Welcome Program

Affirmation Working Group

GOAL:
Address Critical Issues.

STRATEGY: Include and affirm.

Introduction

This program for welcoming members to The Catholic Women's League of Canada has been designed in response to the voices of members across Canada. It relates to two critical issues identified in the strategic plan—1. Include (leave no member behind) and affirm (make members feel welcomed, needed and wanted), and 2. Validate all members. It is intended to assist you as you welcome members to your parish council and to encourage the involvement of all members. You spoke, and you were heard. Best practices and great ideas were researched from councils and external organizations. Included in this program are suggestions, ideas and resources for you to adapt and customize to use in ways that will work best for your council.

Welcoming is not a one-time event. It is a continuous process and mindset that touches members on an ongoing basis. It is what will help members to feel that they are genuinely connected and part of the organization. It is what makes the League a great sisterhood and will keep members engaged and committed. It is essential to make sure new members feel welcomed and at home from their first day and every day. The responsibility for welcoming does not fall solely on the parish council president. She should be sure to ask for the executive's cooperation and participation and work with them to implement practices to welcome and affirm all members.

God did not intend for us to live in isolation. We are made to be relational, to have relationships with others that grow and thrive. We are made for community; living and participating in community is necessary for our well-being. The benefits of community include inspiration, motivation, feeling understood, connecting with others on the same journey and supporting each other. Community is encouraging and fun; it attracts the Holy Spirit and fosters love. These are some of the reasons women join—the companionship of sisterhood experienced in the League.

The League's mission to call "its members to grow in faith, and to witness to the love of God through ministry and service" and its core values, (faith—following Catholic teaching; service—local, national and international; and social justice—actively involved in society) form the basis on which this Welcome Program is built.

The Welcome Program consists of “A Guideline for Welcoming All Members”, which gives tips and advice on how to create a welcoming environment for both new and returning members. It offers practical ways to connect with members and provides them with a sense of belonging.

The “Membership Information Form” section contains ways to get to know members, their interests and talents, and to get an idea of where they will fit into the League. Using members’ natural talents, education and experience lets them know they are valued.

An “Orientation Program” is recommended to assist in welcoming members and informing them about the League, its mission and core values. Informed members are more committed and likely to remain involved and engaged with the council and the League.

A sample “Welcome Kit” is provided to assist councils in developing a resource for new members, giving them tools to be successful.

Councils are encouraged to incorporate the “Companionship Program”, and two options are included. A one-on-one mentor and companion program benefits a new member who is being accompanied at the beginning of her League journey. It also helps to keep existing members engaged and committed as they accompany a new member and help her to learn about the League. Another opportunity for a companionship type program would be available with grouping into the core values of faith, service and social justice. This would create a natural group of women working and journeying together.

The “Validation Program” provides ideas to councils on how to recognize members and acknowledge their contributions to the League, church and community. Acknowledging a member’s contributions of time and talent will increase her sense of belonging and connectedness.

The suggestions and resources provided in this Welcome Program will help you and your council build a culture of welcome and community for all members, ensuring every member of the League feels welcomed, affirmed and validated.

Table of Contents

A Guideline for Welcoming All Members 4

Membership Information Forms 6

- Part I: Basic Information 8
- Part II: Category of Membership 9
- Part III: Interests 9
- Faith 9
- Service 9
- Social Justice 10
- Part IV: A Little Bit More About You 10

Orientation Program 13

Welcome Kit 14

- What Goes into a Kit? 14
- Personalize it to Reflect your Parish 15

Companionship Program 16

- Purpose of Companionship Program 16
- Definitions 17
- Recruiting Experienced Members as Mentors 17
- Procedures for Matching Mentors and Companions 17
- What is Expected of the Mentors? 18
- Important Skills for Mentors 18
- Completion of Mentor Relationship 19
- Small Groups – Core Values 19

Validation Program 20

Addendums 23

- **1.1** New Member Information Form 23
- **1.2** Renewing Member Information Form 26

Resources Used 27

- Website 27
- Manuals 27
- Workshops 27
- Books 27
- Surveys and Discussions with Parish Councils across Canada 27
- Organizations Researched 27

A Guideline for Welcoming All Members

CULTURE OF WELCOME

- Connect
- Welcome
- Listen

Welcoming is about making and nurturing connections. Communication is a crucial component of welcoming and making those connections. Connections may also be made between members of the parish council through a companionship program, matching new members to experienced members.

Personal contact is always best, but telephone calls and individual e-mails are also good ways of keeping in touch. We know how important it is to give all members a warm welcome. If members feel supported from the very start, they will be more enthusiastic, committed and engaged, and more likely to stay with the League for the long term. A large part of feeling welcome is knowing and understanding the organization. To make this happen, especially for new members, a welcome kit is prepared and presented. This could be during a formal orientation or in an informal one-on-one meeting. The new member's mentor (see "Companionship Program") may also be part of this meeting.

To ensure you have all the resources necessary, a short guide has been put together with tips, checklists and ideas for the parish council president (or her designate), which can be adapted for the council.

1. Respond quickly: The president gets in touch with the prospective member as soon as possible by sending a short e-mail or making a telephone call, preferably within seven days. This will allow the prospective member to know she is acknowledged, valued and not overlooked.

2. Have an informal chat: It is recommended the president meet with new members in a community venue, such as a cafe or the church hall. This is an opportunity to dialogue with the new members about the time they are willing to give, their skills and interests, and what support they will need. During this dialogue, the president will have a discussion with each member and will complete a *New Member Information Form*. The form provides information for the council that helps it to find the best placement for the new member. Try to explain who the membership is and what it does. Arrange a time and place for a formal orientation. If there are several potential members, try providing a larger event to bring them together.

3. First meeting/event new members: All members are encouraged to ensure new members feel welcomed at the meeting or event. The president can formally welcome and introduce them.

4. Involve them from the start: Invite new members to become involved in specific areas and tasks based on their interests and skills, so they feel confident about their contribution to the council. Using and sharing new ideas and skills is a great way to help every member grow, learn and develop her potential. A completed *New Member Information Form* will facilitate connecting members into small groups based on the core values of faith, service and social justice (see "Companionship Program"). Attending regional and diocesan gatherings and conventions enable new members to experience the passion and enthusiasm of other like-minded women.

5. Mix and mingle: Provide time for members to mix, mingle and enjoy refreshments. Councils may wish to do this before calling the meeting to order, to allow members to greet each other and converse before beginning the business of the meeting. This has been shown to be effective in allowing members to meet, renew friendships, develop new ones and prepare for the meeting. Allow time during the meeting to refill refreshments.

A designated "companionship coordinator" can help members make connections by organizing an event to match new and experienced members together, or she could meet with the members one on one.

6. Leave no member behind: Encourage members to bring their ideas and suggestions and involve them in decision making. Members unable to attend meetings may be sent greeting cards and newsletters. Invite members to participate in special events and celebrations, and empower them to share their talents and gifts. There are many ways to welcome new members and members who are inactive. Every individual is unique and requires a different level of support. A companionship program is one way to provide support to every member. Be sensitive to individual needs. Members who feel valued and needed will be far more engaged and involved. They will want to be active members in the council, deepen their spirituality and develop lasting relationships with their League sisters.

7. Create a welcoming atmosphere: Designated members could be assigned to greet members at the meeting entrance. Mentors should be encouraged to accompany and introduce their companions. This is especially important as members take time out of their busy schedules to come to the meeting. A big warm smile and a hug go a long way in making members feel welcomed and valued. Setting up a sacred space for Our Lady of Good Counsel adds a significant spiritual element to the meeting. Simple touches like tablecloths, centrepieces and decorations, set up in advance, will create a welcoming environment and have a positive effect on members. Decorations at meetings could be based on spiritual or seasonal themes and special days, like the membership drive, awards ceremony, the Feast of Our Lady of Good Counsel, Christmas gathering and others. Refreshments are always welcome at each meeting, remembering members with special dietary needs. Small groups of members interested in hospitality and decorating can be designated for the room setup/decor and the refreshments.

8. Name badges: Smaller councils will know members by name, but for bigger councils, it is easier to greet members by name if they are wearing name badges. New members/visitors can be identified by wearing temporary sticker badges.

9. Icebreakers: Icebreakers are a great way to introduce members to each other in a fun, relaxed way, especially for large councils and whenever there are many visitors. Consider having these a couple of times a year.

Membership Information Forms

The membership information forms (new members/renewing members) are provided to parish councils as a tool to gain knowledge about new members, assist with welcoming, and to get to know and understand their interests and talents. It is equally important to connect with renewing members to ensure their continuing or changing needs will be met. It is suggested a form be completed with the member on a one-on-one basis, as a conversation and dialogue. This can be done by the president or her designate. It should not be presented in the format of an interview, but rather as a friendly conversation that will also facilitate providing information to the member.

Adding icebreaker questions and "fun facts" about the council, parish or city can make this a pleasant experience. The personal connection that is such an essential part of the League can be established during this moment and nurtured over time. Through listening to the member's answers and ideas, it will be easier to provide opportunities for her to become involved in meaningful ways with the council.

If a member is unable to meet in person, there are many ways to connect by telephone or virtually by computer. It cannot be stressed enough the importance of the personal connection among members, right from the first conversation. We invite you to take these forms, adapt them to your council's needs, and have some fun with the process.

When welcoming new members, it is critical to identify their strengths and interests, so they will find a place in the League that recognizes their gifts and talents and uses them for the benefit of the member and the League. The three core values of faith, service and social justice help define small groups within the council. The questions provided can help the member discern which of these groups may be of most interest to her and how she would like to

be involved. This can also help the council when planning projects and activities.

The questions provided are not an exhaustive list and are offered to guide your discussions. The purpose is to get a sense of what members are most comfortable with and what they most enjoy doing.

This is also an excellent time to introduce the council's companionship program and let the new member know what she can expect from it. You can also let her know there will be a more in-depth orientation where she will have an opportunity to ask questions and learn more.

It is just as important to connect with renewing members as it is to get to know new members. You may not always be able to meet in person with a renewing member; however, every effort should be made to update information and interest areas. At the very least, a telephone call will help you connect.

Printable versions of the membership information forms are provided with this package.

The Catholic Women's League of Canada
New Member Information Form

Council Name: _____ Date:_____

"Every sunrise is God saying, 'Welcome home there is always a place for you'".
(Erwin Raphael McManus)

Part I: Basic Information

This form is an important tool for gaining knowledge about each member's interests and talents, which will benefit both the member and the parish council when planning activities. Because of the important information contained on this form, it is strongly recommended that all members complete this form initially. The council may then use the *Renewing Member Information Form* for future years.

New members should complete each section.

Name:

_____

Address:

_____

_____

Telephone number: _____

E-mail: _____

How do you prefer to be contacted?

_____

To plan council activities and events effectively, may we share your interests and skills as answered in the questions below with the members of the parish council executive? _____

May we share your contact information in the shared membership list?

_____

Due to privacy requirements, if you answered yes to either question above, please sign in the space below:

Birthday (dd/mm/yyyy): _____

Anniversary: _____

What age group do you belong to:

❑ 16-24 ❑ 25-34 ❑ 35-50 ❑ 51-70 ❑ 70+

Part II: Category of Membership

Leading the League provides the following descriptive categories for members. Choose the category that applies.

___**Fully Active Members**: These members pay dues, attend meetings, take part in business procedures with voting privileges, serve on committees and can take advantage of the many opportunities for personal and spiritual development offered by the League.

___**Partially Active Members**: These members pay dues but cannot always attend meetings or functions. They are willing to help when needed, on a task-by-task basis. They want to be part of the organization and make a difference but have limited time to offer.

___ **Financially Supportive Members**: These members pay dues to support the national organization and their local council. They cannot be fully or partially active currently but may become more involved in the future. They wish to stay informed of events and educational updates through the website and *The Canadian League*.

___ **Prayer Partners**: These members pay dues, taking part spiritually as prayer partners—either with a specific person or generally for all members. In turn, they are included in all League prayers.

Part III: Interests

When welcoming a member, it is important to identify her strengths and her interests, so that she will find a place in the League that recognizes her gifts and talents and uses them for the benefit of herself and the League.

During your dialogue with the new member, let her know about the League's Mission Statement, "The Catholic Women's League calls its members to grow in faith, and to witness to the love of God through ministry and service."

The core values of the League are:

Faith—following Catholic teaching

Service—local, national and international

Social Justice—actively involved in society

These three core values help to define small groups within the parish council. The following questions may help the member discern which of these groups may be of most interest to her, and how she would like to be involved. This may also help the parish council when planning projects and activities. These are suggested questions to guide your discussion with the member.

Faith

- Do you enjoy reading books or attending programs that help to develop your faith?
- Do you take opportunities to share your faith with others?
- Are you interested in discussing topics of faith with others?
- Do you like to think deeply about philosophical things?
- Are you open to learning new ways to pray or meditate?
- Do you find that you need to "recharge" with spiritual exercises?
- Activities you might like to get involved in—rosary circle, parish ministries, scripture studies, prayer groups, organizing retreats.

Service

- Are you one of those people who are the "backbone" of the church?
- Do you like to work in the church community?
- Do you prefer to work behind the scenes?

- Do you enjoy taking care of others?
- Do you consider yourself a good hostess?
- Can you take charge of a task that needs doing and get it done?
- Is the social part of the meeting important?
- Activities you might like to get involved in—cooking and baking, knitting, decorating, visiting seniors and the homebound, event organization, community dinners.

Social Justice

- Do you like to keep informed about issues in the news and current events?
- Do you feel passionately about issues that are unjust, or where people are treated poorly?
- Do you like to think of solutions to problems that affect people?
- Do you like to work in the broader community?
- Are you detail-oriented?
- Do you enjoy reading, writing and organizing?
- Activities you might like to get involved in—community volunteering, social justice issues, letter writing, visiting elected officials, resolutions.

Part IV: A Little Bit More About You

Do you work outside of the home? Full-time or part-time? Do you volunteer in the church or community? If so, where?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

The League's mission calls "members to grow in faith, and to witness to the love of God through ministry and service." Please consider what time commitment you could make to the valuable work the parish council performs.

What days and times are best for you? _____

_____

_____

_____

There are roles for all women within the church and League, both active and more contemplative roles. When thinking about your ideal role within the League, would you say that you:

- Are a bit of a go-getter, like to stay active and do things with your hands and mind?
- Prefer quiet time, like to pray and spend time in church?
- Are easy-going, happy to help out whenever needed (but not all the time)?
- Are not fond of big crowds, prefer behind the scenes roles?
- Are happy to help out when able to do so?
- Like working in the community, possibly with children or visiting the elderly or sick?
- Like to have others take the lead, but will work on a task until it is done?
- Like working with others on a cause, doing work like research or letter-writing?

Some other interests to consider:

Spiritual development	Social justice issues
Sewing	Mentor to new members
Prayer partner	Parish ministries
Car pool	Choir

This is not an exhaustive list! The goal is to get a sense of what the member is most comfortable with and what she most enjoys doing. Members want the League to be a haven for all women in the community—younger, older, moms, widows, wives, aunts, sisters and friends. They begin with the spiritual and express it outwards in service to the people of God.

This is also a good time to introduce the parish council's companionship program. Discuss when and how companions are matched and what the new member can expect from the program. Ask if she already has a close connection with someone in the parish council (perhaps she was invited by a close friend or relative).

Let the new member know there will be a more in-depth orientation where she will have an opportunity to ask questions and learn more about the League.

A nice way to close the conversation would be to thank the new member for sharing. Let her know the parish council will prayerfully consider her responses and work hard to make the parish council a true blessing for her.

Interesting Fact: Did you know the League has several levels in addition to the parish council level? You could briefly discuss these levels with

the new member and share information about what they do (e.g. meet with government to share concerns) and let her know she will receive more information during the orientation session.

Printable form found in Addendum 1.1

The Catholic Women's League of Canada
Renewing Member Information Form

It is as important to connect with renewing members as it is to get to know new members. Although meeting in person with a renewing member is not always possible, every effort should be made to update information and interest areas. At the very least, a telephone call should be made.

The following comments can guide the conversation.

Thank you for choosing to renew your membership for another year! We are happy to have you back!

Member Name_____

Date _____

We would like to take the opportunity to ensure the correct contact information for you is on file. Has anything changed since last year (address, telephone number, e-mail)?

_____

_____

_____

_____

What are you passionate about within the League?

_____

_____

_____

_____

What gifts and talents do you have that would be meaningful for you and would complement the League's values?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

What areas of the League would you like to explore more in-depth?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

If the renewing member has not attended many meetings and events, remind her of the times and dates. Finish the conversation by thanking the member for taking time to speak with you about her interests in the League. Let her know the parish council will prayerfully consider her responses.

Printable form found in Addendum 1.2

Orientation Program

Associations are only as strong as their member base. Members are the League's greatest asset, and it is through their actions that League Objects are achieved. An orientation session is critical to welcoming new members and introducing them to the League, while highlighting the many positive outcomes they can expect from belonging. The authentic connections created with new members are vital to developing a more engaged membership. An orientation session educates members on: the League's mission, vision, core values and purpose; and how the League conducts its business (*Constitution & Bylaws*). Members who understand the organization's goals and operations will feel a strong sense of belonging and connection, and realize how their interests and skills are wanted and needed in the council.

You will find the "Basic Orientation Program" and "CWL Flip Kit" in the *Leading the League* manual. The flip kit is downloadable and can be easily used at a one-to-one session or a more formal event to educate members.

Welcome Kit

To Welcome, Inform and Embrace

What Goes into a Kit?

- A friendly welcome that impresses upon members the role the organization plays.
- Names and contact information for key individuals to showcase ease of accessibility.
- Mission, core values, purpose and vision.
- Required information, typically including:

  120/121-Membership Card

  168/169-League Prayers-Small/Large

  171-National President's Message

  308-Welcome Brochure

  604-*Constitution & Bylaws*

  619-*The Catholic Women's League of Canada Plans Strategically*

  *To access visit cwl.ca → To Organize → Resources

The welcome kit is a valuable gift for new members. It is a powerful tool to introduce them to the League and create an unforgettable first impression. Through this comprehensive resource, you will welcome, inform and embrace members into the sisterhood and the varied facets of the League as they embark on a fulfilling journey.

A welcome kit should be given during a discussion with a seasoned member, if possible, at the beginning of an orientation session.

Personalize it to Reflect your Parish

Parish council executives, add your special touches.

- Welcome letter (from parish council president signed and addressed to the new member)
- History of the League/parish council
- Organization chart
- League prayer bookmark/picture or medal of Our Lady of Good Counsel
- Name tag
- Parish council executive contact list
- Schedule of meetings and League events/annual calendar
- Website addresses for all League levels
- Copy of CWL Prayer for Renewal and any current theme prayers
- Social media sites applicable to the parish council

The Anatomy of a Welcome Kit

This pocket will feature a set of single page leaflets, graduated in size and colour coded for ease of use.

National President's Message

Our Lady of Good Counsel Image

Parish Council Information

Core Guiding Principles

The Canadian League

Welcome Brochure

Constitution & Bylaws

League Prayers Booklet

Companionship Program

Purpose of the Companionship Program

The companionship program is beneficial to the members involved and to the League. Offering a new, inactive or inexperienced member an opportunity to be accompanied in her League journey makes her feel welcomed and valued. A member who has someone supporting her results in her having an increased knowledge of the League and its Objects. It gives her a better understanding of what is expected of her. It also increases her self-confidence, leading to an increased likelihood of taking on a leadership position in the future. Having someone act as a mentor increases a sense of connectedness to the council.

An experienced member who acts as a mentor has an opportunity to share her experience, skills and knowledge, as she assists in passing along the council's legacy. It can be very satisfying to contribute to the development of another member and validates the worth and value of the experienced member.

The League benefits from an increased sense of commitment from members, better transmission of knowledge of core values and purpose, and improved succession planning. A companionship program results in improved member satisfaction and retention. It also emphasizes the importance of being connected to all members.

You are urged to implement a companionship program to increase member engagement. A companionship program values the contributions of the companion and her mentor, and helps each feel needed and appreciated, especially inactive members. The result is a stronger, more connected council. As parish councils vary in size and composition of membership, feel free to use the parts of the companionship program you feel are valuable and useful and disregard suggestions that are not right for you. In this way, the program will be exactly what is needed for your council.

Definitions

Mentor: An experienced member who has agreed to journey with a new or inexperienced member by sharing her knowledge and providing guidance and encouragement.

Companion: A new or inexperienced member who is being accompanied by an experienced member.

(**Note**: Mentor and companion are used in this document, but you may wish to use your own terminology, such as big and little sister, buddies, protégé and mentee, etc.)

Experienced Member: An experienced member will motivate, encourage and support her companion on her journey. Please note, what constitutes an experienced member may vary from council to council. This member does not need to have vast experience or great knowledge of the League. Enthusiasm and a wish to help a new member are more important. The companion and mentor will grow in their understanding of the League as they journey together.

Councils may look to past presidents or past executive officers as good examples of an experienced member. If a council is fortunate to have honorary life members, life members or past diocesan or provincial officers, they would also be excellent choices.

Companionship Coordinator: The council president is strongly encouraged to appoint a member to be a "companionship coordinator", whose responsibilities would include organizing the companionship program, scheduling events and the matching of mentors and companions. The companionship coordinator would find it beneficial to ask other council members to serve on her committee and assist with planning events, connecting with mentors and companions, and performing other duties. It is advantageous to the council and its president to delegate this task; it will create a network of members working together to welcome new members and help both new and existing members to find places in the League where they feel valued and appreciated.

The role of companionship coordinator would be appropriate for an enthusiastic, experienced member. Taking on this role would be a way for her to keep connected to the council and utilize her knowledge.

The companionship coordinator would stay in touch with the pairs of mentors and companions, to ensure the relationships progress without obstacles. There may be a companionship pair that does not mesh well and it should be adjusted. Checking in often with both members is advised.

Ideally, the companionship coordinator would creatively offer ways for women to journey together. She would also have the ability to communicate clearly and consistently with both the mentors and the companions.

Recruiting Experienced Members as Mentors

The companionship coordinator invites experienced members willing to provide guidance and eager to create lasting relationships to act as mentors.

An experienced member who agrees to participate in the council's companionship program may want to refresh her knowledge of League resources, such as the *National Manual of Policy and Procedure*, *Leading the League*, the national website, "A Guideline for Welcoming All Members" and the "Basic Orientation Program". However, enthusiasm and willingness to learn and grow together with her companion are most important.

Procedures For Matching Mentors and Companions

For councils where several members are interested in joining a companionship program simultaneously, an event could be held to allow members to get to know each other. Begin with introductions and allow all members to give information about themselves, their family situation, employment, hobbies, etc.

An ice-breaker game is an excellent opportunity for interaction between potential mentors and companions. Time to mingle, perhaps with refreshments, would allow for more in-depth conversations.

At the end of the event, companions may give their first, second and third choices for mentors to the companionship coordinator. Afterwards, she would create the pairs, making choices where more than one companion requests the same mentor.

In smaller parish councils, where an event may not be feasible, the coordinator may want to meet with the companions individually. She could perhaps be joined by the council president or another member of the executive. This would also be an effective procedure in councils where members join intermittently throughout the year.

This meeting would be an opportunity to become acquainted with the companion, her personal situation, her hobbies and interests. (A membership information form should be used at this time, which will organize members into natural groupings of core values of faith, service and social justice). The coordinator should be able to suggest members who would be compatible mentors. She should organize a meeting between the potential mentor and companion to assess the potential pairing.

In larger parish councils, where many companions may join at once, there may be a need for a mentor to journey with more than one companion at a time. This may also be a successful companionship relationship, creating a small group of women journeying together. The mentor may want to meet one on one with each companion, and she may also want to organize group get-togethers.

At times, members join on the invitation of another member, and both may wish to continue their companionship relationship within the League. These kinds of self-selected companions and mentors can also be successful.

Ideally, the companionship coordinator would creatively offer ways for women to journey together.

What is Expected of Mentors?

The companionship coordinator may wish to gather potential mentors together to introduce them to the program and discuss its benefits and what would be expected of them. She may also wish to conduct a workshop, such as "Mentoring: A Workshop," or familiarize mentors with the council's welcome kit and "A Guideline for Welcoming All Members".

Mentors would be support for newer members, as they learn about the League. Mentors would accompany their companions to meetings, introduce them to others, and sit with them. This would enable the mentors to explain unfamiliar procedures at meetings, or invite their companion to join a committee or to help at an event.

There may be members who are unable to be involved in meetings and events, but still want to be accompanied on their League journey. Contact with these members is crucial in enabling them to realize their value and connection and uncovering their contributions to the council.

The mentors' role is to contact their companion regularly, being mindful of the companions' preference. Checking in periodically creates an atmosphere of caring.

Important Skills for Mentors

There are many important skills and attributes that would improve the relationship between the mentor and the companion. Some of these include being able to:

- Listen
- Encourage
- Respect
- Be non-judgmental
- Empathize
- Appreciate
- Inspire
- Motivate

Completion of Mentoring Relationship

The formal companionship program could continue for a finite period, as determined by the mentor and companion, and could result in lasting friendship. Mentors and companions should be flexible in deciding how long the program should last. The program is designed to create a sisterhood of women moving from a role as a companion to a mentor for another new member.

Small Groups—Core Values

Another opportunity for a companionship program could be implemented by grouping mentors and companions into the core values of faith, service and social justice. This would create three groups of women with similar interests who could be involved in tasks and projects together.

The core values could be further divided into smaller groups, based on specific projects or activities. For example, a council could have a group of women passionate about the core value of social justice. Part of the group may be interested in acting on resolutions. This would create a small group, communicating together and building relationships as they work on a specific task.

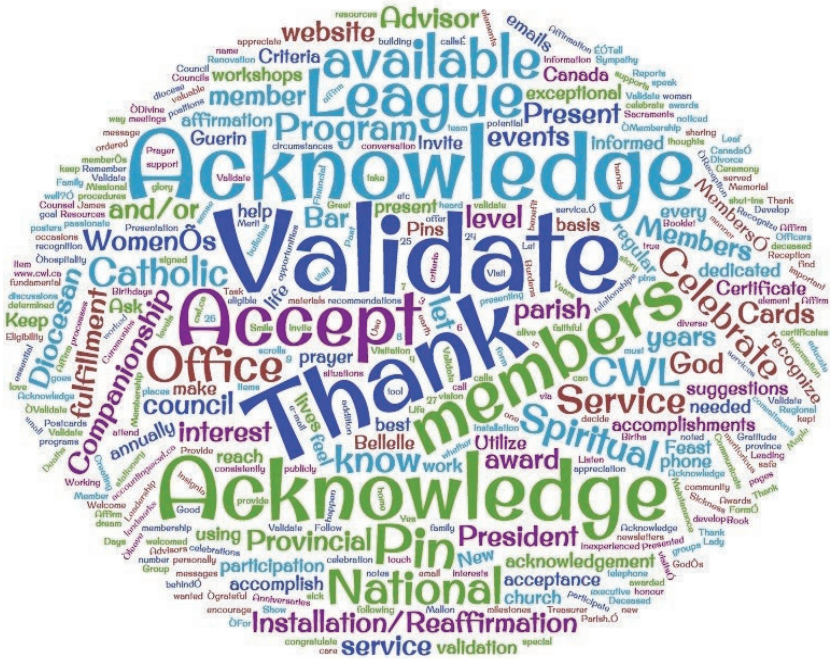
Other ideas for small projected-based groups include: faith—prayer group cells; service—coordinate volunteer activities; and social justice—letter writing group. These are only suggestions. The small groups would depend on the council members' interests and activities, and the needs of the parish and community.

The information needed to group women into the core values could be obtained from the membership information form, which asks women to indicate their preferred areas of activity. The companionship coordinator may wish to join the council president or her designate responsible for assisting members in completing the membership form. They could dialogue as the form is completed and discover the talents and interests that would guide placement of members in an appropriate group.

Contact should be kept with all members of the small groups. The companionship coordinator could meet periodically with members of the small groups to assess their changing needs and interests and see if they wish to move to a different group.

This kind of companionship program uses a member's interests and talents and validates her importance to the council.

Validation Program



The League has the potential to offer Catholic women a real sense of fulfillment. The essential elements to that fulfillment are acknowledgement, acceptance, affirmation and validation.

It is important to let members know their service to the League is noticed, needed and valued. Yes, all the glory goes to God, but we are His hands on earth. It is up to us to celebrate how God has worked in our lives. The fundamental elements to the processes and procedures of acknowledgement, acceptance, affirmation and validation are prayer and celebration.

A valuable tool for the fulfillment of your members is the companionship program. This program supports your new, inactive and inexperienced members by building relationships and can benefit your members and council (see “Companionship Program”).

The parish council’s goal is to “leave no member behind” and make all members feel welcomed, needed and wanted. The following pages provide suggestions and recommendations for how and when to recognize members, their accomplishments and milestones.

(Please note: Items available from national office are noted by item number and may be ordered via e-mail to accounting@cwl.ca or by telephone at (204) 927-2310.)

- Invite members to attend meetings and events and encourage them to participate and help at events.
- Welcome and greet members at all events and places. Smile and call them by name.
- Show an interest in members: “...Tell me your story. What are you passionate about? What do you love doing, and what do you consistently do well?”
- Listen to members, let members speak and be heard. Members must feel safe sharing their thoughts and suggestions.
- Visit the sick and shut-ins. Creating small groups or “hospitality home visit teams” is one way to make this happen regularly.
- Communicate—keep all members informed. Ask members how best to reach them, whether by telephone, e-mail, social media or another form. Keep in touch regularly. Utilize church bulletins, newsletters, posters, etc., in addition to calls, e-mails and messages.

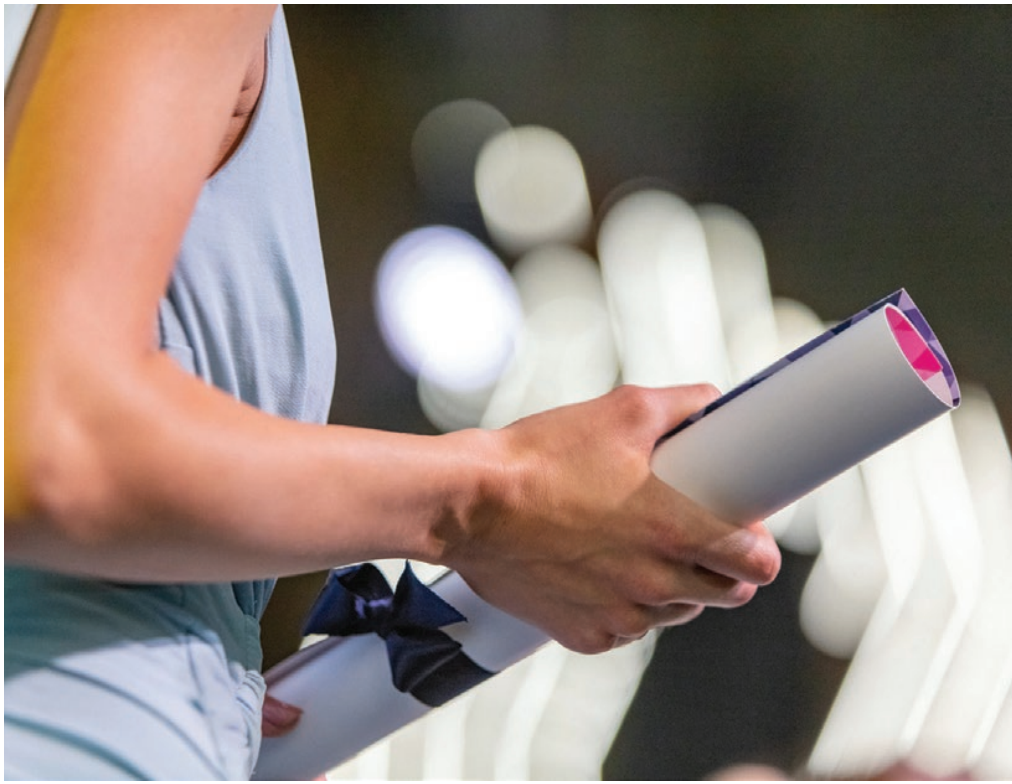
- Recognize the level of interest and participation for members and accept diverse situations and circumstances. The membership information form could help to accomplish this best. Keep all members informed at their level of interest.
- Celebrate, acknowledge and reach out to members on special occasions and life events:

Anniversaries	Birthdays
Births	
Deaths	Sickness
Divorce	
Feast Days	Sacraments
Financial or Family Burdens	

- Acknowledge and thank members who take executive positions. Celebrate installation/reaffirmation annually. Present the president pin (250) and the past president pin (251).
- Acknowledge and thank spiritual advisors. Celebrate installation/reaffirmation annually. Present the spiritual advisor pin (252), spiritual advisor years of service pins (253 and 254) and the spiritual advisor's stole (460).
- Acknowledge and thank members personally or publicly to let them know how appreciated they are (cards, notes, e-mails, telephone calls).
- Acknowledge and thank members who are not active, do not attend meetings or events, or those unable to do so.

  Leading the League provides examples of ways councils may recognize members who are partially active, financially supportive or prayer partners. Like all members, they are essential, and councils have a responsibility to recognize and thank them.
- Celebrate the League and its members.
    - *Ceremonies Booklet* (603)
    - Prayer Service—Feast of Our Lady of Good Counsel (728)
- Provide opportunities to educate and develop members. Utilize workshops and resources available from national office. Develop programs in support of members' interests.
- Use League materials to acknowledge, accept, affirm and validate:
    - Insignia pin (220)—present at a reception for new members
    - Pins (221–236) for members every five years from five to 80 years of dedicated service "For God and Canada." Councils decide which milestones to recognize.
    - Membership scrolls (207)—award for 25 years of service or more and signed by the national president and national secretary-treasurer.
    - Maple Leaf Service Pin (270)—award to members who have served the League in an exceptional or meritorious manner. The eligibility criteria is determined by the presenting council.

    - Bellelle Guerin Pin (271)—award to members who have kept the vision and dream of Bellelle Guerin alive and have dedicated themselves to the work of the League in the parish, diocese or province and are not eligible for life membership. The criteria is available from national office.
    - Certificate of Merit (202)— present to members in "grateful recognition and appreciation of faithful and exceptional service."
    - Leadership Certificate (205)—for active participation in workshops for leadership and development of members.
    - Gratitude postcards (302), sympathy cards (408), visitation cards (409) and other stationery are available.
- Present pins, certificates and awards at celebrations and prayer services using:
    - Reception of New Members (730)
    - Ceremony for the Presentation of Service Awards (706)
    - Installation of Spiritual Advisor (714)
    - Installation/Reaffirmation of CWL Officers (715)
- Be creative for celebrations, including luncheons, dinners, activities and themes (Valentine's Day tea, St. Patrick's Day, Christmas social, etc.). Incorporate the interests of members as indicated on the membership information form.
- Remember and honour deceased members using Memorial Service for Deceased Members (720 and 727).
- Follow up on any conversation and commitments to members.



Addendum 1.1

The Catholic Women's League of Canada
New Member Information Form

Council Name: _____ Date:_____

"Every sunrise is God saying, 'Welcome Home there is always a place for you'".
(Erwin Raphael McManus)

Part I: Basic Information

New members should complete each section.

Name: _____

Address: _____

_____

Telephone number: _____ E-mail: _____

How do you prefer to be contacted? _____

To plan council activities and events effectively, may we share your interests and skills as answered in the questions below with the members of the parish council executive? _____

May we share your contact information in the shared membership list? _____

Due to privacy requirements, if you answered yes above, please sign in the space below:

Birthday (dd/mm/yyyy): _____ Anniversary: _____

What age group do you belong to: ❑ 16-24 ❑ 25-34 ❑ 35-50 ❑ 51-70 ❑ 70+

Part II: Category of Membership

Leading the League provides the following descriptive categories for members. Choose the category that applies.

___ **Fully Active Members:** These members pay dues, attend meetings, take part in business procedures with voting privileges, serve on committees and can take advantage of the many opportunities for personal and spiritual development offered by the League.

___**Partially Active Members**: These members pay dues but cannot always attend meetings or functions. They are willing to help when needed, on a task-by-task basis. They want to be part of the organization and make a difference but have limited time to offer.

___ **Financially Supportive Members**: These members pay dues to support the national organization and their local council. They cannot be fully or partially active currently but may become more involved in the future. They wish to stay informed of events and educational updates through the League website and *The Canadian League*.

___ **Prayer Partners**: These members pay dues, taking part spiritually as prayer partners—either with a specific person or generally for all members. In turn, they are included in all League prayers.

Part III: Interests

The core values of the League are:

Faith—following Catholic teaching

Service—local, national and international

Social Justice—actively involved in society

Faith

- ❑ Do you enjoy reading books or attending programs that help to develop your faith?
- ❑ Do you take opportunities to share your faith with others?
- ❑ Are you interested in discussing topics of faith with others?
- ❑ Do you like to think deeply about philosophical things?
- ❑ Are you open to learning new ways to pray or meditate?
- ❑ Do you find that you need to "recharge" with spiritual exercises?
- ❑ Activities you might like to get involved in: rosary circle, parish ministries, scripture studies, prayer groups, organizing retreats.

Service

- ❑ Are you one of those people who are the "backbone" of the church?
- ❑ Do you like to work in the church community?
- ❑ Do you prefer to work behind the scenes?
- ❑ Do you enjoy taking care of others?
- ❑ Do you consider yourself a good hostess?
- ❑ Can you take charge of a task that needs doing and get it done?
- ❑ Is the social part of the meeting important?
- ❑ Activities you might like to get involved in: cooking and baking, knitting, decorating, visiting seniors and the homebound, event organization, community dinners.

Social Justice

- ❑ Do you like to keep informed about issues in the news and current events?
- ❑ Do you feel passionately about issues that are unjust, or where people are treated poorly?
- ❑ Do you like to think of solutions to problems that affect people?
- ❑ Do you like to work in the larger community?
- ❑ Are you detail-oriented?

- ❑ Do you enjoy reading, writing and organizing?
- ❑ Activities you might like to get involved in: community volunteering, social justice issues, letter writing, visiting elected officials, resolutions.

Part IV: A Little Bit More About You

Do you work outside of the home? Full-time or part-time? Do you volunteer in the church or community? If so, where?

_____

_____

_____

The League's mission calls "members to grow in faith, and to witness to the love of God through ministry and service." Please consider what time commitment you could make to the valuable work the parish council performs.

What days and times are best for you? _____

_____

There are roles for all women within the church and League, both active and more contemplative roles. When thinking about your ideal role within the League, would you say that you:

- ❑ Are a bit of a go-getter, like to stay active and do things with your hands and your mind?
- ❑ Prefer quiet time, like to pray and spend time in church?
- ❑ Are easy-going, happy to help out whenever needed (but not all the time)?
- ❑ Are not fond of big crowds, prefer behind the scenes roles?
- ❑ Are happy to help out when able to do so?
- ❑ Like working in the community, possibly with children or visiting the elderly or sick?
- ❑ Like to have others take the lead, but will work on a task until it is done?
- ❑ Like working with others on a cause, doing work like research or letter-writing?

Some other interests to consider:

Spiritual development	Social justice issues
Sewing	Mentor to new members
Prayer partner	Parish ministries
Car pool	Choir

This is not an exhaustive list! The goal is to get a sense of what you are most comfortable with and what you most enjoy doing.

Addendum 1.2

The Catholic Women's League of Canada
Renewing Member Information Form

Thank you for choosing to renew your membership for another year! We are happy to have you back!

Member Name_____ Date _____

We would like to take the opportunity to ensure the correct contact information for you is on file. Has anything changed since last year (address, phone number, e-mail)?

_____

_____

_____

What are you passionate about within the League?

_____

_____

_____

_____

What gifts and talents do you have that would be meaningful for you and that would complement the League's values?

_____

_____

_____

_____

What areas of the League would you like to explore more in-depth?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Resources Used

Website:	cwl.ca
Manuals:	*Leading the League*
	The Catholic Women's League of Canada Plans Strategically
Workshops:	Mentoring: A Workshop
Books:	*Divine Renovation: From Maintenance to a Missional Parish* Fr. James Mallon
	Groups that Thrive Joel Comisky
	One Mother's Heart Dorothy Pilarski
	Mentoring Handbook Lagacé-Roy, Knackstedt
	Skills for Successful Mentoring Linda Phillips-Jones
	Win the Heart Mark Miller
	Witness to Love Ryan and Mary-Rose Verrett

Surveys and Discussions with Parish Councils across Canada

Organizations Researched: Alpha, Beta Sigma Phi Sorority, Catholic Christian Outreach, Girl Guides of Canada, Knights of Columbus, Nanaimo Ladysmith Public Schools, National Council of Catholic Women (US), Soroptimists International, Third Order Franciscans, Winnipeg Military Family Resource Centre, YP Lounge

Photos are PowerPoint stock photos.

NOTES

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