestibule. Many Catholics were unaware of the annulment process, and it was good to inform them whenever possible. Those affected by separation and divorce may have felt lonely and isolated.

Vocations

Parish councils (75%) participated in prayers for vocations and read and shared Pope Francis' prayer for the 2019 World Day of Prayer for Vocations. Parish councils adopted a seminarian (43%) and sent spiritual bouquets to their priests and seminarians (54%). Several watched a video regarding the call to serve God through a vocation to the ordained ministry and religious life.

The annual reports were not easy to complete. I enjoyed reading the excellent reports from provincial chairpersons, several of whom expressed concerns about a drastic rise in domestic violence since the start of the pandemic. Chairpersons were also concerned about the lack of support for caregivers and the importance of excellence in care in seniors' homes. There was a need to promote engagement by parish councils in areas that lacked involvement in the past. Planning the year ahead and including new projects would have been helpful.

As activities were greatly reduced, the year was more of a year of reflection, which allowed typically very active members to do lots of good reading and lots of praying!

In reviewing this report, the pandemic would certainly need to be taken into account. Members could only hope and pray that 2021 would see the League resume as usual. I thank all those generous members who continued to care for and love their families, friends and neighbours during this difficult year and for their continuing dedication "For God and Canada."

Uniting Catholic women to grow in faith, and to
promote social justice through service to the
church, Canada and the world.

Marie C. Rackley

National Chairperson of Community Life



Sub-Committee Chairpersons

- Dignity and Rights of Persons: Life Member Dorothy Johansen
- Refugees, Immigration and Citizenship: Life Member Madonna Clark
- Developing Countries: Life Member Irene Gallant

Eleven provincial chairpersons of community life submitted an annual report.

Community life activities were different this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which prevented the membership from volunteering its many hours of service and the need to help organizations defray costs. Although parish councils were unable to meet, they continued to push forward to change the ways of the past and develop new action plans and ways to serve.

Dignity and Rights of Persons

Parish councils continued to help those suffering from poverty with donations of clothing and food for their needs. Soup kitchens received grocery orders and paper products to help distribute meals through specially-made windows as people were unable to enter and share a meal together. Due to school closures, parish councils reported an increased number of children who received meals from soup kitchens than in previous years. Financial donations were given to assist with more significant needs.

Parish councils were concerned the pandemic would result in a growth in human trafficking, which has had devastating impacts on some of Canada's most vulnerable people, often children between the ages of 11-13. Donations were given to shelters that help victims when they flee from the hands of their controllers. Some parish councils reviewed the federal government's *National Strategy to Combat Human Trafficking 2019-2024*, which detailed "Canada's enhanced approach to counter human trafficking... guided by a

framework of empowerment, prevention, protection, prosecution and partnership-based initiative... adaptable to address the changing environment in which this crime occurs.” (Public Safety Canada)

Many parish councils wore orange on September 30th to bring awareness of the impact of the residential school system on Indigenous communities. Early in the year, several councils took part in activities such as the Native Women’s Association of Canada’s Faceless Doll Project and KAIROS Blanket Exercise.

Parish councils continued to monitor the Canada Summer Jobs Program application criteria to make sure that it was available for all organizations in Canada.

Social and Economic Justice

Although parish councils could not support many organizations with physical labour, they continued to assist with financial donations, supplies and prayerful support.

Members were unable to visit women in local detention centres and work with organizations like the Elizabeth Fry Foundation, Coverdale Centre and John Howard Society; however, donations were made throughout the year.

Some parish councils found it difficult this year to help those in need financially as most fundraising events did not take place.

Refugees, Immigration and Citizenship

Large Remembrance Day services were cancelled due to the pandemic; however, some parish councils did host a small service at a gravesite abiding by all COVID-19 restrictions to lay a wreath and remember their fellow Canadian brothers and sisters. The Royal Canadian Legion’s Poppy Campaign was well supported, and several parish councils participated in a drive-through car parade at 11:00 a.m. on November 11th. One parish council reported more than 70 cars met at a mall parking lot and followed one another down the streets and through graveyards with music playing. Members continued to support Canadian troops by wearing red on Fridays.

Parish councils worked with their parishes to welcome immigrant families to the community. They reviewed and monitored Resolution 2016.01 Equal Access to Permanent Resident Status, an

Amendment to the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* and kept members informed on amendments to the act.

Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace

Overwhelming support was received from parish councils regarding the announcement that the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops and Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace had reached an agreement and that contribution to the national voluntary fund could resume.

Developing Countries

Two notable projects were approved at the winter meeting of the national executive/board held in Toronto as part of the second year of the national theme, *Care for Our Common Home*. The first was the Pieta Bhavan project (India), to replace the roof on the community's primary water well. The second project was to support children in the Diocese of Adigrat (Ethiopia) with the remaining funds by providing lunches for students attending school. A total of \$17,934 was collected for these initiatives.

The financial support did not stop there. An additional amount of \$15,003 was sent directly to Catholic Near East Welfare Association in August for funds collected through the national voluntary fund from July 2019 to June 2020.

Councils continued to support international organizations, including Canadian Food for Children, Chalice, Doctors Without Borders, Habitat for Humanity, Holy Childhood Association, Operation Christmas Child, Operation Eyesight International, Samaritan's Purse, Save a Family Plan, Sleeping Children Around the World and more.

Parish councils celebrated the first annual National Day of Prayer for Christians in the Holy Land on September 21, 2020 (also the International Day of Peace). With the unrest in the Middle East and the devastation that occurred in Beirut, Lebanon, prayers for peace were greatly needed. Members looked forward to celebrating this day of peace for Christian brothers and sisters for years to come.

The year began like most years do, with resolutions on what members would change in their daily lives and how these changes

would help their families, spiritual life, health and work. However, by March, it became a challenging year, and the restrictions of the COVID-19 pandemic changed life and the world. Doing the routine everyday things became non-routine, and Canadians changed as a community.

Parish councils found new ways to communicate with their communities and continued to serve God’s people. Members did not sit back when the pandemic hit—they dressed with the army of their saviour and fought the fight.

Faith Anderson
National Chairperson of Education and Health



Sub-committee Chairpersons: Life Member Dr. Rayleen De Luca (Wellness and Sickness/Disease), Rita Janes (Environment) and Life Member Peggy McNeil (Catholic Education).

Even with the COVID-19 pandemic hampering many opportunities for parish councils to take action, an incredible amount was accomplished. Parish councils are to be commended

on their efforts and should celebrate what they were able to achieve in light of dealing with a pandemic.

Catholic Education

Provincial chairpersons (64%) indicated they had been informed about the quality of Catholic religious instruction in the parish and had inquired about the support that was needed, while 54% knew about the quality of Catholic religious instruction in Catholic schools in their area.

Parish councils (43%) identified breakfast and lunch programs as a need. Parish councils provided rosaries, crosses and first communion, reconciliation and confirmation certificates. They supported catechesis programs and bible camps. Parish councils provided busses for masses.

Some members were sponsors for Rites of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) candidates, while others were more formally involved as facilitators and leaders. Parish councils offered prayers and gifts to RCIA participants. Members were active in sacramental development in regions where religious education was not taught in the school system.

Literacy and Continuing Education

Parish councils reported members were mentors for new immigrants and tutors as they learned to speak English and acquired new literacy skills. In one provincial council, members were involved in the Elementary Literacy Foundation (ELF) program in local schools. Some parish councils had a list of Catholic universities and colleges available in their diocese or province. One parish council supported a parishioner's educational placement in Africa and collected school supplies and money for Literacy Nipissing Group. Parish councils worked to raise awareness of the challenges faced by those with learning and physical disadvantages. Life-long learning courses in local communities were promoted for senior members. One parish council noted it donated funds for books for the school program through READ Saskatchewan. Parish councils also indicated donating to Coady International Institute.

Scholarships and Bursaries

Parish councils (71%) identified scholarships and bursaries as a need in Catholic schools. Overall, most (63%) provided a scholarship or bursary to students in elementary (20%), high school (68%), or post-secondary education (17%). In some parish councils, scholarships or bursaries were designated for particular people or purposes. Several parish councils supported NET ministries. Members supported Roots of Change which helped reduce poverty in Nicaragua. In Regina, an award was presented to a high school student for Catholic studies and a workshop for My Gen Youth Rally. Vancouver Diocesan Council granted two \$1,000 bursaries to children of members attending first-year post-secondary education. B.C. & Yukon Provincial Council reported funds provided to Missionary Sisters from Franciscan Sister of Immaculate Conception to work with Kindergarten to Grade 12 youth in Catholic schools in Kamloops along with faith formation and bible school in parishes.

One parish council in Alberta initiated a bursary, named after a deceased member, for a graduate who exemplified the pillars of faith, service and social justice. Bursaries across Canada varied in amounts.

Parish councils (11%) reported members applied to the National Bursary Fund. Despite the pandemic, councils contributed to the fund. A few parish councils (12%) used the newly developed bursary certificate available from national office, which more councils would hopefully use in the future. The certificate was a way to uniformly indicate that the bursary was provided by a League council.

The League gratefully acknowledges the following donations designated to enhance the national bursary fund.

- Anne Gorman, Fredericton 50.00
- Annunciation, Enterprise 25.00
- Annunciation, Prince Rupert 50.00
- C. A. Aubut, Oakville 50.00
- Carol Lynn St. James Fascia, Saint-Constant 50.00
- Carol MacKenzie-Gruber, Brandon 150.00
- Carole Carlson, Surrey 50.00
- Cecile Miller, N.E. Margaree 50.00
- Christ The King, Kitimat 100.00
- E. Ann Doucet, Rothesay 25.00
- Eleanor Arless, Point Claire 25.00
- Elizabeth Joseph, La Salle 50.00
- Frances Sutherland, Nelson 40.00
- Georgina M. Bourke, Oakville 100.00
- Glenda Klein, Lindsay 125.00
- Good Shepherd, Thornhill 150.00
- Holy Cross, Burnaby 100.00
- Holy Family, Sechelt 80.00
- Holy Family, St. Albert 120.00
- Jacqueline Nogier, Snow Lake 100.00
- Judy Look, Calgary 50.00
- Lorraine Atchison, North Bay 30.00
- Marsha Keech, Surrey 100.00

• Mary Nordick, Saskatoon	25.00
• Notre Dame, Dawson Creek	60.00
• Notre Dame, North Battleford	100.00
• Our Lady of Fatima, Sydney River	20.00
• Our Lady of Good Counsel, Candiac	50.00
• Our Lady of Lourdes, Kingston	100.00
• Our Lady of Peace, Capreol	100.00
• Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Chateauguay	25.00
• Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Labrador City	50.00
• Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Rothesay	50.00
• Our Lady of the Assumption, Stratford	50.00
• Our Lady of The Miraculous Medal, Russell	50.00
• Our Lady of The Sacred Heart, The Pas	50.00
• Our Mother of Perpetual Help, New Liskeard	100.00
• Palmer Road, St. Louis	25.00
• Patricia Smith, St. Catharines	50.00
• Precious Blood, Scarborough	150.00
• Queen of the Most Holy Rosary, Belleville	50.00
• Sacred Heart, Kimberley	50.00
• Sacred Heart, Prince George	50.00
• Saint John XXIII, Dartmouth	100.00
• Saint Mother of Teresa of Kolkata, Halifax	20.00
• Saint Peter, Dartmouth	25.00
• Sheila Fortune, Margaree Valley	50.00
• St. Aidan, Scarborough	50.00
• St. Alphonsus, Callander	100.00
• St. Andrew, Vancouver	50.00
• St. Ann, Penticton	100.00
• St. Anthony, Drumheller	100.00
• St. Augustine, Saskatoon	30.00
• St. Boniface, Scarborough	50.00
• St. Clare of Assisi, Coquitlam	50.00
• St. Columba, East Point	25.00
• St. Edward, Winfield	100.00
• St. Francis of Assisi, Lincoln	20.00
• St. George, Crystal Beach	100.00

• St. Gerard's, Calgary	100.00
• St. James, Wilkie	20.00
• St. Joseph, Kingston	50.00
• St. Joseph's, Smithers	100.00
• St. Joseph's Basilica, Edmonton	250.00
• St. Jude's, Vancouver	50.00
• St. Leo The Great, Brooklin	50.00
• St. Martin of Tours, Terrace Bay	150.00
• St. Mary, Brampton	200.00
• St. Mary, East Bay	10.00
• St. Mary, Kingston	50.00
• St. Mary, Provost	50.00
• St. Michael, Bright's Grove	100.00
• St. Michael, Leduc	75.00
• St. Michael's Basilica, Chatham	25.00
• St. Patrick, Markham	100.00
• St. Patrick, N.E. Margaree	250.00
• St. Patrick, Napanee	50.00
• St. Peter, Ingonish Beach	50.00
• St. Peter, Winnipeg	25.00
• St. Peter's, Calgary	100.00
• St. Rita's, Castlegar	100.00
• St. Theresa, Middlechurch	50.00
• St. Thomas More, Dartmouth	10.00
• St. Thomas of Villanova, Conception Bay South	50.00
• St. Vincent De Paul, Dartmouth	20.00
• Star of The Sea, St. Catharines	100.00
• Star of The Sea, White Rock	100.00
• Sts. Joachim & Ann, Aldergrove	100.00
• Swift Current CWL #942, Swift Current	100.00
• Tillie Aessie, Saskatoon	500.00
• Valrose Edgerton/Anne Gorman, Fredericton	30.00
• Wilhelmenia Glasman, Saskatoon	100.00

Wellness and Sickness/Disease

When parish councils were able to meet in person, speaker presentations were held on various topics. The pandemic slowed communication; however, information was still made available through newsletters and websites. Some parish councils offered virtual presentations. Donations were made to various organizations, including the Alzheimer Society of Canada, [The] Arthritis Society, Autism Canada, Canadian Cancer Society, Canadian Mental Health Association, Canadian Red Cross, Chez-Nous, children's treatment centres, Children's Wish Foundation of Canada, CNIB Foundation, Cystic Fibrosis Canada, Diabetes Canada, Heart & Stroke Foundation, Jocelyn House Hospice, [The] Kidney Foundation of Canada, Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada, Ovarian Cancer Canada, Prostate Cancer Canada, Ronald McDonald House Charities Canada and VON Canada, as well as various community-based mental health organizations. In Nova Scotia, parish councils reported donating to construction of new hospice and palliative care facilities. Donations were given to Atlantic Wellness in New Brunswick, which provides free mental health services to teens.

Parish councils continued to recognize palliative care as an important issue. Quilts were made and donated to palliative care units. B.C. & Yukon Provincial Council reported parish councils (60%) participated in 12 Hours of Prayer for Palliative Care. Alberta MacKenzie and Ontario provincial councils reported a majority of their parish councils took part, with 64% across the country participating. Saskatchewan reported one parish priest used material from the 12 Hours of Prayer for Palliative Care Kit at daily mass. A few parish councils (14%) used the palliative care postcard. Letters were sent regarding resolutions 2016.04 Amend the *Canada Health Act* to Identify Palliative Care as an Insured Health Service and 2007.02 Hospice Palliative Care: An Integral Component of the Canadian Health Care System.

A guest speaker on end-of-life care presented information to members on recording their true wishes on how they want their life to end. In Ontario Provincial Council, members sent letters regarding inadequate staffing in long-term care homes, palliative care and the need for long-term care beds in the community. An

education session for members was held on wait times for long-term care beds, the application process and how to ensure enough adequate beds were available in the future. A parish-wide day of prayer at the church and in homes was organized during National Hospice and Palliative Care Week, sponsored by the Canadian Hospice Palliative Care Association. One parish council fundraised for a local hospice association, and \$1,000 was donated. Members helped decorate a tree to raise awareness for the need for palliative care and online prayer services were organized.

Mental health was a concern for members, particularly due to the pandemic and the isolation that many people felt. Some parish councils used the mental health postcard (12%); however, due to the pandemic this campaign was not fully utilized.

A few parish councils (6%) made blood donations using the League's unique Partner I.D. (CATH011269) with Canadian Blood Services Partners for Life program. This program was underutilized due to a lack of awareness.

A link to register for national organ donation was shared with members, and donations were encouraged. A few parish councils reported working on advance care planning (16%) and obtaining information on emergency response information kits (7%). Members participated in the Walk to End ALS (ALS Society of Canada) and local Terry Fox runs. A couple of parish councils reported participating in Bell Let's Talk Day (Bell Canada).

Environment

Sixty-two percent of parish councils participated in the *Care for Our Common Home* Initiative, with 85% participating in plastic and waste clean-up. Approximately 396 bags of waste were collected, while other numbers were not reported. One parish council in Manitoba continued its biannual commitment of its eight kilometre Adopt a Highway project. Members committed to eliminate the use of plastic bags (404) and plastic straws (405), while 408 members undertook to reduce their garbage.

Members attended the League's Summer Speaker Series session with Dr. Cory Andrew Labrecque, associate professor of bioethics and theological ethics at the University of Laval, and members were

encouraged to “lug-a-mug” to reduce environmental waste. The mantra ‘reduce, recycle and reuse’ was clearly demonstrated in the reports. Water bottles and straws were banned and replaced with a large refillable water container and glasses at one parish council’s meeting. A 15-year-old Canadian Indigenous woman, Autumn Peltier, named the chief water protector for the Anishnabek Nation, was highlighted. At one council meeting, members of a mission in Naujaat, Nunavut spoke about their strong bond to the land. Plastic and milk bags were crocheted into mats for the homeless. One parish council provided a bin in the church for recycling ink cartridges and batteries. Another, responded to caring for the environment by writing tips of the month for the parish bulletin regarding water consumption, planting trees and reducing plastics. Pope Francis’ encyclical *Laudato Si’* continued to be a source of inspiration for members to *Care for Our Common Home*. Parish councils addressed environmental issues by recycling (50%), reducing the use of Styrofoam cups (46%), eliminating plastic water bottles (40%) and plastic straws (36%) and reducing water use (32%).

A number of parish councils kept the national Water Pledge alive through using water gathered from dehumidifiers and cooking to water plants. Parish councils kept water usage on their radar with some observing the United Nations’ World Water Day and Earth Day. Water was a focus for many parish councils and resolutions on that topic were acted on. In at least one parish council, a water poster project was available for young parishioners with prizes available to recognize World Water Day. Bulletin board displays in church foyers that showcased water were used by some parish councils.

Some parish councils participated in the national centenary committee project to recognize the League’s 100th anniversary by planting trees or shrubs. Trees were planted on parish grounds, grottos or shrines; a senior’s apartment building, chancery yard; in front of rectories, in cemeteries, church lawns, school grounds and a children’s play area. One parish council planted two trees—one at a cemetery with a new sapling from a 100-year-old tree to represent the first 100 years and a young maple leaf tree to represent its future hopes. A tulip tree was planted with the event videotaped and made available to 110 members online. In keeping with the national theme

and in honour of a new school, one parish council planted a tree and indicated it was a symbol of God's gift of creation and a reminder that members were stewards of the earth. Bishop Douglas Crosby (Hamilton) blessed a tree planted on the lawn of a parish. Another tree was planted on a schoolyard to provide shade for students. Some parish councils had a commemorative plaque posted where the tree was planted. One parish council adopted a tree on the parish grounds as the space was well landscaped. One council planted fifty trees in the Willow Park Natural Area (Stony Plain) and planned for another planting in 2021.

Genetics

Although knowledge concerning the advantages and disadvantages of technology to alter genes according to Catholic teachings was rated as good (45%), the pending release of the vaccine for COVID-19 provided an opportunity on a different perspective as concern that stem cells from aborted fetuses could be used in some vaccines. Genetics remained in need of further sharing of information. Few parish councils (4%) indicated they subscribed to the Canadian Catholic Bioethics Institute's regular announcements.

In general, despite the pandemic, parish councils were able to keep abreast of many issues concerning the environment and health. Members wrote letters and sent postcards, acted on resolutions, affirmed pledges, were environmentally aware of issues, planted trees, were concerned about palliative care initiatives, supported Catholic education and prayed for many issues and concerns brought forward. It was clear parish councils and members stepped up to the plate and were creative and inventive in undertaking many activities.

Continued work would need to be done to create awareness of the various postcard campaigns, Canadian Blood Service Partners for Life campaign, National Bursary Fund and genetics. The year brought new awareness as parish councils strived to communicate the many issues under this standing committee. With prayer and guidance from the Holy Spirit, progress would be made.

Doreen Gowans
National Second Vice-President and Chairperson of Communications



Eleven of 11 provincial chairpersons of communications reported.

The Canadian League Magazine

Members found *The Canadian League* magazine to be a strong connection to the national council and their League sisters throughout Canada, and it was well read. Some parish councils considered the magazine a resourceful tool for advocacy and action. Of particular interest were articles about the 100th anniversary of the League, the implementation of the strategic plan and those written by the president and spiritual advisor.

In the winter issue, the top articles that resonated with most of the reporting councils were “President’s Message”, “*Care for Our Common Home—Year Two*”, “Protections of Minors... A Serious Issue”, “Who Do You Choose to Communicate With?”, “Inappropriate Medication Prescribing For Older Adults”, “Where Does Your Thirteen Dollars Go?”, “From the National Spiritual Advisor”, “Vocations” and “All We Can Be.”

In the spring issue, the most read articles were “President’s Message”, “Living with Alzheimer’s Disease”, “Something Beautiful For God”, “We are Not a Money Making Organization”, “From the National Spiritual Advisor”, “Looking Back, Looking Forward”, “Embrace Change by... Being Part of It!”, “We Are Mission”, “Letters—We Write Letters!”, “Where Did It Go? Archiving National Resolutions”, “Act Through Communication!” and “Life Membership—The Value and the Benefits!” The pullout section on “Our History is Filled with Faith, Fun, and Fulfillment” was also of significant interest.

The articles of most interest in the fall issue were “President’s Message”, “100 Years is Good! 200 Years is Better!”, “From the National Spiritual Advisor”, “Celebrating 100 Years!”, “We are

Christ's Hands and Feet", "Women of Action", "Here I am Lord", "Change... So Much Change! Are Members Ready?", "Pandemic Report", "Just the Same, Only Different" and "The League Life—Betty Anne Brown Davidson's Story."

Some interesting suggestions for future articles included getting up to speed with technology with tips or guidance for "non-tech" members, stories about how new parish councils formed, sexual orientation, connecting with younger generations and seeing their involvement with the League, teaching on the truth and greatness of faith, more insights on the history of the League, Catholic Missions In Canada, abortion and euthanasia, and more about the Blessed Mother Mary.

It was mentioned more than once that a hard copy of the magazine is preferred and often read, referred to, kept for future reference and archived.

Media for Evangelization

Church bulletins, newsletters, e-mail and telephone were the most widely used means to communicate with members. Parish councils focused on upcoming events on the diocesan websites. A few councils supported Catholic media via television (Daily TV Mass) while some members subscribed to Catholic newspapers or publications.

It was evident there was a need at parish councils to educate members on how to access social media and Internet sites. Former national spiritual advisor Bishop William McGrattan (Calgary) offered a live-streamed mass for honorary life members and life members, Alberta Mackenzie Provincial Council and its diocesan councils. Councils at all levels promoted programs for evangelization, from live-streamed masses on Facebook or YouTube, Twitter, Instagram, to online spiritual retreats via Zoom, rosaries, webinars and more. One chairperson was particularly resourceful in teaching her executive and members how to use Zoom and Facebook. The council even created its own Facebook group and should be commended for its members' creativity.

Many councils promoted faith-oriented programs either financially or through subscriptions such as *The Catholic Register*, Salt + Light

TV, Mass for Shut-ins, Daily TV Mass, Vision TV, the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops website, *Catholic Herald* and Eternal World Television Network. The League's sponsored mass on April 26th in honour of the Feast of Our Lady of Good Counsel was acknowledged and appreciated. Parish councils shared information about online retreats, webinars, prayer services, workshops and Pope Francis's message during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown. World Communications Day (first Sunday in June) sponsored by the Holy See was promoted.

Parish councils were encouraged to submit photographs along with an explanatory paragraph for the national website's On the Spot feature so others could see the great events happening across Canada, such as the tree plantings that took place in honour of the League's centennial anniversary.

Media to Promote the League

As the pandemic prevented most councils from holding in-person meetings, the provincial councils reported e-mail was the primary platform to distribute information. A majority of councils produced newsletters written either by the president or chairperson of communications. Newsletters were distributed to councils regularly as a way to promote faith-based programs and other pertinent information. Some parish councils used FlockNote, (a communication platform designed for churches to take advantage of online services) to promote League activities. Parish councils without access to Internet services were sent newsletters by regular mail.

Some parish councils were fortunate to have a budget for advertising, which provided an opportunity to advertise events when they were open to the general public. One parish council thanked the public for donations through the local radio station. A few parish councils used Facebook and community pages to advertise. One provincial council reported social media had become an essential part of its communications. One parish council found this type of outreach increased member participation in meetings.

Most parish councils found the national website informative, current and easy to navigate, and felt it helped increase members'

knowledge base, with about 600 unique visitors per week. They searched for communiqués, prayers, the strategic plan and current information. Members were encouraged to follow the League on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube.

Media Evaluation and Promotion of Good Content

Members who regularly monitored media content raised concerns about *Mary Kills People*, a television program series that promoted euthanasia, hospice funding being denied and forcing facilities to use medical assistance in dying, and Netflix film *Cuties*. Concerns were also voiced regarding child pornography, euthanasia and homosexual content referencing the Lord. Some parish councils reported expressing their disapproval to media outlets regarding adult content being made available too early in the day while children were able to view. Some members cancelled Netflix due to inappropriate content.

Pornography

Pornography Hurts postcards continued to be sent to government representatives, including the federal minister of justice and prime minister. One provincial council printed 10,000 Pornography Hurts/Mandatory Age Verification postcards, which were distributed via post to chairpersons of communication or presidents of diocesan councils, as well as parish councils upon request. The goal was to have councils mail the postcards to every member of parliament regardless of political party in hopes that 5,000 postcards would reach government offices.

Parish councils promoted *Over 18*, a documentary about pornography. Another parish council reported members had attended a seminar to gain a better understanding of pornography and related issues. One council promoted the film *Red Light, Green Light*, a documentary about human trafficking.

Action on Resolutions Pertaining to this Standing Committee

Parish councils took action on several resolutions, including:

- Resolution 2017.02 Mandatory Age Verification Mechanisms for Adult Pornographic Websites. Councils wrote or sent Pornography Hurts postcards to members of

parliament seeking tools to protect children from viewing adult websites.

- Resolution 2004.11 Link Between Violent, Graphic Imagery and Aggressive Behaviour and the Mechanics of Killing. Members wrote to government officials urging them to enact procedures to prohibit the sale and/or rental and/or distribution to minors of videos, movies and games that contain graphics that promote violence and killing as acceptable behaviour.
- Resolution 2002.11 Responsible Internet Use for Children. Members were encouraged to educate themselves and their families on safe, wise and responsible Internet use.

Strategic Planning

The envisioned future of the League was exciting, especially with the vignettes and continued awareness of the To Inspire tab on the national website. There was a reported increase in reciting the CWL Prayer for Renewal. Some councils kept members informed by using the monthly implementation committee updates, while others were not aware the updates were available. Sixty-five per cent of parish councils had a chairperson of communications, with 61% having been appointed. As such, communication fell to another member whose only responsibility was to send in bulletin announcements. As a result, strategic planning information may not have been communicated to grassroots members.

Summary Comments and Final Thoughts

The chairperson of communications is a challenging, demanding, interesting and exciting position at all levels of the League. It requires discipline and commitment to address and execute the parameters of the duties and responsibilities as outlined in the *Executive Handbook*.

One provincial chairperson believed at the parish level, chairpersons may not be given the full responsibilities of the role and were being informed that all they must do was put notices in the bulletin.

Recommendations Going Forward:

- A trademark and standards manual developed at the national level for the use of the League crest (colour, and black and

white) in communications with electronic versions of all sizes that could be used by all councils.

- Online, downloadable template for letterhead and communiqués with mandatory guidelines of an approval process that must be followed prior to publication.

Cathy Bouchard **National Chairperson of Resolutions**



Two of the Objects of the League are “to unite Catholic women of Canada ... to recognize the human dignity of all people everywhere and to uphold and defend Christian education and values in the modern world.” The League did this through the effort of its resolutions.

Approximately 40% (479) parish councils completed the annual report form for resolutions. Of the reporting parish councils, the position of chairperson of resolutions was filled in 36% of parish councils, with 37% of these elected, i.e., one in eight parish councils had an elected chairperson of resolutions. Eighty per cent of the reporting parish council chairpersons shared this position with the legislation standing committee. At the provincial level, one of the 11 councils did not have a chairperson of resolutions, although someone on the council ably assisted with resolutions. Four provincial councils had the role combined with the role of the chairperson of legislation.

At least 25% of respondents reported they had at some point in their League journey attended a workshop that outlined the League’s resolutions process, or had attended diocesan or provincial development days, workshops or convention sessions. Twenty per cent of respondents had not attended any workshops on the resolutions process. In previous years, when workshops had been conducted, they helped remove the fear of writing a resolution and assisted members in understanding the process better.

Although parish councils were not able to meet for most of the year, nearly one-half of parish councils made members aware of the issues

addressed through resolutions adopted at any level through meetings, e-mail or newsletters, written to federal or provincial governments or signed petitions. Parish councils were most passionate about concerns regarding euthanasia and assisted dying, palliative care and quality of care in long-term-care homes. Other issues that concerned councils included abortion, gender identity, youth mental health, abuse of seniors, and Canada's commitment to the United Nations *Convention on the Rights of the Child*. One-half of parish councils were familiar with national resolutions that required action.

The two most significant challenges for parish councils regarding resolutions were not having a standing committee/chairperson and trying to generate interest in resolutions. Because it was difficult to fill the position for the standing committee, even when combined with the legislation standing committee, parish councils positively anticipated the recommendations from the implementation committee.

Members displayed reluctance to talk to elected representatives in person at all levels—e-mail and letters were the preferred methods. Members contacted representatives regarding municipal concerns (25%), provincial representatives (33%) and federal representatives (40%). Some members connected with their elected representative through Zoom, which was a first!

It was impossible to consider the League's work without considering the effect the COVID-19 pandemic had. Members were hampered in the usual manner that they conduct business, particularly with regards to resolutions. Members could not gather to discuss and research resolutions. Without the annual meeting of members to present them, resolutions were not adopted at the different levels. On the other hand, members were more active in letter writing and made their voices heard because they had time to write. Issues did not go away just because of the pandemic, and members responded with e-mails and letters to government officials when issues were presented to them. Members were encouraged to address issues with their elected representatives.

Challenges

According to the annual reports, one challenge to the resolutions process was that members struggled to formulate a resolved clause for the resolution they wanted to bring forward. They had a topic in mind but could not decide what the clause should be. Members seemed to be interested, and discussions at meetings generated a fair participation, but they did not follow through. The response would be for those who had more experience in writing resolutions.

Successes

Successful projects included assistance to members through sample letters and organizing the information for members to write letters and e-mails. One chairperson reported focusing on local, provincial and national topics that concerned members personally made a huge difference. Members were active in signing petitions and sending them to government officials via e-mail and saying expressing their opposition to medical assistance in dying in hospice/palliative care.

One success story was “the remarkable way in which, despite the challenges presented by COVID-19, ... councils managed to carry out a number of its missions. From a personal point of view, COVID-19 was a learning opportunity as it exposed in tragic and sometimes heroic detail our communal strengths and weaknesses. It exposed the need for strong and decisive governmental leadership. It exposed our dependency and our complacency. It showed how truly interconnected we are in this chain of life and that when one link fails, it affects all of us. We will go forward with hope and a greater respect for those we serve and for those who serve us. We will better appreciate what we have and that which we have to give. When once again we can be together in person as a council, I will challenge my Catholic Women’s League sisters to examine what they have learned and how we can better serve God and Country.”

The work of resolutions was nurtured in the life of prayer.

Betty Colaneri

National Chairperson of Legislation



Sub-Committee Chairpersons: Life Members Jacqueline Nogier and Wilma Vanderzwaag

In an unprecedented year, the world was brought to a standstill by the global COVID-19 pandemic. The impact of dealing with an unknown virus and its ramifications created uncertainty and anxiety in communities, provinces and the country. What took place may be surprising to some. Businesses were closed, but legislation stood up and came to the forefront. It persevered and continued to be the driving force that paved the way for crucial action required for the health and wellbeing of Canadians.

With restrictions and stay at home orders in place, chairpersons of legislation and members reported having more time to research, study and monitor legislation and government activities in a more detailed manner than ever before. Members took the time to educate themselves on existing legislation to develop an understanding as to how it affects their families, society, municipalities and country.

The year was challenging on many levels. Some parish councils reported the pandemic was their greatest challenge due to the restrictions imposed that barred meetings from taking place in person. Previous meetings gave members an opportunity to provide input, hold an informative discussion and explain important issues. When in-person meetings were held, it provided an opportunity to assist members who did not have computers and e-mail addresses. Meetings also assisted those that continued to struggle with the steep learning curve aspect of technology. Many councils at all levels rose to the occasion and embraced technology to facilitate reaching out to members to share information and hold virtual teleconferences. Unfortunately, members without computer access could not be reached electronically, making communication and sharing of information with them difficult.

Chairpersons of legislation and members predominantly focused on monitoring federal and provincial legislation surrounding the pandemic. Another important focus was monitoring Bill C-7 *An Act to amend the Criminal Code (medical assistance in dying)*. Parish councils were vigilant and brought awareness to members. They continually encouraged members and the community at large to sign petitions and write letters to ministers and senators to express opposition to the changes being proposed to Bill C-7. Chairpersons read briefs and viewed webcasts of witnesses who made presentations before parliament expressing their point of view. Bill C-7 was the prime example of how the power of one in a court action can initiate the process of bringing a bill forward. Members continued to be advocates for the respect and dignity of life at all stages. Legislation chairpersons and members were diligent in their pursuit of resources for palliative care.

Provincial legislation chairpersons and members monitored provincial issues such as palliative care, hospice, health care and homelessness. The prominent issue that had provincial councils outraged was the crisis conditions in long-term-care homes. The pandemic took its toll on the most vulnerable bringing to light the horrific conditions that had been ignored for far too long. Members were urged to vigorously send e-mails and letters to their local members of parliament to express their deep concern as well as the need for appropriate action to be taken. The increased awareness of these important issues led to greater participation and the desire to become involved not only in the general membership but with parishioners as well.

Most parish councils expressed the most significant challenge of the legislation standing committee continued to be the arduous task of finding a member willing to take the position. As such, many parish councils did not have an active chairperson of legislation. This did not discourage parish councils from fulfilling the tasks that pertained to the position, and they continued to stress the importance of keeping abreast of legislation regardless of the vacant position. Teamwork came into play as parish council chairpersons and members worked together to conscientiously monitor and report on legislation or initiatives being taken by the federal, provincial and

municipal governments. Even though tracking the status of bills or monitoring legislation could be a time consuming and intimidating task, the provincial chairpersons fervently persevered. To be at the forefront on issues being discussed at the different levels and receive regular updates, parish councils amended their mailing lists of political representatives.

Federal Bills Monitored and/or Acted on Nationally:

- Bill C-3 *An Act to amend the Judges Act and the Criminal Code* Intended to restrict eligibility for judicial appointment to persons who participate in continuing education related to sexual assault law.
- Bill C-4 *An Act relating to certain measures in response to COVID-19* Intended to authorize the payment of the Canada recovery benefit, sickness benefit and caregiving benefit in response to COVID-19.
- Bill C-6 *An Act to amend the Criminal Code (Conversion therapy)* Intended to make certain acts of regarding conversion therapy an offence under the *Criminal Code*.
- Bill C-7 *An Act to amend the Criminal Code (medical assistance in dying)*.
- Bill C-13 *COVID-19 Emergency Response Act*. Intended to implement certain income tax measures in response to the pandemic.
- Bill C-14 *COVID-19 Emergency Response Act, No. 2*.
- Bill C-15 *Canada Emergency Student Benefit Act* (43rd Parliament, 1st Session). Intended to authorize payment of emergency student benefits to students due to the pandemic.
- Bill C-233 *An Act to amend the Criminal Code (sex-selection abortion)*
- Bill S-203 *An Act to restrict young persons' online access to sexually explicit material*.

Provincial Bills:

- Ontario Bill 13 *Time to Care Act (Long Term Care Homes Amendment, Minimum Standard of Daily Care)*, 2020 Intended to require long-term care homes to provide its

residents with at least four hours a day of nursing and personal support services, averaged across the residents.

- Quebec Bill 21 *An Act respecting the laicity of the State*
- British Columbia Bill 23 *Worker's Compensation Amendment Act, 2020*
- British Columbia Bill 41 *Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act*. Intended to harmonize the province's laws with the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*.
- Ontario Bill 63 *Right to Timely Mental Health for Children and Youth Act, 2019*
- Ontario Bill 116 *Foundations for Promoting and Protecting Mental Health and Addictions Services Act, 2019*
- Ontario Bill 153 *Long-Term Care Homes Amendment (Till Death Do Us Part) Act, 2019*
- Ontario Bill 161 *Smarter and Stronger Justice Act, 2020*. Intended to amend several acts.
- Ontario Bill 175 *Connecting People to Home and Community Care Act, 2020*
- Ontario Bill 184 *Protecting Tenants and Strengthening Community Housing Act, 2020*. Intended to “permit the lieutenant governor in council to designate a not-for-profit corporation as the administrative authority.”
- Ontario Bill 195 *Reopening Ontario (A Flexible Response to COVID-19) Act, 2020*
- Ontario Bill 203 *More Than a Visitor Act (Caregiving in Congregate Care Settings), 2020*
- Ontario Bill 229 *Protect, Support and Recover from COVID-19 Act (Budget Measures), 2020*
- Nova Scotia Bill 240 *Life Partners in Long-term Care Act*
- British Columbia Bill M 207-2019: *Safe Care Act, 2019*
- British Columbia Bill M 217-2019: *Interpersonal Violence Disclosure (Clare's Law) Act*.

Other Actions Taken:

- Chairpersons instituted different social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp to keep members

informed as to bills, their progress and when to act in a timely manner.

- Chairpersons distributed monthly newsletters with updates, links and petitions, and to highlight activities and address areas of concern.
- Members wrote letters to various ministers requesting the government to support, sign and ratify the United Nations *Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons*, to honour its commitment to the United Nations *Convention on the Rights of the Child* and regarding Canada's single-use plastic ban and zero plastic waste strategy.
- Members viewed witnesses and briefs from relevant committees via webcasts.
- Chairpersons provided lists of parliament and legislative assembly to members.
- Parish councils accessed provincial and national League websites for reference.

Recommendations:

- Appoint subcommittee chairpersons to assist with the time restraint of: monitoring and researching federal and provincial government legislation; interpreting proposed bills, their contents, and how they work; explaining legislative terms; and dividing the information. (Highly recommended)
- Access the legislation websites.
- Create interesting ways to inspire members of the importance of this committee.
- Encourage members to be educated and involved with the legislation process.
- Host a workshop to help members achieve a better understanding of the position and how it affects members as individuals, in their community and Canada.
- Host visual presentations and/or workshops on accessing, monitoring, advocating and dealing with government.
- Consider conducting brainstorming activities at meetings.

- Provide a reference guide of how to effectively monitor the various government publications and increase knowledge of government terminology.
- Work with other councils that may have a better understanding of legislation.
- Contact guest speakers knowledgeable in the legislative process (to be done online until it is possible in person).
- Inform the community of what the League does regarding social justice using current social media platforms of Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, etc.
- Refer to the action plan from resolutions as a stepping stone for what could be done.
- Have a focus group to deal with letter writing to the government to help encourage other members to do the same.
- Invite younger members to assist with electronic research.
- For council meetings, set aside time on the agenda to properly address legislation topics or issues of concern for discussion and action by members. This should be done even if the position is vacant.

Legislation could be fascinating. Unfortunately, it was often viewed as the undesired, underrated, overwhelming position with dry topics. Though the position could be daunting, everyone should have an opportunity to experience the position and be amazed at what could be achieved. Many members felt that a member who likes to take the time to research issues and who is passionate about legislation and politics would be an ideal candidate for the position.

Passionate about legislation would never have been a description I would consider having prior to being appointed to the position. The past three years gave me an opportunity to learn how the government works and gave me a greater appreciation for the legislative process. Two sayings came to mind while finalizing this report. One that provides the answer to the question of why you were called—“God doesn’t call the qualified, He qualifies the called” (Mark Batterson). The other gives reasoning with which to intrigue members into action—“Tell me and I forget. Teach me and I remember. Involve me and I learn” (Benjamin Franklin).

Legislation provides the realization of how important the League's voice is. History proves it. Members have, can and continue to make a difference. With the strategic plan, the legislation format may change but the importance remains. Legislation is not only social justice in action, but faith in action!

Margaret Ann Jacobs
National Past President and Chairperson of Laws



A thread of optimism and hope weaved its way through the reports from 10 of 11 provincial past presidents. It was a heartwarming experience to sift through the carefully worded, affirmative renditions of the accomplishments across the country, all the while noting the many challenges faced at parish, diocesan and provincial levels. The COVID-19 pandemic phenomenally impacted the ability of councils to meet,

conduct business as usual and resulted in most projects being placed on hold. Parish council annual reports were filed by 50% of councils nationally, while provincial compliance varied from 30-90%. Brava to the Military Ordinariate Provincial Council for its completion rate!

Serve in a Consultative Capacity

Past presidents were available to offer advice when consulted. They reported working closely with their presidents as decisions/provisions were made for virtual gatherings and partial virtual teleconferences, sometimes chairing meetings and filling vacant roles on the executive. Noteworthy was the support offered that focussed on attempts to keep members connected throughout the pandemic. Personal investment in keeping abreast of diocesan, provincial and national events on the League's websites and conveying this information to members in a positive manner was a valued method of promoting the League.

Archives and History

The majority of past presidents were responsible for the archives, which were most often stored at the church in a designated space for League materials. Photo albums proved the most frequent method used, while 51% of respondents maintained a history book of their League happenings. Annual reports, books of life, deceased member histories, financial information, executive lists, membership renewal data, minute books and years of service records were most often stored indefinitely and only reviewed as needed. Restricted access to the history and archives was noted this year. One past president noted updating archival materials was challenging, time-consuming, but rewarding.

Study and Implementation of the *Constitution & Bylaws*

It was reassuring to learn that 95% and 88% of parish councils had a copy of the *Constitution & Bylaws* and *National Manual of Policy and Procedure*, respectively. However, less than 45% reviewed or referred to either document to help guide decisions or help with processes and procedures. Manuals of policy and procedure had been developed by 53% of parish councils and were most often update when a policy changed.

Other Duties as Assigned by the President

When pandemic restrictions permitted, past presidents were called upon to represent and promote the League in the parish and community. They took part in online teleconferences, spiritual reflections and rosary recitation. Planning strategically was supported by focusing on articles in *The Canadian League* magazine, sharing information from the planning strategically booklet, volunteering for surveys and praying the CWL Prayer for Renewal.

Laws (National Level)

Proposed amendments forwarded to the national council were assembled for deliberation by the amendments committee appointed by the national president. The committee composed of honorary life members Joan Chesser, Velma Harasen and Claire Heron, National President and Chairperson of International Relations Anne-Marie Gorman, National President-Elect and Chairperson of Organization Fran Lucas, Executive Director Kim Scammell and myself, met via

teleconference on September 14th and 28th and on October 13th, 20th and 26th. The recommendations of each proposed amendment were reported to the national executive/board for final decision. Upon approval, a comprehensive package including a cover letter from the national president, a memo with attachments regarding the *Constitution & Bylaws* and a memo regarding a per capita fee increase was distributed to each parish council president and copied to the diocesan and provincial presidents in December.

Challenges and Successes

Many challenges facing councils at all levels were related to the pandemic where it was difficult to keep the League visible, share fellowship, fundraisers and fun. Technology and lack of internet access or computer skills proved to be stumbling blocks. Members reported missing the energy and sisterhood of in-person meetings and the ability to see, hear and share with their League sisters.

Zoom meetings proved to be the overriding accomplishment of note with teleconferences, rosary recitation and retreats conducted virtually. Past presidents appreciated taking part because of their ability to participate without travel or other expenses. Celebrations on June 17th via Zoom hosted by Toronto diocesan and Quebec provincial councils brought special attention to the League's 100th anniversary.

One Manitoba past president reported that during a pandemic lockdown, she went through 30 years of documents compiling an electronic history complete with memorable moments, historical events and a list of members, executives and presidents at all levels of the League for each year. The files were printed and organized by year in labelled binders that also contained newsletters, minutes, executive and general meetings and other documentation. The e-files were shared with members. WOW!

Recommendations

- Emergency measures procedures should be developed by national council.
- Past presidents should prepare a spreadsheet for incoming presidents with monthly duties, contact lists and a prepared script for running a meeting.

- Members should be educated on the value of having a council manual of policy and procedure and access the national manual more often.
- Past presidents should access the brochure provided by national council outlining the duties and information regarding archiving.

Members should all keep in mind the powerful message shared by Saskatchewan’s past president, “CWL members are among the most gifted people on this earth. We must continue to encourage mentorship to all members so that women will step into leadership feeling confident and supported.”

Judy Look

Alberta Mackenzie Provincial President



The diocesan presidents were: Jan Myhre (Calgary), Mary Molloy (Edmonton), Christine Becker (Grouard-McLennan), Shirley Gutierrez (Mackenzie) and Lolain Alsmo (St. Paul).

2020—the year of COVID—the year a “**Catholic Organization full of Vitality, Inspiration and Dedication**” continued to work “For God and Canada” despite all of the challenges. It was a year filled with hope and gratitude. Comprised of four diocesan councils in Alberta and one in the Northwest Territories, membership stood at more than 8,800 women in 150 parish councils. The provincial executive was blessed with table officers from all five dioceses. Along with its parish councils, the provincial council had a very challenging year confronted with social distancing, closed churches, the inability to have in-person meetings and the increased use of technology. Its theme, *Care for Our Common Home: Building Relationships and Effecting Change* offered a new challenge with the inability to meet; however, officers were diligent in staying connected with their diocesan and national counterparts.

Provincial Chairperson of Organization Mary Hunt attended many teleconferences, participated in two strategic planning working groups and met with her diocesan and provincial counterparts as they worked together on leadership issues. She also chaired the Alberta March for Life. Provincial Treasurer Gwen Elliott worked on the budget, which continued to be fluid as the pandemic's impact affected all activities, communicated with her diocesan counterparts on financial issues and chaired the financial council. The treasurer and organization chairpersons kept abreast of the membership numbers and continued to support their counterparts at other levels. Provincial Chairperson of Spiritual Development Gladys Brown posted prayers on the website, helped coordinate the Advent Lenten Retreat facilitated by Fr. Jim Corrigan and developed spiritual programs for Zoom gatherings.

Provincial Chairperson of Communications Janet MacPhee took on the daunting task of revising the council's website and accomplished stellar work under the pornography portion of the standing committee's portfolio. She organized the production of two videos of greetings (one each for Advent and Christmas) posted on the Diocese of Calgary and provincial council websites, and posted greetings from other diocesan councils. She and Provincial Secretary and Life Member Liaison Gloria Lundberg planned and executed a Christmas card fan out to parish council chairpersons, life members, bishops and organizations in the community. Using the pillars of faith, service and social justice, the chairpersons of community life, Christian family life, legislation and resolutions worked together to research, collaborate, produce letters and a joint communique on Bill C-7 *An Act to amend the Criminal Code (medical assistance in dying)* with very positive results.

Technology played a crucial role as the fall meeting, along with many others, became virtual teleconferences. Provincial Chairperson of Community Life Theresa Hickey kept members abreast of Catholic Near-East Welfare Association, Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace, St. Vincent de Paul Society and activities in the north. Provincial Chairperson Christian Family Life Celine Berlinguette kept members current on topics including medical assistance in dying (MAiD) and ethical

issues, to mention a couple. She also represented the council on the March for Life committee. Provincial Chairperson of Education and Health Gerda Hazenberg continued to promote Grateful Advocates for Catholic Education (GrACE) and participated in a strategic plan working group on diversity. Provincial Chairperson of Resolutions Betsy Fletcher brought to members' attention the national council's new *Resolutions Guide*, welcomed a new resolution and reminded councils to continue to work on previous topics such as the necessity of an independent senior's advocate office.

Provincial Chairperson of Legislation Sharon Malec, the council's contact with the provincial government, advised members of legislative issues and participated in an implementation committee working group. Provincial Past President June Fuller, the council's go-to person for information, continued to update the policy and procedure manual and took on an initiative to supplement the council's history. All officers posted communiques to the website, stayed connected with and funneled national issues to their diocesan counterparts, and participated in a multitude of webinars. Although the convention was cancelled in June, members took advantage of the national council's Summer Speaker Series webinars. Despite all of their work, they remained very active in their parish councils.

Diocesan presidents continued to be resilient in their dedication to the League. They, along with their executives, worked diligently to support parish councils. Every president was thrust into the world of virtual communications with all of its challenges as they discovered Zoom and other virtual meeting platforms. They soon realized if members could not come to them, they would go to the members and go they did, with seminars, workshops, retreats, discussion groups, fall and regional meetings. Presidents encouraged members to become creative in their thinking, and so, councils met outdoors in parks and church parking lots, physically distancing and wearing masks. Most parish councils completed an annual report survey, be it online or manually. They reported they liked having a national theme and continued to embrace *Care for Our Common Home*. For inspiration and information, members chose the League and Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCCB) websites and *The Canadian League* magazine. Parish councils valued spiritual

advisors as they have a significant role, though they may not have attended all the meetings. The three pillars of faith, service and social justice permeated the reports. The strong pillar of faith continued to be the underlying pillar as councils continued to participate in activities such as the World Day of Prayer, 12 Hours of Prayer for Palliative Care, online bible studies, online mass and retreats.

Social justice was highlighted as parish councils wrote their members of parliament and legislative assembly on the issues of good palliative care, euthanasia, Bill C-7 and other MAiD issues, care home mismanagement and rights of the unborn child under the United Nations' *Convention on Rights of the Child*. They used information from the CCCB, Campaign Life Coalition, Euthanasia Prevention Coalition and United Families International, communiques, encyclicals and national resolutions to support their positions. Fundraising was seriously curtailed; however, parish councils continued to support their financial commitments as best they could. A minority of councils did find ways to have virtual fundraisers.

Service for most parish councils focused on service to their League sisters and churches as physical distancing and staying home became the orders for the day. They came up with many ways to stay connected with e-mail at the top of the list, followed closely by telephone, sending cards and virtual teleconferences. Where it was permissible, some councils continued to visit in person, continued their ministries and reached out to the poor.

To help facilitate parish council meetings, presidents reported using various resources with the most popular being the *National Manual of Policy and Procedure, Constitution & Bylaws, Robert's Rules of Order* and the *Executive Handbook*. Presidents relied on past presidents for support and called on life members periodically. Some councils moved forward in developing a policy and procedure manual.

It appeared parish council treasurers did an outstanding job of keeping track of membership fees, bank accounts and paying bills on time. Some councils moved toward using direct deposit and e-transfers. Money directed for support of presidents to attend

conventions and workshops ranged from nothing at all to all expenses paid. Presidents at all levels were the face of their council.

Challenges focused on declining membership, disbanding councils and leadership, as many members were hesitant to take on the role. For many, particularly in the northern dioceses, technology was a barrier as the Internet was not always accessible.

Although the pandemic tried its hardest to slow councils down, it was not successful. In many ways, it brought members closer to one another and God. “Alberta Mackenzie Prays the Rosary” on Wednesday nights enabled members to connect across the province and territory and make prayer the ultimate weapon to battle the pandemic and all of its issues. Priorities changed, approach to work changed, appearances changed, but the love grew. Members continued to live the League’s Mission Statement “... to grow in faith, and to witness to the love of God through ministry and service.” All looked forward to the day when they could get together to laugh, cry, share stories and hug.

Gisela Montague

B.C. & Yukon Provincial President



- One hundred and seven of 126 parish councils reported.
- One hundred per cent of diocesan councils reported.

Informing Members

Primary sources of information reported were *The Canadian League* magazine (86%), followed closely by national, provincial and diocesan communiqués and websites. Parish bulletins and Google searches were also used. Another source reported was the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCCB) website. Parish councils reported an increase in newsletters as they could not meet in person due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The national theme, *Care for Our Common Home*, was well supported. Parish councils worked on current topics, including social

justice issues surrounding life, such as medical assistance in dying (MAiD), hospice and palliative care and rights of the pre-born.

Communication with Spiritual Advisors

Most parish councils reported their spiritual advisor was supportive, though not always present at meetings. Some reported being unaware that their spiritual advisor should be invited to meetings. One parish council had its deacon as the spiritual advisor because the pastor was too busy. The provincial spiritual advisor was incredibly supportive and provided weekly spiritual messages.

Council Policy and Procedure Manual

At least 50% of parish councils had a policy and procedure manual, and others mentioned they would appreciate help in preparing one. Vancouver Diocesan Council developed a video on creating a policy and procedure manual.

Foster Open Communication

Because of the pandemic, parish council members had little opportunity to interact on a personal basis. Most communication happened through e-mails, telephone calls, cards and virtual conferences. More newsletters were produced to keep members informed.

Promote Active Leadership in Councils

Promoting leadership was more difficult as many events were cancelled or moved online. Presidents and their executives increased virtual teleconferences with more information becoming available constantly and to keep councils engaged. The strategic plan was promoted, and participation in working groups was encouraged.

Ten parish councils did not have a president, while some had a contact person for information sharing. Two presidents were afraid to step down for fear the council would fold. One diocesan president noted all parish councils had a president; however, most did not have a president-elect. One diocesan council reported having the same executive for quite some time. Others reported members felt they could not meet the time commitment to take on an executive position.

Resources Used at Meetings

Councils used the *Constitution & Bylaws* and *Executive Handbook* most often, followed by *Robert's Rules of Order*.

National and Provincial Themes

Most parish presidents found it beneficial to have a national theme on which to focus activities. Only one-half liked the change of theme with every new president. Reduce, reuse and recycle were prominent activities. Parish councils planted trees, and one provided recycling bins for its parish.

Greatest Challenges

The pandemic's restrictions interrupted momentum. Parish councils struggled to keep the League alive and found communicating with members the biggest challenge. Presidents tried to keep members engaged and informed during the lockdowns; however, they felt weighed down by the amount of paperwork, a limited knowledge of technology, recruiting and filling executive positions. One comment received was "presidents felt undertrained and overwhelmed and had difficulty keeping members interested and dealing with tedious policies and too much paperwork."

Greatest Accomplishments

Many parish council presidents considered it an accomplishment to have members participating in virtual teleconferences and carrying on with a regular schedule. The feeling of fellowship and community, respect, support by members, generosity and kindness, dedication, resilience and willingness to try new things were felt as significant accomplishments. One parish council met virtually every day to pray the rosary and had done so since the start of the pandemic.

Comments/Suggestions

Councils at all three levels struggled with leadership. Many parish councils had no president, and those with presidents were primarily "recycled" and well over 65 years old. Members looked forward to upcoming changes. Regarding the annual report survey, no question specifically asked for comments or suggestions, only about issues and what presidents were proud of. It was recommended to enable more input by providing more open-ended questions in future

surveys. The questions in the survey did not take the unique situation of the pandemic into account.

Provincial President's Activities

Many plans were made at the beginning of the year, preparing for the provincial convention by inviting speakers and dignitaries, preparing the spring meeting, sending out replies to diocesan convention invitations and confirming the invitation to the Diocese of Kamloops 75th anniversary. These events were cancelled with the onset of the pandemic. The provincial council was fortunate to be able to meet in person for the spring meeting in March. Plans were made for the national convention in Montreal, and much fun was had practicing the selected song to represent the provincial council.

In February, I flew to Powell River to attend the funeral of Provincial Past President Evelyn Rigby's husband. From there, my flight connected to Toronto for the national executive meeting. One of the highlights was watching the play *Come from Away* with my League sisters.

The provincial council acquired a Zoom account for teleconferences, and the executive learned new technological skills. I attended many teleconferences, spiritual retreats and presentations on different topics via Zoom and GoToMeeting. I contacted all provincial presidents about the issue with Delta Hospice Society (DHS) and the provincial government closing its hospice because it did not wish to permit euthanasia at the facility. Presidents were encouraged to share this with members and help DHS by taking out a membership.

Many petitions were signed and letters written on Bill C-7 *An Act to amend the Criminal Code (medical assistance in dying)* and Bill C-16 *An Act to amend the Canadian Human Rights Act and the Criminal Code*.

Despite cancelled meetings and conventions, it was a very busy year. I was thankful to the provincial executive members, who all served an extra year at this level.

Janet Brunger

Manitoba Provincial President



Three of three diocesan councils reported.

It was indeed a year that no one would ever forget. As the COVID-19 pandemic insidiously took hold and forced countries into lockdown, events and gatherings of all kinds were cancelled while the global community stood still, looking on in disbelief. The League was not immune as churches shut down, and all meetings, gatherings, fundraisers and events were also suspended. As expected, this took a heavy toll on councils' financial well-being and led to feelings of loneliness and isolation for many members. Members were forced to become creative in their attempts to connect.

Inform the Membership of the League's Position

The primary tool employed to obtain information was technology. Councils relied heavily on virtual teleconferences and online websites and resources. The national website was heavily utilized as well as *The Canadian League* magazine and national communiques. Also used were parish bulletins; Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, Catholic Organization for Life and Family and Life's Vision websites; and newsletters.

National priorities discussed or acted upon by parish councils included promoting *Care for Our Common Home*, excluding medical assistance in dying from palliative care/hospice facilities and advocating for the rights of the pre-born under the United Nations *Convention on the Rights of the Child*.

As expected, parish councils utilized technological means, newsletters, parish bulletins and e-mails to communicate with the membership.

Foster Open Communication with the Spiritual Advisor

Overall, most parish councils felt the spiritual advisor was supportive. The membership was highly appreciative of spiritual advisors' involvement in activities. Councils demonstrated appreciation for spiritual advisors with prayers and other small acts

of kindness. For those whose spiritual advisor did not attend meetings and events, reasons cited were duties outside the parish and the lack of tradition of having him at meetings. Regular communication helped foster and develop better relationships and understanding of the League.

Preside at Meetings and Conventions

All councils used the resources available, namely, the policy and procedure manual (council or national), *Constitution & Bylaws*, *Robert's Rules of Order* and *Parliamentary Procedure*. If a life member was available, given her years of service in the League, she was also a good resource in meeting protocol.

Signing Authority

Presidents used their signing authority on cheques, banking documents, petitions and letters concerning League business directed to parties within and outside the organization.

Provide Active Leadership

With most events cancelled, the membership became active online, attending teleconferences, events, conferences and webinars virtually. Members widely attended World Day of Prayer on March 5th, which featured the women of Zimbabwe. Livestreamed masses and spiritual programs became the new normal. Parish councils appreciated the national webinar “How to Complete an Annual Report.”

Initiate Policy, in Consultation with the Officers of Council

Most councils had a policy manual and utilized and updated it regularly. Councils reviewed policies and initiated minor changes and modifications.

Keep Informed on the Operation of the League and Report Annually to the Membership

Councils utilized the *Executive Handbook* as well as past presidents as active resources. Many summarized the year's activities in a report to members, again using technological means.

Although most outreach and events were cancelled, the membership continued to support wherever they could, in whatever capacity possible.

Official Spokesperson

Although there were no opportunities to speak on behalf of the League or represent the organization at events, presidents continued to keep themselves informed and called or wrote letters and e-mails to their members of parliament and legislative assembly. When writing on behalf of the parish council, presidents used League letterhead. Presidents attended virtual conferences and webinars on a variety of topics.

Mentorship

In carrying out their duties, presidents reached out to immediate and former past presidents, life members (if available) and current executives. The most considerable challenge new presidents faced in transitioning into their role, in addition to learning their duties, was not having a full slate of officers. Some presidents felt overwhelmed and undertrained and encountered challenges related to the amount of paperwork, delegation, resistance to new ideas, recruiting, technology and tedious policies and procedures.

Theme Changes

Most presidents found it very beneficial to have a national theme on which to focus activities. Most felt eight years was an appropriate amount of time to allow between theme changes.

In summary, I was so proud of the leadership demonstrated by parish and diocesan presidents. When the pandemic took hold and forced a lockdown, members responded in typical fashion by demonstrating care and concern. They organized virtual teleconferences, telephone and e-mail networks, offered spiritual programs and did what they could to support and encourage members. This was truly what I had envisioned when establishing the provincial theme, *The Seed That Flowers*.

Tawnya Stringer Military Ordinariate Provincial President



Thirteen of 13 base councils reported.

It was a year for the history books! During a worldwide pandemic, facing challenges that would affect just about every aspect of life, members remained faithful to their call to serve God and Canada.

Of the 13 base council presidents, four had been members for more than 25 years. Five reported being members for 11-15 years, while three had been members for

six to 10 years. Only one president had served for less than five years. Nine of 13 had previously held the position. Most presidents (11) were between 45-64 years old, while one was under 44 and one was older than 75.

Information from many different sources was shared with members. One hundred per cent of base councils reported sharing information from *The Canadian League* magazine and national communiques. Eleven reported both the national and provincial websites as sources of information, along with provincial newsletters. Lesser used sources were newspapers, parish bulletins and Google searches.

Of the many national priorities base councils could have acted upon or discussed, the two most supported were excluding medical assistance in dying from palliative/hospice care and the national theme, *Care for Our Common Home*. The rights of the pre-born under the United Nations *Convention on the Rights of the Child* were also a priority for five councils. Ninety-one per cent of respondents used meetings to inform members.

At the provincial level, meetings were used to share information and highlight topics of interest. In May, in lieu of meeting in person, the council hosted members from across the country in a virtual gathering. Padre Lieutenant-Colonel Michel Dion, CD, the liaison for safe environment with the Military Ordinariate, was invited to

discuss the policies and procedures in place in base chapels to protect vulnerable people.

Most base presidents met with the spiritual advisor monthly. Of concern, one council reported having never met with its spiritual advisor. Also of concern was two councils responded “no” to feeling the spiritual advisor was supportive. Many presidents reported they believed the spiritual advisor was busy serving several parties. Anecdotally, one council said its spiritual advisor knew very little of the League before involvement with the council and expected them to serve the parish more than League work. This had been a common issue in the past, and the education of chaplains had previously been addressed by enlisting the help of Provincial Spiritual Advisor Padre Maria Codina. She championed the League at chaplain exercises and liaised with many chaplains to engage them and promote the League and its councils. In December, Padre Codina and I met with Bishop Scott McCaig to re-affirm support to the Catholic faithful and share ideas on how the chaplaincy could support the League.

The *Executive Handbook* was a resource used by 11 of 13 base councils. Every respondent answered that it helped them fulfill their duties. As provincial president, I used the national executive document, *How We Serve* to assist me in my role. I could not stress enough to councils and members, the importance of reading and reviewing the manuals to fulfill their responsibilities.

A written annual summary was provided to members by nine base presidents. Further to this, all presidents provided to the provincial membership a written report of council activities in May. I challenged each executive member to write her report and relate it to a name for Mary, for example, Our Lady of Good Health or Our Lady of Guadalupe. Having a topic for oral reports was a practice I initiated my first year as president. I found it helped members relate more deeply to their activities and roles and was educational too.

The survey asked presidents to identify who had helped them the most when they assumed their role. A majority reported the council executive was most supportive, with former past presidents, life members and the provincial president next most helpful. I learned greatly from the provincial council executive as well as other

provincial presidents. I developed close friendships and learned so much in my term as president. I worked with other provincial presidents on projects, and it was this collaboration that inspired the development of a book club offered to members in the summer. The provincial convention would have been the only time base council presidents and the executive met in person. As this was not possible, the provincial council purchased each council president a copy of *Joyful Momentum, Growing and Sustaining Vibrant Women's Groups* by Elizabeth A. Tomlin and held a weekly discussion about the book. All but one president attended, and several attended weekly. The shared time together provided an opportunity for presidents to develop collaborative relationships with each other and help them be a resource to each other. In the fall, because of inspiration from the book, each member of the provincial administration team was assigned a base council to liaise with. I described the role as "joyful accompaniment." It provided opportunities to get to know Military Ordinariate Provincial Council members across Canada and built some lasting connections.

Some areas in need of growth were identified in the answers submitted in the survey. Recruiting and not having a full slate of officers were listed as the most significant challenges faced by base council presidents. My term began with a full slate of officers; no appointments to fill positions were needed for the first time in many years. However, it ended with one resignation of a provincial standing chairperson, which I could not fill. The strategic plan, it was hoped, would help breathe some vitality into base councils. Members of the provincial executive attended a virtual presentation on the Welcome Kit in December.

A national theme was thought to be beneficial to base council presidents, as 12 of 13 respondents replied it helped them focus their activities. I also found it helpful and credit national themes and the educational and faith-building activities with assisting me on my spiritual journey. As a leader, I enjoyed working with themes to develop training and believe it provided a fresh lens that assessed League work. Most base council presidents felt good or very good about the theme changing with each new national president, and I agreed. Each new president needed to be allowed the opportunity to

use her position, talents and vision as a gift to members and a theme was one way of sharing that.

Despite many obstacles faced, League work continued. Members learned to do things in different ways, maintained their connections and supported one another. Undoubtedly, councils had to pause some activities they believed was their identity, but what remained was most important. Presidents were asked to provide statements about what they were most proud of. Their choice of words indicated the blessings shared in the League: community, collaboration, sisterhood, support, spirituality, forgiving, together and helpful, were commonly used—members were blessed.

My final year as provincial president was with a heart full of joy and gratitude. As difficult as it was, the year was also filled with wonderful opportunities and blessings. I was proud of Military Ordinariate Provincial Council members—my lifelong sisters—who inspired with their support and works.

June Brown

New Brunswick Provincial President



Provincial Spiritual Advisor Rev. Paul LeBlanc

Although it was an honour to hold the position of provincial president, it was a year that will not be forgotten. In my wildest dreams, a global pandemic was never on my radar.

In January, parish councils were contacted regarding policy review. I met with Most Rev. Christian Riesbeck (Saint John) as an introduction and update on activities and continued preparations for the provincial convention.

In February, the provincial council received an invitation to attend a priests' gathering in the Saint John region, which included a holy hour and lunch. Along with the provincial treasurer, I attended a gathering to amalgamate two parish councils in Fredericton. St.

Dunstan and Sts. John & Paul parish councils became St. Mary Magdalene Parish Council (Fredericton).

I attended the annual winter meeting of national executive/board members in Toronto. In mid-March, the COVID-19 pandemic shut down the province, and in May, I accepted an invitation from the Diocese of Saint John to attend a prayer service on the consecration of Mary via Zoom.

The various parish councils moved ahead to the best of their ability. While limited in the ability to meet in person, councils were inventive in gathering via Zoom, in church parking lots or at their home worship site for various reasons, including fundraising, presenting certificates and service pins or socializing at a distance.

Notable parish council anniversaries included: Our Lady of the Annunciation Parish Council (Doaktown), which celebrated 70 years, Saint Anthony Parish Council (Glen Levit), 60 years, and St. Francis of Assisi Parish Council (Lincoln), 40 years.

Twenty-three of 37 parish councils reported on their year, of which 57% reported their council was in an amalgamated parish. These parishes amalgamated between 1992 and 2020. All councils reported having a president. Seventy-eight per cent had held the position previously, and their ages ranged from 54 years to 74 years.

Information passed on to members came mainly from national communiques (91%), *The Canadian League* magazine (82%) and the national website (73%). Newsletters, parish bulletins, the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops website and Google searches were also used.

Fifty per cent of parish councils reported they rarely met with their spiritual advisor. Twenty-seven per cent met monthly, 14% never and 9% yearly. Most (91%) felt the spiritual advisor was supportive of the League. One-half of parish councils felt other duties kept the spiritual advisor away from meetings.

All national resources were used at meetings, and an agenda was followed.

On behalf of their parish council, presidents signed cheques, banking documents, letters and petitions. Most presidents represented their council via Zoom. No in-person conventions or meetings were held. If they had been, 91% reported the council would not have subsidized the cost to attend.

Slightly more than one-half (55%) of parish councils had a policy manual, while 50% felt it helpful to have one. Sixty per cent thought they would need help in developing a policy manual. One council reported developing a new policy (early in the year) that allotted monies for conventions, training, retreats, funeral reception costs for deceased members and more. Most parish councils (86%) used the *Executive Handbook*.

Presidents received the most significant assistance from the immediate past president (59%), former past president (50%), current members, life members and executive. Twenty-seven per cent of presidents reported the provincial president had assisted.

Due to the pandemic, keeping members informed and interested was a significant roadblock. A yearly written report was provided to members.

All councils reported it beneficial to have a national theme and logo, and 62% liked the change of theme with each new national president.

All in all, 2020 was a learning experience. It seemed my computer was my new best friend and digital meeting platforms brought me closer to everyone on a national and provincial level. Our Lady of Good Counsel continued to guide and protect members throughout this time of uncertainty.

Ellen Merrigan

Newfoundland and Labrador Provincial President



It was a heartbreaking, tragic year filled with loss, chaos and immeasurable stress. Newfoundland and Labrador experienced one of its worst blizzards in history. A state of emergency was called, igniting the federal government to provide military assistance to the province. Just as “Snowmageddon” was conquered, members were faced with the COVID-19 pandemic and the loss of

Provincial Chairperson of Communications Ruby Sharpe, a life member.

Many parish councils did not meet and did not know when they would next be able to meet. Despite these challenges, parish councils continued to carry out the League’s mission that calls members “... to witness to the love of God through ministry and service.”

The provincial president’s annual report was compiled with the assistance of annual reports from seven parish presidents who completed the online survey and six who submitted handwritten reports. It was evident parish councils continued to work diligently to keep the League viable in troubled times.

All reporting parish councils indicated the spiritual advisor was supportive of the League, with 43% of spiritual advisors having attended monthly meetings.

Parish council presidents used national, provincial and parish council materials to help facilitate meetings. Most councils reported using the *Constitution & Bylaws* and *National Manual of Policy and Procedure*, and a council policy and procedure manual. Lesser used was the *Executive Handbook*, *Robert’s Rules of Order* and *Parliamentary Procedure*.

The online survey asked presidents who provided them with the greatest assistance when they assumed the role of president. Fifty-seven per cent of respondents indicated former past presidents were

most helpful, with past presidents ranked second. Life members and treasurers were ranked third (29%). Secretaries, current executives, personal mentors and others were ranked with 14%.

The year, like no other, brought many challenges, including no face-to-face meetings or, for some, no gatherings at all. Trying to maintain membership in an ageing parish population and getting individuals to accept offices were also mentioned. One of the most significant challenges faced was the members' knowledge of technology. Presidents felt undertrained (57%) and overwhelmed (43%), while not having a full slate of officers, feeling inexperienced and trying to please everyone were also noted.

Presidents shared what they were most proud of in their parish council, and the responses were indeed positive. They felt the support of members to keep the League alive and active was encouraging. They felt the teamwork within the parish and community made for sisterhood where they shared and felt like they belonged.

Spirituality played the most important part in all activities carried out by parish councils. All councils devoted a great deal of time to spiritual development through prayer services, novenas, rosaries, stations of the cross, celebrating the feast day of Our Lady of Good Counsel, masses and individual devotion and reflection. These were often carried out virtually, on church parking lots and at home. Members were scared, and praying for an end to the pandemic was uppermost in their minds.

Parish councils found ways to show God's love to the people around them. Many provided financial donations, donated care items for shelters, supported food banks, sponsored a foster child, delivered blessing bags to the homeless on the street, provided special Christmas baskets and bags to deserving people in the community and supported the Centre for Life. Members answered the call to service and offered their support whenever and however they could despite the pandemic.

Despite the ongoing challenges and areas of uncertainty for the League in the province, members endeavoured to remain a vibrant and active organization. They worked to overcome these challenging

and unprecedented times caused by the pandemic and continued to work diligently to ensure a strong League. Members remained good stewards of creation.

Glenda Carson

Nova Scotia Provincial President



This report reflects the annual reporting of 33 parish and two diocesan councils. The mean response rate for parish councils reporting was 50%. One diocesan council saw an increased participation rate (60%) in reporting, while the other experienced a decrease. Leadership remained primarily comprised of more senior, experienced members; however, there was an increase in the percentage of members who stepped up for the first time to a leadership role, including as president. Service years for leadership were also broad, ranging from less than five to more than 30 years. As in previous years, despite the lower response rate for annual reports, the quality of the activities and overall work of councils was impressive, even in a pandemic.

Despite facing both chronic and new hurdles, the League remained a strong and vibrant presence. More than 60% of parish councils were in urban areas, reflecting the general trend of the population movement from rural areas to larger communities and cities. Although improving, an ongoing lack of Internet support still presented a significant issue for some rural councils.

The number of parish councils and members continued to decline. The primary variable for membership decline remained member attrition. Several councils became part of newly developed parishes due to mergers, though this did not significantly contribute to the decrease in councils. Most councils that found themselves part of a new parish retained their own charters rather than form new or amalgamated councils. Disbanding was the major factor in reducing the number of parish councils, mainly due to churches closing, continual unmet leadership needs and declining active membership. Unfortunately for some disbanded councils, the diocesan president

was not consulted at a point where she may have been able to assist with decision making and support for the transfer of members to other councils. While procedures were available in the *National Manual of Policy and Procedure*, most parish councils seemed unaware of the essential steps to take when disbanding. The loss of members through disbanding and the potentially destabilizing effect of parish restructuring presents a critical need for vigilance by leadership at all levels. Many changes and support to councils from the national strategic plan implementation do address some issues faced. This brings optimism that parish councils will remain viable and would look to League resources and mentors to assist them with helpful strategies in the future. On another, most positive note, there was success in bringing new members into some councils, one of which welcomed six members. The new members ranged in age from their mid-forties to their fifties and sixties.

The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in a strict lockdown in the early spring. Restrictions on gathering and travelling within the province continued on and off, making in-person meetings difficult and nonexistent for most. The diocesan and provincial conventions were cancelled. Concerning misperceptions arose regarding League activities. Some members came to believe the League had effectively shut down all activity at all levels since in-person meetings were not being held and due to the forced temporary closures of national office in Winnipeg. Information from national, provincial and diocesan communiques helped inform members of the ongoing administrative support and available activities and opportunities.

Presidents and committee chairpersons as a whole faced many leadership challenges. Parish presidents, in particular, shared they often felt overwhelmed, undertrained and inexperienced to take on the role of president, let alone be a leader during the time of a pandemic.

It was a discouraging time for some. While positively embracing their role of representing their councils in their churches and communities, presidents had little or no opportunity to do so. Administrative expectations were often burdensome, especially when facing the need to balance new and increased life

responsibilities related to family and employment during the pandemic. Many presidents felt forced to embrace new technology to fulfill their leadership roles and be role models and mentors. Many members struggled with the changes they faced concerning the pandemic's effects and transitions occurring within the organization. With the loss of traditional ways of being a council, access to their faith communities and social gatherings, presidents were challenged to look for new and creative ways to keep members embraced and engaged.

Despite the negative overtones of the year's experiences, many members and leaders positively rose to the challenges they faced with great spirit. Many "looked to what could be done, not what couldn't be done" (Anonymous). There was concern about the isolation and loneliness experienced by many members, particularly older members. Many council executives and members connected by telephone and e-mail, sent cards and made personal telephone calls. Virtual gatherings became the mainstay at all levels. Correspondence and council business items were forwarded to members electronically and by paper for those without e-mail. Resources such as League manuals, websites and newsletters were used frequently to aid in doing council business. Strategic planning updates were circulated as well; these were obtained through *The Canadian League* magazine and League websites. Many presidents expressed feeling supported by their past president, current and former executive members, life members and personal mentors. While this was very reassuring to hear, leadership mentoring still required support and development.

The pandemic restrictions and guidelines limited many of the traditional means of fundraising and raised concerns about the ability of some parish councils to survive economically. This was especially true for some smaller parish councils. However, donations of more than \$61,000 were given to organizations. The other positive note was the ongoing support to members, high school and university students by councils at all levels through bursaries and financial donations. All of this was positive news, given the worries of how the pandemic could negatively affect charitable giving.

Separation did not quell the spiritual work of the League. Members prayed hard and often for themselves, their League sisters and all those suffering ill health, misfortune and effects from the pandemic. They took advantage of opportunities to participate in online liturgies, retreats and prayer services, and to stay informed about their faith through online postings. Mass and sympathy cards and prayers were offered to grieving members and families who were limited in their funeral services for loved ones due to lockdowns and gathering restrictions.

Spiritual advisors were also noted to be a mainstay for councils with their active involvement and support. For example, in addition to reaching out to members during the tragic massacre in April, Provincial Spiritual Advisor Fr. Patrick O'Neill hosted a daily rosary on his Facebook page for much of the year. He also celebrated the Feast of Our Lady of Good Counsel and the Feast of the Immaculate Conception with a special mass for members and others within the province and beyond its borders. Virtual attendance was highly successful, reaching thousands of viewers for the live and recorded events.

Climate change was a concern for members, resulting in participation in activities arising from the national theme, *Care for Our Common Home*. Reducing waste impact on the environment, conserving water and planting trees to commemorate the League's centennial anniversary were just a few ways they chose to help the environment. Information received on local and global climate events was circulated to members, helping them increase their climate change awareness.

Acting upon resolutions and legislative bills was a challenge due to the dearth of meetings in the House of Commons and the provincial legislature. Councils again needed to focus on practical ways of making members aware of situations that required attention on their part. Concerns regarding hospice and palliative care facilities being forced to include medically assisted dying were brought to members' attention, and action was encouraged. Members participated in petitions relating to Bill C-7 *An Act to amend the Criminal Code (medical assistance in dying)*. Many councils

participated in “12 Hours of Prayer for Palliative Care” either by encouraging individual prayers or gathering online.

Health care in the province was a significant concern for members. It was particularly highlighted due to the number of people without a primary care professional combined with the threat presented by the pandemic. Of special concern were long-term care facilities and the deaths of residents that occurred early in the pandemic. Mental health and the wellbeing of others became a special priority in light of the increased isolation and reduced access to supports and interventions experienced by many people.

The needs of community members and partners were not forgotten. Parish councils continued their usual support in prayer and service, when possible, for those disadvantaged in the world. There was a particular emphasis on determining ways to support the homeless, the disabled and seniors. Requirements to shelter in place became opportunities for members to knit and create items for others, including making masks and other protective clothing for healthcare workers and those who were going without. Councils also rose to provide financial and in-kind support for organizations supporting the poor and vulnerable, Indigenous people, the Pieta Bhavan project in Kerala, India and the children in the Diocese of Adigrat. Members marked their concern about human trafficking through participation in the International Day of Prayer and Awareness Against Human Trafficking, promoted by the Vatican. Unfortunately, not many councils participated in the “Pornography Hurts” postcard campaign, which may have been due to the lack of in-person meetings and restrictions on church activities.

Members joined their other sisters across Canada as the League celebrated on September 21st, its first National Day of Prayer for Christians in the Holy Land. Remembrance Day looked quite different, with no public services held at the cenotaphs. However, members were strong in number in their support for the Royal Canadian Legion’s Poppy Campaign and provided wreaths on behalf of their councils. It was welcome news to many members when the League was again able to promote the 1% Program for the Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace. Though they often faced financial hardships, loneliness and frustration, members

deserve commendation for the caring and support shown to others at home, nationally and internationally.

There was deep and sincere gratitude for the many prayers and messages of love and caring from League sisters across Canada during the tragic massacre in April and the loss of military members last spring. All of these events greatly impacted many Nova Scotian families and members. The expressions of care and compassion by all are greatly appreciated, as is the spirit, willingness to engage and commitment of leaders at all levels. This truly helped to bring about so much good in the face of a unique year of challenges. However, while the amazing performance by many councils gave hope for a more certain and sustainable future, realistic concerns remain the fragility of membership sustainability and the financial viability for some councils. Uncertainty will always be a part of the future, but there is no doubt that members' strong faith, love and commitment to others and ability to persevere will help steer a steady course in the face of any future ill winds.

Colleen Perry **Ontario Provincial President**



It was my honour to represent the 38,202 members in Ontario. I was awestruck by their dedication to the League's core values and mission.

The year started like any other. Members participated in League development days, Lenten retreats and training workshops in February.

On March 14, 2020, a global pandemic was declared, and the world as members knew it changed—everything changed. The provincial theme of *Loneliness* suddenly was more relevant than ever.

Despite not being able to meet in person, members continued to support their parishes and communities through outreach and commitment. In many circumstances, members took the lead as part of parish cleaning teams and volunteered to support the public health regulations when only limited numbers could attend mass in person.

Reaching out to the lonely, vulnerable and frightened became a mission for many. Members called each other to offer support or a listening ear. They sent cards of encouragement and friendship.

The pandemic made members thirst for spiritual fulfillment. Periods of lockdowns provided opportunities for training. Diocesan councils offered virtual workshops, rosary gatherings, CWL Wednesdays, mass dedications and virtual celebrations. Councils gathered when they could, keeping the health and safety of members at the forefront. Drive-through membership drives popped up in many areas. Councils held celebrations of life in cemeteries where they relaxed while physically distancing. Generally, where there was a will, members found a way.

Several diocesan councils organized celebrations to commemorate the League's 100th anniversary. One hundred and thirty-six trees were planted as part of the national centenary project.

While isolating, almost 1,000 letters were written to the provincial government to support changes to long-term care. Letters were also written to oppose the adoption of Bill C-7 *An Act to amend the Criminal Code (medical assistance in dying)*, which would permit medical assistance in dying for those whose death was not reasonably foreseeable. The provincial executive could not arrange a government visit due to public health restrictions; however, a letter was sent from the provincial president to the premier, reminding him of the League's commitment to bring Catholic values to legislation.

Member's prayer lives were enriched by both in-person and virtual rosary rallies, "12 Hours of Prayer for Palliative Care," prayer shawl ministries and weekly prayer services.

The different climate caused by the COVID-19 pandemic showed that councils could continue to pull together, through teamwork and a willingness to help and support each other. People became stronger, supportive and giving—they learned to be kinder and more patient, and most importantly, learned to never take today for granted.

The provincial council was challenged to find new ways to serve the membership, the community, the church and the world. Every

member stepped up to those challenges and met them head-on—each responding in their own way, with the support of League sisters and under the guidance of Our Lady of Good Counsel.

Shirley Pierce

Prince Edward Island Provincial President



The year started the way most years do for parish council presidents. In January and February, presidents set up and hosted annual meetings and encouraged new members to join by giving presentations at mass, advertising through bulletins, etc. Some councils held a few fundraising activities.

Then in mid-March, the COVID-19 pandemic struck with a bang, and life changed for everyone. Members and their presidents felt the impact. No longer were they able to have monthly meetings, which would typically encompass spiritual time, a business meeting and social time. Churches and most businesses were closed for months. Many people worked from home, looking after and helping to teach their children through online lessons. It was seemingly a different world!

However, presidents kept in touch with members through bulletins, e-mails and calls to seniors and shut-ins. They sent cards and presents at Christmas time, donated to all varieties of initiatives and worthy causes. Presidents were most proud of their councils involvement in many activities, including: funeral luncheons; participation of members in many ministries; gift donations for a women's shelter; Christmas traditions like the Jesse Tree; Coats for Kids; treats and visits with seniors; telephone calls with members and community folks; fellowship; supporting the parish priest; providing food and prayer assistance during the pandemic; spirituality; helping with parish activities and giving financial aid for the parish; creating prayer calendars for members; support for school milk, breakfast and lunch programs; and many others. Several councils highlighted some special initiatives, including donating

three homemade quilts to Lennon House, providing a religious gift to newlyweds, and knitting baby blankets for baptisms.

Presidents spoke on behalf of their councils regarding membership, the importance of prayer for peace and the end of the pandemic, donations, issues surrounding medical assistance in dying, including *Bill C-7 An Act to amend the Criminal Code (medical assistance in dying)* and the importance of writing letters to members of parliament.

When churches reopened after the initial outbreak of COVID-19, many members were involved with volunteer work registering, sanitizing and doing ministry work to help keep the virus at bay. One president mentioned that before the pandemic, members were involved with the Knights of Columbus and other parishioners to provide a meet and greet reception after mass for newcomers and parishioners. One president met with a community organizational committee to discuss a workshop with the theme of *Reconciliation & the Indigenous People*.

Twelve presidents joined the provincial executive in early January for a meeting and leadership development workshop.

As part of Catholic Education Week, the provincial council worked with the Knights of Columbus and the University of Prince Edward Island Chaplaincy Centre. Members met some lovely students and gave them an overview of the respective organizations and how young people could become involved.

The provincial executive hosted area meetings in four locations across the island on February 29th. The executive worked in teams to deliver a meaningful Mothers of Love and Faith workshop. Many members attended, enjoyed the networking, social activities and potluck lunch, and left committed to writing longer stories about their mothers.

Two executive members were actively involved in implementation committee working groups and a third member was beginning her work. Members were encouraged to participate as working group members, pray, and be involved in surveys, questionnaires, etc.

Another executive member was accepted into the Catholic Women’s Leadership Foundation’s program.

Communication was essential to the League. Weekly or biweekly e-mails were sent to presidents, which included information on what was happening locally and nationally. National communiques and pandemic-related decisions were shared, as was information on special webinars, retreats, speakers series, plans for conventions, prayer requests, etc. A Welcome Program was mailed to all presidents in December. A newsletter was prepared in December which highlighted activities happening in councils.

Due to the pandemic, the provincial convention was cancelled. The standard fall conferences (two) and pilgrimage to the Canadian Martyrs were never planned.

The year came to a close, but members looked forward to 2021, which they hoped would offer all members on the island the opportunity to work individually and collectively “For God and Canada.”

Rosa Lam **Quebec Provincial President**



Seventeen parish councils and 11 provincial chairpersons reported.

Ten presidents had been president before. Interestingly, two presidents had been members for less than five years—one was between 25-34 and the other, between 45-54 years old.

As expected, all reports mentioned the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in the life of the parish, diocesan and provincial councils. Frustration over the cancellation of the national convention that was to be hosted in Montreal and other conventions and in-person meetings took a toll on members’ spirit, especially for some councils where many members were over 65. However, councils managed to keep the League’s objectives alive.

Quebec had some of the most stringent restrictions of all regions due to the high number of COVID-19 cases and deaths.

Parish presidents were pleased to receive assistance from former past presidents, life members and their executives. Their most significant challenge was not having a full slate of officers and resistance to new ideas. Presidents found the information given in a membership seminar useful.

In January, I received an invitation to attend a meeting at St. Patrick's Parish Council (Quebec City) and present the strategic plan. The members were very welcoming. Another parish council in Montreal sent an invitation to a virtual teleconference so I could explain the changes in the constitution, and many questions were answered.

Several communiques were sent that relayed information from the national level, as well as memos. Other president's duties were to participate in the national executive/board meetings and workshops offered by national council and prepare for provincial meetings.

Under the leadership of Diocesan Spiritual Advisor Fr. Andrew Thuraisingam, Montreal Diocesan Council celebrated its 100th anniversary with a mass and activities online. Members were invited to dress up and raise a glass of wine. Fr. Thuraisingam related his experiences as diocesan spiritual advisor, while the histories of the League and trivia questions were also part of the birthday celebration held on June 17th. Instead of a goodwill collection of items for the Seafarers (Fr. Andrew's ministry), the diocesan council gave a monetary donation.

During summer, many members listened to the Summer Speaker Series webinars offered by national council, and eventually, councils began to explore virtual ways of communication. Few activities took place.

The national and provincial websites and communiques, and websites for the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops and Catholic Organization for Life and Family were the sources used by presidents to gather information for members. The *Constitution &*

Bylaws and National Manual of Policy and Procedure were used as resource material.

Members were kept informed via e-mail, communiques, newsletters, telephone calls, online workshops and videos, and were kept up to date on happenings at the national and provincial levels. Christmas, condolence and other cards were sent to many members and Facebook pages were kept current. Two articles were published in *The Canadian League* magazine celebrating the 100th anniversary, including a compilation of stories by Provincial Chairperson of Communications Yasmine Zitouni and an article by Life Member Eleanor Arless. All national chairperson communiques were received by e-mail. The provincial council requested information from Zoom Video Communications about a subscription to its online meeting platform. A suitable package with price and details was e-mailed to the treasurer and secretary. One-half of parish councils shared the strategic planning information with members.

Not all past presidents were responsible for looking after archives. In one case, the secretary was appointed to do so under her portfolio. Archives were stored in filing cabinets, photo albums, scrapbooks and banker boxes at the church hall or office. Some parish councils did not have a history book but felt photo albums reflected their history.

Parish councils did their best to maintain their presence and influence their local communities. There were donations of gift cards to food banks and many projects to help women shelters. One council took the task of delivering groceries from local supermarkets for residents who could not shop by themselves. It provided emergency provisions for a community resident when her budget ran out and offered financial assistance to one member with a rare disease to cover medical treatment not covered by the province. Instead of collecting gifts for a local senior's home, one council sent a poinsettia with a note of best wishes for Christmas.

Social opportunities were drastically decreased, and fundraising was nearly impossible, which limited the allocation of funds distributed. Remarkably, members did their best to make a difference in their communities, doing so without the social support of gathering.

Parish councils supported Chalice, the Canadian Red Cross, World Vision, Operation Eyesight International and the Canadian Food for Children. Response to the Catholic Near East Welfare Association projects was limited. Some members offered donations to churches to buy masks and hand sanitizers. One council reported support for Faith First, Columbian Squires and Squire Roses, who in turn became the choir and readers because elderly members could no longer participate.

Councils offered prayers for the protection of life and participated in pro-life activities. Seventy-three per cent of reporting councils wrote to local legislators on resolutions regarding abortion and euthanasia. Support was given for seniors, shut-ins, the disabled and widowed, separated and divorced people through telephone calls, prayers and sending cards. Memorial services were celebrated with prayers, cards of condolences, telephone calls and distanced visiting.

Spiritual growth during the pandemic was widened through social media, masses, reciting the rosary, stations of the cross, bible studies, retreats, prayer lines, Lenten missions and online workshops. Some parish councils did not have a spiritual advisor. Members continued to represent diocesan councils, parish committees and pastoral councils during the lockdown. There was a continued outreach to communities by invitation to pray, especially for families and seniors.

The membership suffered a loss of 56 members. From the surveys gathered, one-third of parish councils prepared a budget. Some treasurers would like to have had their books examined by an independent individual at the end of their term. Unfortunately, parish council treasurers did not submit the treasurer reports.

Membership fees were paid using e-transfers and post, and instructions were provided to members on how to pay. Several parish councils reported gifting memberships.

Recruitment of members took place in various ways. Parish announcements and personal invitations were by far the most common approach. Bulletin boards, guest speakers, ecumenical and interfaith endeavours and council websites were also used to promote the League. Events included a luncheon with a guest

speaker and invitation to friends and members to the general meetings. The portrait of members showed parish councils to be ethnically diverse, welcoming women of all backgrounds. Few councils appeared to have members under the age of 35; however, it should be noted that one-half new members were under 40 years old. Certificates commemorating members' years of service and maple leaf service pins were awarded or would be when meeting in-person was possible.

An obligatory Zoom webinar was offered, for which all parish and diocesan chairpersons of organization and presidents were to attend to introduce the *Welcome Kit*, to review the parish annual survey process, the annual reporting process for all, and hold an open floor discussion. Annual reports continued to be a huge hurdle, and getting members to participate was extremely challenging and time consuming.

A leadership crisis was evident. Much work on leadership would need to happen to keep the League alive. Most parish councils did not have a president-elect and would be facing a vacuum in leadership at the next election cycle.

A majority of parish councils reported they were informed about the Catholic instruction in their parishes and had inquired how to provide support. One diocesan council specifically mentioned supporting diocesan faith education programs for children with intergenerational activities and promoting bible-based animated movie nights to children and their families. Some members were involved in the Right of Christian Initiation of Adults. Members were informed about the application for the Catholic Women's League Foundation program, and one member completed its leadership program.

Parish councils were more aware about the resolutions process due to their participation in workshops, attendance at past conventions and from communiques received. The most popular resolution acted upon by parish councils was Resolution 2001.01 Quality End-Of-Life Care followed by Resolution 1990.07 Environmental Concerns. Parish councils acted on resolutions concerning education and health, including setting a standard for products marketed as

flushable, banning the use of neonicotinoid pesticides, water use, water quality, banning microbeads in personal care products, global accountability for mining companies, toxic substances in household products, increase in funding for health research, genetically engineered foods, warning labels on food and drug products, *Eating Well With Canada's Food Guide*, and increased early access and invention to children and youth mental health services. One council had a nutritionist as a guest speaker.

The national theme, *Care for Our Common Home*, was observed by members composting food waste. At least one parish council reported it planted a tree to commemorate the League's centennial anniversary and all councils were encouraged to do so. At a provincial meeting, the study Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si'* was encouraged through the use of a dialogue guide from the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops. Regarding the length of time to use a national theme, the consensus was it should be kept for more than two years.

Health and wellness organizations were supported including the Alzheimer Society of Canada, Canadian Cancer Society, Diabetes Canada, CNIB Foundation, MaterCare International and others. Local organizations were also supported, including an organization that supports families of youth with autism, and mental health organizations Ami-Quebec and Mental Health Estrie. Very few councils had knowledge about gene altering technology in regards to the teachings of the church.

One parish council initiated a project in which used plastic bags were made into mats for the homeless. Some councils supported Corde à linge, an organization that provides clothes at a low cost, and the Lennoxville Women's Centre.

Some parish councils were familiar with their municipal, provincial and federal representatives and had received their mailings. Some councils indicated they were well informed on issues being discussed at municipal, provincial and federal levels. They monitored and acted upon the Bill C-7 *An Act to amend the Criminal Code (medical assistance in dying)*. During this time more letters were sent to the government representatives.

Life members received national communiques, along with local news and League information. All communiques were sent by e-mail to 14 life members. A telephone call, and sometimes “snail-mail”, were sent to two without Internet. Birthday, good wishes and cards were sent to members according to the calendar. The provincial council mourned the deaths of two life members. Patricia Gauthier and Lorna Halderman. On a happier note, three new life members were welcomed in May—Patricia Hannan, Alice Noble and Carol St. James Fascia. The provincial council hoped to honour them in the first in-person meeting.

Chantal Devine **Saskatchewan Provincial President**



Annual reports have been a great way of communicating parish council activities. After reading the reports from the three diocesan presidents, I was reassured that despite COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, the League’s work continued, albeit at a reduced rate. In all three diocesan councils, the number of parish councils reporting was down from the previous year. In the northern diocese, only 38% of parish councils submitted annual reports, while in the other two, nearly 50% reported. The position of parish council president was filled in just more than 90% of those reporting. In the councils where the position was not filled, two members shared the responsibilities of the office.

The ageing membership was evident in the information relating to parish council presidents. More than one-half of presidents were 65 years or older, and only 7% were under 55 years. Fifty-three per cent of presidents had been members for more than 25 years, and 70% had previously held the position. Members were excited about the new initiatives proposed in the strategic plan undertaken by the League, which will hopefully attract new and younger members to the organization.

The Canadian League magazine was the source that 90% of members referenced for up-to-date information about the League. Other popular sources of information were national, provincial and diocesan communiques, provincial and diocesan newsletters and church bulletins. Likely due to the increased time spent in self-isolation, website use increased by 75% as members visited the national and provincial websites for information.

A majority of parish councils were in favour of a national theme and wished this to continue. The present theme, *Care for Our Common Home*, was well received as it was timely and allowed members to actively support it in a personal way. Other areas of concern acted on were removing medical assistance in dying (MAiD) from palliative care and hospice facilities, protecting the conscience rights of health care workers, issues dealing with flushable products and Bill C-7 *An Act to amend the Criminal Code (medical assistance in dying)*. Members voiced their concerns through e-mails and letter writing to government officials. Thirty-one per cent of members also showed support for the rights of the pre-born under the United Nations *Convention on the Rights of the Child* by contacting provincial and federal government representatives and supporting pro-life organizations. This was in contrast to Canada's support for the *Treaty on Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons*, which only garnered 2% support. More than 90% of parish councils reported discussing these topics at meetings. Several wrote about the issues in newsletters or had a standing committee chairperson speak on the subject, while 11% arranged for a guest speaker.

More than 90% of parish councils felt the spiritual advisor was very supportive of the League. Slightly more than one-half reported meeting with the spiritual advisor monthly, while 7% never met. The most common reason for the lack of attendance was that more than 50% of priests had other parishes to administer or other duties within the diocese which took priority. One-third of parish councils cited a lack of tradition in having the spiritual advisor at meetings. That tradition and a large influx of international priests who were not well informed about the League may have contributed. To help improve this situation, parish councils should have provided each spiritual advisor with a copy of the *Handbook for Spiritual Advisors* and

consulted on the spiritual advisor's availability before setting the dates for monthly meetings.

More than one-half of parish councils stated the most referenced resources were the *Constitution & Bylaws*, *Executive Handbook* and the *National Manual of Policy and Procedure*. Several used *Robert's Rules of Order*, while a few consulted *Parliamentary Procedures*. Those parish councils with a policy and procedure manual (48%) often referred to it during meetings. Thirty-eight per cent of parish councils that did not have a manual thought it would be beneficial and would require assistance to compile one.

The most common documents signed by parish council presidents were cheques and bank documents. Letters directed within and outside of the League were the second most common item that required the president's signature, while a few presidents reported signing petitions.

Before restrictions were enacted, the top two events where parish council presidents represented their councils were church functions (62%) and World Day of Prayer (51%). Presidents also attended other events, including funeral guards, potluck suppers, Remembrance Day services, masses, regional meetings, conventions, workshops, fundraising events, retreats, community fundraisers and school ceremonies. Subsidizing presidents' expenses to attend these functions varied very little. Less than 15% of presidents were subsidized for their attendance at conventions and other events.

The majority of presidents read and made use of the *Executive Handbook*, which helped them outline the duties of each chairperson on their executive and organize activities.

All presidents reported the League's work was carried out via the various committees within the parish council, primarily, social events, funeral lunches, visitations, annual teas and bazaars. To a lesser degree, councils supported scholarships/bursaries, fundraising, catering and donations. Other committees mentioned were spiritual, financial, organizational committees, prayer chain, World Day of Prayer and Catholic Girl's League. One council had

an organized group in charge of making baptismal stoles to provide as gifts at baptisms in their parish.

Approximately 60% of parish councils provided an annual summary of activities to the membership. This was mostly accomplished through oral reports and also written reports, e-mails, newsletters and parish bulletins.

Because of restrictions on in-person meetings, most presidents did not speak on behalf of their council at public gatherings. They concentrated on growing spiritually through prayer and reached out with telephone calls, e-mails and cards of support. Those presidents who had an opportunity to address members spoke on *Care for Our Common Home*, MAiD and palliative care, national resolutions and mental health. They also encouraged members to attend 12 Hours of Prayer for Palliative Care, the parish-sponsored Alpha Course and a rosary rally.

When assuming the role of parish council president, the majority responded the immediate and former past presidents offered the greatest assistance, followed closely by the treasurer, current executive and secretary. Thirteen per cent mentioned a personal mentor but did not disclose who this mentor was. Unfortunately, life members, who would have been an invaluable source of knowledge, capable of providing guidance and support, were only called on 7% of the time.

The greatest challenges presidents faced were not having a full slate of officers, keeping members enthused, recruiting and technology. The remaining challenges had roots in not being well enough prepared for the position. More workshops dealing with all aspects of the League would have gone a long way in eliminating many of these challenges.

Most parish council presidents embraced the national theme as it gave members a focus in developing prayer services and other council events. Nearly 80% felt changing the theme every two years was a good practice, while the remainder thought it was okay, except for 2% who favoured rejecting this practice.

Presidents expressed pride and joy in being a part of a faith-based organization where members demonstrated their faith in serving God and neighbours in their many League activities. Whether participating in a prayer service, serving on lay ministries, helping in parish and community projects, writing letters to government officials, or running a membership drive, the work was accomplished harmoniously and cheerfully. Members initiated activities that could be done individually or virtually, such as preparing bags containing toiletries and a change of clothing for women leaving a violent home situation, using the downtime to set up a Catholic Girls' League, holding virtual teleconferences, collecting baby items for pregnancy shelters, praying the weekly CWL rosary, planting trees for the League's Centenary Project, 50/50 fundraisers and the list went on! As one parish council president exclaimed, "We are a small but mighty, dedicated and cooperative sisterhood!"

COVID-19 accentuated some ongoing problems presidents have been facing. Encouraging members to take on executive positions, keeping everyone informed and recruiting new members continued to be significant issues. An inability to hold in-person meetings required presidents to look at new ways to stay connected with members.

Challenges cited in completing the annual report survey included difficulty logging in due to the long address and in understanding the questions, time-consuming, not having options to provide input, having no standing committee chairpersons yet having to complete it for all positions, and questions not applying to small parish councils. Several reported completing the survey was easy, simple and user-friendly, so all went well! One parish council mentioned the *How to Complete an Annual Report* webinar provided by national office proved very helpful.

Despite pandemic restrictions, I was gratified to witness the dedication and the love for the League that shone through these presidents' reports. Improving all lines of communication from provincial to diocesan chairpersons and down to the most important members, parish council presidents, would be essential in the future. The future of the League is dependent on their leadership and the

work of their councils. Until restrictions end, provincial and diocesan levels must continue to stay connected with parish presidents using the GoToMeeting teleconferencing platform, which the provincial council purchased for this purpose. In being more accessible and by providing learning opportunities through virtual workshops and webinars, and through the intercession of Our Lady of Good Counsel, I believe members can look forward to the coming year with increased optimism.

END OF ANNUAL REPORT



Care for our

Common Home

2021 Life Members

In The Catholic Women's League of Canada, life membership gives to the recipient, in addition to the honour, a permanent place on the national council, the same voting privileges as accredited delegates at an annual meeting or convention (C&B, Part XV, Section 2(c)), a voice in its affairs and eligibility for a national appointment. Privilege entails responsibility as national council expects support and service from its life members. Life members are expected to maintain their memberships by paying annual per capita fees through their parish councils and to provide research, present workshops, and actively respond to requests made to them by national, provincial and diocesan councils.

Life Member	Nominating Council
Anna Bawer-Di Lallo	Quebec Provincial Council
Linda Chisholm	Quebec Provincial Council
Sharon Ciebin	Vancouver Diocesan Council
Rosa Lam	Quebec Provincial Council
Evelyn Mills Meaney	Quebec Provincial Council
Angela Pellerin	London Diocesan Council
Emma Rose Rayburn	Alexandria-Cornwall Diocesan Council
Lynne Rowlandson	Timmins Diocesan Council
Alice Uvanile	Thunder Bay Diocesan Council

The B.C. & Yukon Provincial Council

invites League members from

across Canada to attend the

102nd Annual National Convention

of

The Catholic Women's League of Canada

August 14-17, 2022

in

Kelowna, British Columbia

