Tools to Increase Connectedness Between Members

Increase Connectedness Working Group

GOAL:
Through outreach and service, members of The Catholic Women's League of Canada foster a culture where all life is valued with dignity and respect.

STRATEGY: (G3.C2) Develop tools to increase connectedness among members.

Table of Contents

Introduction and Background 2

Connectedness Between Diocesan and Parish Executive: Information for Diocesan Officers 3

Increase Connectedness 3

Happy to meet you! How can I help? 3

Direct Connect 4

Connectedness between Parish Members: Information for Parish Council Officers 5

Friendship Circles 5

Increase Connectedness 5

How can your parish council do this? 5

Guide to Creating a Parish Council Facebook Group 6

Appendices 8

Appendix A: Welcome Mail or Email to Parish Council Chairperson (from Diocesan Chairperson) 8

Appendix B: Direct Connect Agenda Template 9

Introduction and Background

The Catholic Women's League is the largest group of women in Canada. Members have their faith in common and so much to share and learn from each other. To create a sense of connectedness and sisterhood within the League, the grassroots member needs to feel a sense of community within her parish and diocesan councils. After she leaves the monthly meetings, she needs to have the opportunity to reach out to other sisters in the League, sharing ideas and thoughts and creating friendships. Challenges the League faced in 2020 and 2021 allowed many members to connect with their sisters near and very far in new ways. The League's strength is members' connectedness.

Included are some suggested tools to implement within parish and diocesan councils to increase the sense of belonging and connectedness and help councils feel closer and be of service to each other. In addition, using one's imagination and skills, or those of some of the other very talented members, may open up more ways of being and staying connected.

Connectedness Between Diocesan and Parish Executive:
Information for Diocesan Officers

Increase Connectedness

Do your parish council counterparts

- know your name as their equivalent diocesan counterpart?
- know your contact information?
- feel comfortable contacting you?
- have resources that pertain to their executive role?

If the answer is no to any of these questions, that is a potential barrier to getting the most out of your diocesan executive experience.

Happy to meet you! How can I help?

Diocesan officers should

- mail or email a welcome notice (see Appendix A) to their new parish council counterpart(s) with words of encouragement and contact information and offer to telephone at a convenient time to discuss the position.
- follow up with communication introducing themselves, including what excites them about their role, highlighting achievements and what is currently being worked on.
- provide or email essential resources and links (e.g., national communiqués).
- send emails with news and updates (quarterly or as current issue timing requires, e.g., a reminder of deadlines).

As a diocesan officer

- do you feel a disconnect between you and your parish council counterpart?
- do you want to create a nurturing and supportive space?
- do you want your parish council counterpart to learn, grow and collaborate with her peers?
- do you want to create a sense of camaraderie?

Direct Connect

Diocesan Executive

Parish Counterpart

Connect + Collaborate = Camaraderie

Direct Connect

As a diocesan officer, here is how to build a dream team!

- Compile a contact list of the team (parish council counterparts within the diocese).
- Sort participants by region (if in a large diocese) or in groups of four to six officers.
- Contact the parish council officers to set up a virtual meeting.
- Use the agenda template (see Appendix B) to create an agenda that is modified to reflect the specifics of your diocese.
- Record the meeting for the diocesan president to review later as needed or to send out to parish council officers who could not attend.
- Use the chat function to share questions, resources and links.
- Summarize the chat and send it to parish council officers for reference.

Note: As the diocesan officer, the timing and frequency of meetings are at your discretion. At least one meeting per year is suggested, perhaps in January or February when most parish councils have held elections. A second meeting may be at an appropriate time, specific to that position, for example, in October or November, for treasurers to discuss budgeting.

Connectedness between Parish Members:
Information for Parish Council Officers

Friendship Circles

Increase Connectedness

Do you want to increase connectedness among parish council members, share friendships and faith, assist other members in reaching common goals and create a circle of friends?

How can your parish council do this?

An executive member—the president, appointee, or both working collaboratively—creates friendship circles within the parish council.

A friendship circle is made up of three people who live close together. In September, divide the parish council membership list according to postal codes and further separate it into small groups of three within each postal code.

On purpose, each executive member is paired with two non-executive members to help members feel they know others well. If desired, the circles can change over the year to allow members to connect and get to know more members within the council.

Within each friendship circle, one member is the leader. This member makes an initial call to each member in her circle, introduces herself and forms a bond.

The leader then shares the other two's telephone numbers within her group. Staying in touch with each other, perhaps once every two weeks, is recommended.

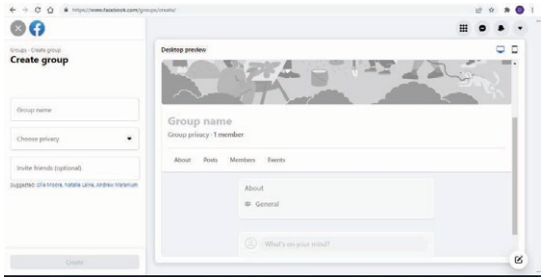
Some ideas for building friendships may be offering to help pick up groceries or prescriptions, driving each other to the next League meeting or sharing a story.

Note: Explain the idea of friendship circles to the membership at a meeting, by email or through social media. Ask members before September if they are comfortable having others use their telephone numbers.

Guide to Creating a Parish Council Facebook Group

In ***your personal*** Facebook account, click on *Groups*, then *Create a New Group*.

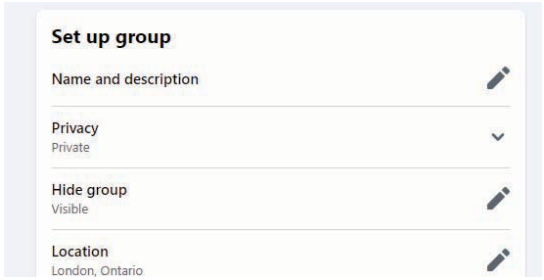
On this screen, you can:



- name the group (e.g., SJTD CWL group).
- choose the privacy setting. Groups can be private (only members see the posts) or public (anyone can see the posts).
- hide group: The group can be ***hidden*** (people will need to be invited) or ***visible*** (anyone can find it publicly and ask to join).

Group Settings

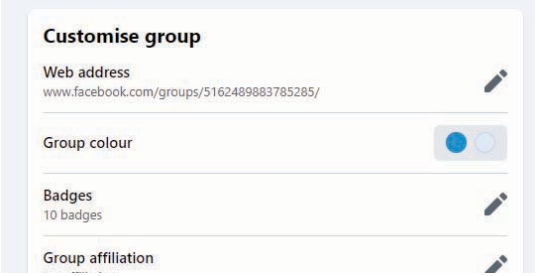
You can edit:



- the group's name (if you misspelled or want to change the name).
- the description of the group. When people read about the group, they can choose to join or not.

Customize Group

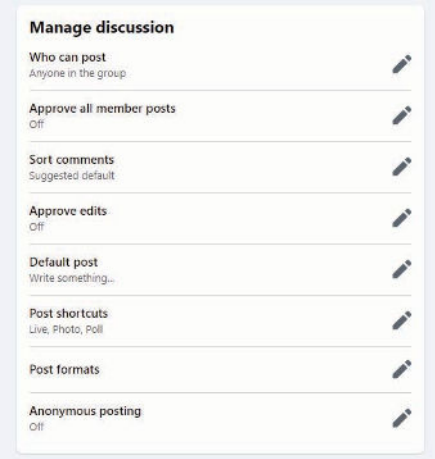
This section allows you to choose:



- a group colour
- badges:
  These are given to people in the group for being new members, group experts, etc.
- group affiliations:
  Add a group affiliation to show that a specific person or organization is an administrator of the group. The administrator's name will appear at the bottom of the group's cover image.
- the group type (general, buy and sell, gaming, etc.).

Manage Discussion

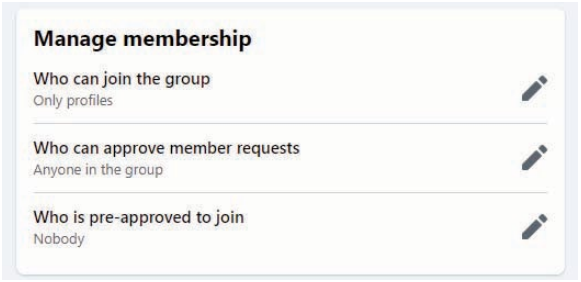
Under this section, you can:



- control who can post (administrator only or any group member).
- approve member posts: This can be turned on or off. If it's "on," members will need approval before the post goes live.
- sort comments and approve edits.
- default post.
- post shortcuts and formats
- enable anonymous posting.

Manage Membership

In this section, choose:

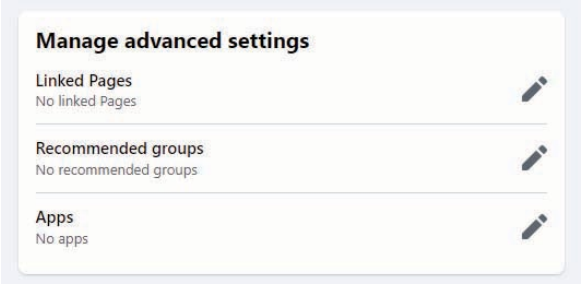


- who can join, including profiles (i.e., people) and pages
- who can approve member requests
- who is pre-approved to join.

Manage Advanced Settings:

In this section you can:

- link this group to the League's national page and other pages.



Appendices

Appendix A:

Welcome Mail or Email to Parish Council Chairperson
(from Diocesan Chairperson)

The Catholic Women's League of Canada

[*Insert name of diocese*] Diocesan Council

[*Insert name of standing committee/executive position*]

Date: [*insert date*]

Dear [*First Name*]

Life is a series of new beginnings! Welcome to your position as [*Insert name of standing committee/executive position*].

My name is [*insert your name*], and I am your diocesan [*Insert name of standing committee/executive position*]. I am a member of the [*Parish Council Name*] Parish Council.

Your new position provides another opportunity to be of service to your community, to the country and to God. It is a chance to live your faith with those who share it.

In your new role, you will have a chance to meet fantastic and energetic League sisters while helping to advance our goals and ensure our collective voice is powerful. The Catholic Women's League has been around since the 1920s and has met annually with all levels of government since the 1970s!

Thank you for entering into this two-year commitment. I know you will be open to new ideas and opportunities within your parish council and be a valuable conduit to members.

I am available to discuss your new position and responsibilities by telephone, at a time convenient to you or by email. Please feel free to contact me with any questions at [*insert email*] or by telephone [*insert number*].

Blessings and prayers to you

[*insert your name*]

Appendix B:

Direct Connect Agenda Template

The Catholic Women's League of Canada — Date:

[*Insert name of diocese*] Diocesan Council — Time:

[*Insert name of standing committee/executive position*]

Agenda

Opening prayer

Roll Call (optional)

Diocesan officer introduction

Parish officer introduction

- If this is the first meeting, then each parish member should spend up to a minute introducing herself (name, parish, member since, what inspires her about the League).
- If there are only a few new members, then only the new ones would give an introduction.

Brief outline of the position

Upcoming important events and deadlines

Feedback from parish team members

Brainstorming session to get creative juices flowing and share ideas

Wrap up

Closing prayer

NOTES

The Catholic Women's League of Canada

C-702 Scotland Avenue
Winnipeg, MB R3M 1X5

Tel: (204) 927-2310
Website: cwl.ca
E-mail: info@cwl.ca

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