



Official Publication of
The Catholic Women's League of Canada
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National President's Message

Shari Guinta
National President



It has been very affirming to receive compliments following the 104th annual national convention held in August 2024. Members were present and online and enjoyed the new format. That was certainly gratifying. I felt it was a significant step to have two days of plenary and the final morning assigned to the annual meeting of members. The Saskatchewan convention planning committee and the spiritual program team were exceptional, and I thank them on behalf of everyone!

Reports from the national executive/board can be found in this issue, and I encourage you to read all of them. You will read about the good works and initiatives from all national officers and in all provinces from the presidents. The work accomplished is outstanding.

The League has completed its five years of planning strategically and the final report was presented at the convention. I congratulate all those who worked on the working groups under the implementation committee. Now, more work, *future work*, begins.

It is crucial to use the resources developed over the last five years. Workshops, presentations and "how to" information are all included in the more than 80 resource items on the national website. These should be presented at provincial, diocesan and parish levels for League development, instruction and confidence building.

The League has evolved and continues to evolve and move forward. It is more streamlined and organized, with additional revisions coming, including ways to communicate, collaborate and prioritize with all levels of the League.

The national theme, *Here I am Lord, send me* will be the theme through 2025, and all councils at every level are encouraged to concentrate on the theme with a focus on mental health. A national theme and focus brings members together—the League and its members need that. We always have. Speaking with one voice makes the League stronger and that voice more pronounced.

Speaking of voice, I encourage members and councils to review the resolutions adopted at the convention. An action plan is attached to each resolution. †



Delegates voting at the 104th annual national convention.

2025 - A Jubilee Year - Pilgrims of Hope

Most Rev. Wayne Lobsinger, Auxiliary Bishop of Hamilton
National Spiritual Advisor



In the *Book of Leviticus* (25:10-17), Catholics first hear of God's plan that his children should celebrate a year of jubilee in which liberty and forgiveness would be proclaimed, and the people would return to their land and family. During the jubilee year, the land was to remain fallow—the people eating only what the land grew on its own.

In the Catholic Christian tradition, jubilee years are celebrated every 25 years. Beginning in 1300 A.D., Pope Benedict VIII declared a holy year and every 25 or 50 years since then, the church has celebrated an ordinary year of jubilee. Throughout the past 700 years, there have also been several extraordinary years of jubilee, the latest being 2015/16, the extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy. Pope Francis has declared 2025 to be an ordinary year of jubilee.

During a year of jubilee, the holy father opens the holy doors at the four major basilicas in Rome. Pilgrims are invited to visit these basilicas and pass through the doors. The holy father attaches to this action an indulgence that assists the faithful in finding forgiveness for their sins and the consequences attached to those sins. Dioceses worldwide are encouraged to celebrate the jubilee year by having places of pilgrimage and prayer. The local bishop can also attach indulgences to these places of pilgrimage.

Pope Francis has designated the 2025 ordinary jubilee year with the title "Pilgrims of Hope." Hope is one of the three theological virtues given to Catholics at the moment of baptism, along with faith and charity. Hope is the virtue that allows Catholics to continue to trust in God and his promises, even when it would be easier to despair. People face many struggles in the world and in society. These struggles can sometimes weigh so heavily upon them that they lose hope that God is still in charge and that all he allows is for their good. It is easy to give up on God, to despair and to lose hope in his love and mercy. The virtue of hope is God's gift to Catholics to help them, us, to continue to believe and trust in God, even when life seems difficult and makes no sense.

Years of jubilee are gifts from God and his church to renew people in their faith, to help them find forgiveness of their sins, and to strengthen them in their love of God and service to his people. A year of jubilee is truly an opportunity for all peoples of goodwill to grow in faith and in their relationship with God. During 2025, let members truly be "Pilgrims of Hope"—people who do not give in to despair but truly continue to trust in God and all his many promises of mercy, love and salvation.

May Our Lady of Good Counsel continue to draw all of you and your families deeper into the love of her Son, Jesus, renewing the gifts of faith, hope and charity in you. †





Welcome New and Returning National Executive!



Back row, left to right:

Saskatchewan Provincial President Helen Kayfish
Nova Scotia Provincial President Jessie Parkinson
New Brunswick Provincial President Madonna Clark
Alberta Mackenzie Provincial President Betsy Fletcher
Prince Edward Island Provincial President Karen Rossiter
Newfoundland and Labrador Provincial President Linda Corbett
Manitoba Provincial President Lucille Rossington
B.C. & Yukon Provincial President Catherine L'Heureux
Ontario Provincial President Colleen Martin
Military Ordinariate Provincial President Theresa Schopf
Quebec Provincial President Anna Bawer-Di Lallo

Front row, left to right:

National Chairperson of Social Justice Glenda Carson
National Chairperson of Service Joline Belliveau
National Spiritual Advisor Most Rev. Wayne Lobsinger (Hamilton)
National President Shari Guinta
National Vice-President Betty Colaneri
National Secretary-Treasurer Dorothy Johansen
National Past President Fran Lucas
National Chairperson of Faith Rolande Chernichan

Glowing Hearts of Christ in the Golden Prairies: Highlights from the 104th Annual National Convention

Catherine C.
Guest Journalist



Bishop Stephen Hero (Prince Albert).



Convention Planning Committee
Co-Chairperson Melanie Fauchoux
speaks with National Spiritual Advisor
Bishop Wayne Lobsinger (Hamilton).

The national theme, *Here I am Lord, send me!* was ever-present during the 104th Annual National Convention of The Catholic Women's League of Canada, which took place from August 11th to August 14th. Hundreds of members across Canada answered the call as they travelled to the golden Canadian prairies of Saskatoon to gather and meet again with life-long friends and create new ones in the name of spiritual sisterhood. Gracious hosts welcomed them with smiles and hand-embroidered tote bags generously filled with lovingly crafted items and information booklets to support them throughout the week.

A bishops' Mass and dinner was held on August 9th at the Cathedral of the Holy Family in Saskatoon, featuring welcoming words from Bishop Mark Hagemoen (Saskatoon) and Bishop Stephen Hero (Prince Albert). "The Church in Canada has always needed the Catholic Women's League—and needs it now perhaps more than ever," said Bishop Mark Hagemoen.

On August 10th, Fiesta Filipino at St. Patrick's Parish was a night of joyful celebration for members, showcasing Filipino heritage and culture. Plenty of traditional Filipino food was served, like pancit, beef morcon, pork hamonado,

chop suey and lechon. St. Cecilia Choir performed popular Filipino music with enchanting vocals, and the Filipino Heritage School performed lively folk dances that depicted people's relationship with the earth, unity and love.

A glimpse into the history and culture of Indigenous peoples on the prairies took place on August 11th. Members enjoyed a visit to Wanuskewin Heritage Park, a sacred spot north of Saskatoon where Indigenous peoples have gathered for thousands of years. Participants arrived, gathered for brunch, and witnessed a hoop dancing demonstration by Lawrence Roy, accompanied by drummer and singer Elmer Tootoosis. Mr. Roy then taught some hoop dancing moves to a few eager members. Afterward, convention delegates toured the site and viewed displays.

Before the beginning of plenary sessions, more than 100 members attended the Resolutions Dialogue. Grouped at tables, the members reviewed, evaluated and openly discussed the proposed resolutions. Each woman was given the opportunity to share her perspective with her group, and delegates could obtain a motion form to propose an amendment.



Members participate in the
festivities at Fiesta Filipino.



Wanuskewin tour



Convention Opening Mass.

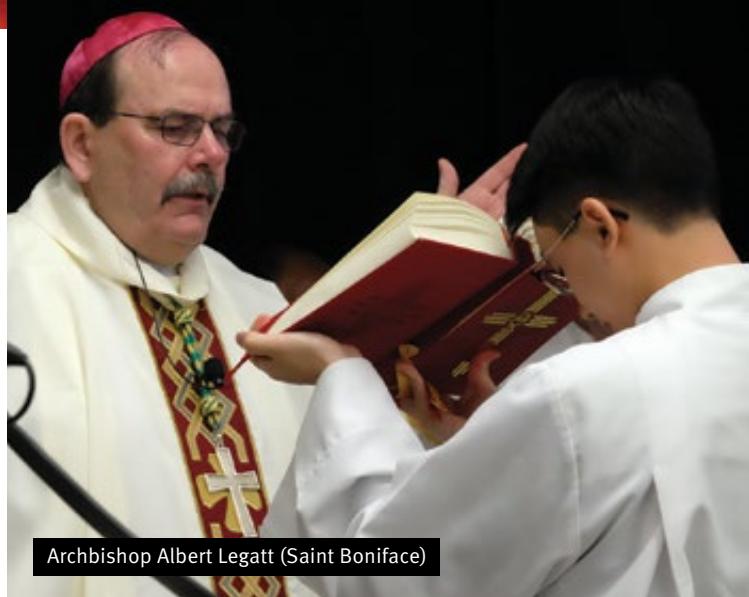
Members were then welcomed with hospitality and the glowing prairie sunset at the Opening Eucharistic Celebration at the Cathedral of the Holy Family. Speakers who brought greetings included Saskatchewan Provincial Spiritual Advisor Fr. Francis Hengen, Member of the Legislative Assembly for Saskatoon Churchill-Wildwood, Lisa Lambert, City Councillor for Ward 9, Bev Dubois, Saskatchewan State Deputy of the Knights of Columbus, Marte Nogot and National President Shari Guinta.

National Spiritual Advisor Bishop Wayne Lobsinger (Hamilton) reminded those gathered of the importance of faith during these times and affirmed the testimony “blessed art thou among women.” Celebrant Bishop Hagemoen shared during his homily about a recent 30-kilometre marathon he completed, where he learned that even when you are tired, your journey must continue. He noted that members could find strength in God as Elijah did during his journey into the wilderness in 1 Kings 19:4-8. He found this strongly connected to the League’s national theme, *Here I am Lord, send me*. Following the celebration was a wine and cheese reception, where laughter was shared, and warm smiles were given as members got to reconnect and enjoy the start of the convention excitement!

Monday, August 12th began with a morning Eucharistic celebration with celebrant Archbishop Albert LeGatt (St. Boniface). In his homily, he assured that goodwill always triumphs over evil, and if members want to experience the glory of God, then Jesus says they will. During the sign of peace, members happily exchanged greetings with their neighbours, many embracing one another. After Mass, National President Shari Guinta shared an opening message acknowledging the new format of the convention, which would allow for more educational opportunities, stating this was the first of many big steps.

Bishop Lobsinger provided greetings and shared the meaning behind his coat of arms, “He must increase, but I must decrease” (Jn 3:30). Another message that he wanted members to keep in mind for the next few days was “mercy within mercy, within mercy.” He encouraged members to “show mercy so that he may increase.”

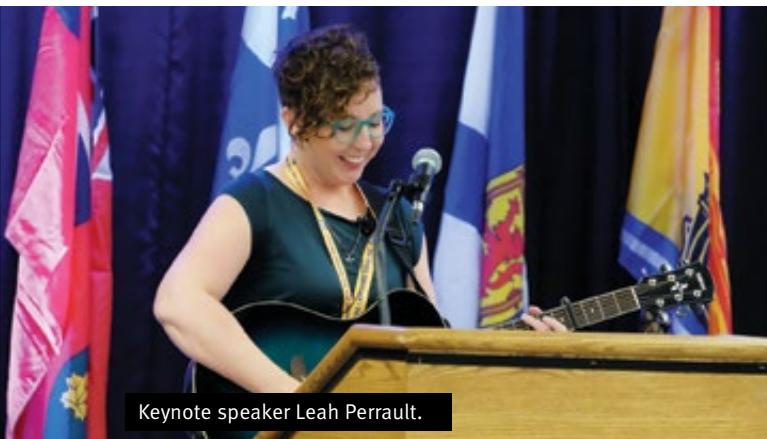
Keynote speaker Leah Perrault.



Archbishop Albert Legatt (Saint Boniface)

Members were then welcomed by women from organizations that share common goals with the League: Marlene Bodnar, president of the Ukrainian Catholic Women’s League, Life Member Mary Nordick from Women’s Inter-Church Council of Canada, Rosemarie Kingston, national vice president of Anglican Church Women of Canada, Cathy Reid, president of the Presbyterian Women’s Missionary Society, and Phyllis Robinson from United Church Women.

Following this, Bishop Lobsinger and Honorary Life Member Barbara Dowding (2014–2016) delivered a presentation called “Walking Together in Synodality.” Bishop Lobsinger explained that synodality means to “journey together” to find ways to hear the voices of all the people of God, as all baptized are guided by the Holy Spirit. He said that it is not about changing the truths of our faith but thinking about how to bring the truths of our faith into the world today. Barbara asked members to discern together how the Holy Spirit calls the church in Canada. A synodal church is a church that listens, as quoted from Pope Francis. Barbara said to listen not only to what a person says but also to what she means and has experienced. She then asked members to discuss with others at their table what characteristics of female leadership God calls forth for women in today’s church.



Honorary Life Member and WUCWO Regional Vice President for North America Barb Dowding speaks to members and guests.



Catholic Women's Leadership Cohort.



Jacqueline Saretzky,
Coordinator of Hospital
Chaplaincy for the Roman
Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon.



Saskatchewan Provincial
President Helen Kayfish.



National Vice-President Betty Colaneri is joined by Lucia Vacca and her family at the Pirates of the Saskatchewan River Banquet.



Members dressed as pirates at the Pirates of the Saskatchewan River Banquet.

This and other thoughtful questions were deliberated to decide what actions should be taken moving forward.

Archbishop Donald J. Bolen (Regina) and Deacon Harry Lafond, Chief of Muskeg Cree First Nations, presented an important session discussing the historical legacy of the papal *Doctrine of Discovery*. Deacon Lafond expressed that people usually think of the word “discovered” as a positive term. But for Indigenous communities and the history they experienced from colonization, it is not a positive term. The Cree community sees all things designed to be interconnected and not as a commodity to be parcelled out into pieces. People need to learn to talk and listen to each other. A standing ovation was given for their presentation as members were encouraged to make this topic a longstanding focus of their work.

Inspiration was spread through the convention hall during the keynote presentation titled *“Here I Am Lord, send me”* by author and faith speaker Leah Perrault. Leah conveyed the need to learn to love in the midst of brokenness. She shared miracles she witnessed in her own life through personal stories and said God is acting in our lives just as powerfully. She encouraged others to have a moment with someone at their table and answer the question: “Where have I encountered Jesus?” Members gladly reached out their hands to each other as they spoke, some with tears in their eyes. Leah expressed that worthiness is rooted in God’s invitation, “Whom shall I send?” It is not a pretty nor easy journey, but it is the beauty and boldness of our belief that allow us to say “yes” to Jesus. She ended her presentation with an acoustic performance of the song “New Wine” by Brooke Fraser.

Cheers and celebrations were in order during the commissioning of new life members. The new life members were welcomed and called forth one by one to receive a blessing. Congratulations to Connie Crichton (Saskatoon, Saskatchewan), Gwen Elliott (Camrose, Alberta), Paddy Fitzgerald Nolan (Sydenham, Ontario), Hilarion Mitchell (Brampton, Ontario), Audrey Shelton (Haileybury, Ontario) and Linda VandenBerg (High Prairie, Alberta)!

On Monday evening, a sea of pirates took over the TCU Place for the Pirates of the Saskatchewan River Banquet! A different parish council designed each centrepiece at the tables to represent their city or town. Members dressed up in their best pirate costumes, and a live band rocked the stage with grooving original music and a medley of classics like “Peggy Sue,” “Honky Tonk Women,” and “I Love A Rainy Night.” Delicious Ukrainian food was served, including perogies, cabbage rolls, sausage and mustard, along with salad, bread, brownies and cakes. There was a photoshoot opportunity with a giant pirate ship, and an incredible conga line formed later in the evening from all the fun dancing!

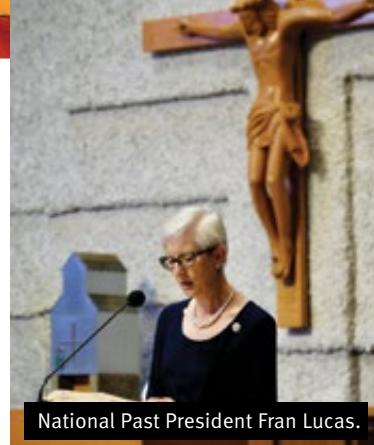
Tuesday, August 13th, began with a Eucharistic celebration with celebrant Archbishop Bolen. In his homily, he showed gratitude to the League for answering

the call and for providing support and healing for those in their parishes. Next was a national voluntary fund presentation where members heard from a representative of each of the four organizations the League currently supports and provides donations towards. The speakers included Eileen Alma from Coady Institute, Brenda Arakaza from Development and Peace—Caritas Canada, Joe Gennaro from Catholic Missions In Canada, and Dr. Adriana Bara from Catholic Near East Welfare Association. Also present and speaking was Linda Dudar from Catholic Women's Leadership Foundation.

Following this were one-hour breakout sessions where members could choose which session to attend. Among the sessions, was an educational presentation by Christina Mines, Director of Evangelization & Catechesis with the Diocese of Hamilton. Ms. Mines focused on faith, presenting on the topic "Women As Echoes of Hope, a Catechesis for the Synodal Church." She described catechesis as a life-long path to learning and fulfillment—a process of initial conversion, formation, education and ongoing conversion. Those present participated in table discussions, sharing their experiences of catechesis in their faith journeys.

The "Palliative Care and Pastoral Response" session was held by Jacqueline Saretsky, a nurse who works with a full-time chaplain at her hospital. She shared the despairing reality as to why patients may feel pressured to choose medical assistance in dying without knowing enough information on the options available, such as choosing palliative care. Palliative care takes a holistic approach that is more than just a medical treatment, caring for people who are living until their natural death. She encouraged members to volunteer and visit those disconnected from their church when sick and provide resources for discussing palliative care in their church.

Barbara Dowding led the presentation, "Women in the Life and Mission of the Church," where she provided an overview of the World Union of Catholic Women's Organisations (WUCWO), explaining that as a result



National Past President Fran Lucas.



Hoop Dancer Lawrence Roy.



of members' membership in the League, they were also members of WUCWO. She shared WUCWO's goal of promoting the formation of women in order for them to face contemporary challenges in the cultural and political spheres.

National Past President Fran Lucas presented a motivational session called "Leadership—No Greater Love!" She asked members what was holding them back from taking roles of leadership to promote their love for the League in their parish. National Vice-President Betty Colaneri hosted an energetic session called "1 for All and All for '1,'" focusing on the power of the "1" and personal connection when recruiting, retaining and regaining members. National Secretary-Treasurer Dorothy Johansen held an informational session called "Social Media—Connection." The workshop introduced the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops' "Pastoral



Closing Mass.



Bishop Mark Hagemoen (Saskatoon).



National Chairperson of Social Justice Glenda Carson at the Resolutions Dialogue.

Letter on the Use of Social Media,” and attendees were given time to discuss important questions in small groups, such as “How do we determine if something on social media is true?”

National Chairperson of Faith Rolande Chernichan led a thoughtful session called “Walk with Him,” encouraging others to allow their hearts and imaginations to enter into a sacred place to see what God has to say to them. National Chairperson of Service Joline Belliveau led an insightful session called “Move Me, Engage Me, Embrace Me,” outlining the symptoms of depression, its risk factors and the importance of using physical activity as a tool. She explained that “Struggle marks us... When we struggle, when we suffer... we develop more compassion for others. Struggle is the process where we start to see God. We transform. We grow... Hope and despair are not opposites. Hope comes from despair.” National Chairperson of Social Justice Glenda Carson presented “Be Not Afraid: An Interactive Workshop on Crafting Resolutions.” The topics covered during the workshop included crafting the resolution, using technology to assist in the development of resolutions and being passionate voices of advocacy. Glenda’s team of presenters reminded attendees to “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has” (Margaret Mead).

Throughout the day, there was a special Life Members’ Luncheon and Spiritual Advisors’ Luncheon, as well as dinners for each provincial council. A Memorial Service for Deceased Members concluded the Tuesday sessions with a rose of remembrance being presented by each provincial president and placed into a bouquet at the altar of Mother Mary.

Wednesday, August 14th was the official national annual meeting of members. The proposed resolutions were deliberated, and members were invited to ask questions or provide suggestions at the microphone. Three resolutions were adopted:

- 2024.01: Increase Supported Housing for Individuals Experiencing Homelessness with Mental Health and Mental Illness Issues
- 2024.02: National Universal Pharmacare Program to Include Coverage for Drugs Prescribed for Mental Illness

- 2024.03: Grant the Canadian Ombudsperson for Responsible Enterprise Legal Authority to Investigate Environmental and Human Rights Abuses

Shari Guinta spoke on the continued focus on education and League development, highlighting the numerous resources available on the national website and urged members to go where God leads them, to listen, and to respond. Bishop Lobsinger encouraged members to support their parish priests and to keep the League’s spiritual aspect a central focus so that women can grow in their faith lives. Dorothy Johansen gave a thorough report outlining the League’s 2024 financials to June 30th. Members were able to ask questions to gain a better understanding of where the League stood financially. Kim Scammell provided an update on national office, noting each staff person’s role and responsibilities. She explained that “staff work within the parameters set by the board.”

Plenary sessions that followed included a cheerful presentation with song and dance for the 2025 Toronto National Convention Committee, the implementation committee’s final report, a Unity Outreach task force presentation, and a transparent question and answer session addressing any questions or comments submitted by members.

There was a spirit-filled Closing Eucharistic Celebration and Reaffirmation of Officers at the Holy Spirit Church. Members dressed in formal attire for the Gala Banquet and enjoyed a flavoursome dinner featuring Saskatoon berries! On Thursday, August 15th, members could attend breakfast at the Berry Barn, a premiere Saskatoon attraction offering a greenhouse filled with colourful flowers and a homestyle brunch on the patio.

As members had to say goodbye to each other with the convention coming to a close, many felt renewed and fuelled with the passion to say “yes” to what each of them was being called to do by God to make an impact within their own journeys. The annual national convention was an affirmation of the sisterhood of women who share their hearts and intellect in a welcoming community of unity, always willing to learn more, and excited to know where God will send them next! †



Closing Mass.

Updates from the National Executive

NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ADVISOR



Bishop Wayne Lobsinger
Hamilton, Ontario

This has been my first year as the national spiritual advisor, so a significant part of my service this year has been getting to know the League and how it works. I have participated in the executive meetings, and to the best of my ability, I have

been present at the monthly administrative committee meetings.

My biggest effort during this time was preparing for and offering a webinar for all spiritual advisors. Approximately 40 spiritual advisors from across the country registered for this hour-long presentation. Unfortunately, due to a technical glitch, none of the spiritual advisors were able to log in—a fact that we did not know about until after the presentation was completed. Fortunately, the presentation was recorded, and the national office team was able to send a link to the recording to all those who had registered.

I look forward to another year of serving the League as the national spiritual advisor.

I am praying for all of you. †

NATIONAL PRESIDENT



Shari Quinta
Waterloo, Ontario

It has been a busy, active and change-filled year for The Catholic Women's League of Canada!

The national theme, *Here I am Lord, send me*, came into effect January 1, 2024, and has been embraced by members. The theme focus is mental

health, and all councils have been encouraged to become aware of this incredible crisis in our communities that affects family, violence, spousal abuse, homelessness, job security and more.

The council resources produced by the implementation committee's working groups are appreciated and inspiring. Councils at all levels are encouraged to use these resources found on the national website.

The Unity Outreach was a positive experience and a success. The data received from the visits to all levels of the League has been instrumental in our future planning. The data was used to investigate the next steps from the national level to assist the other levels in their planning and work. The national board is determined to continue to educate and assist all councils in planning, ministry and service.

Three national task forces were formed to work on data from the Unity Outreach: communication, education and priorities.

Councils have embraced the new structure, which uses the League's core purposes, or three pillars, of faith, service and social justice. Positive future planning, activity and projects have been reported.

The new *Constitution & Bylaws* has been printed and distributed along with the *National Manual of Policy and Procedure*.

Board governance was a serious aspect that came out of planning strategically and has been concentrated on at the national level. It was realized that the organization needs to be more focused and streamlined. Work continues with sessions at the national board level with a consultant who teaches and walks us through exercises in planning and focused approaches. A concentrated effort to streamline communication at all levels of the League has been a priority. Communiqués from the national officers were sent to the next level secretary and president by email for distribution and placed on the national website. A calendar of events was added to the national website, communiqué guidelines were developed and approved, and provincial and diocesan councils were encouraged to use generic emails that could be available on the national website.

An Indigenous relations *ad hoc* committee has been formed at the national level to continue working on awareness and relationships regarding truth and reconciliation.

The national board agreed to support two Development and Peace partner projects: food and nutritional security and climate change in the Sahel and management and prevention of acute malnutrition in Gedo, Somalia, through the national voluntary fund established for Development and Peace.

Change is healthy, and The Catholic Women's League of Canada is experiencing change or perhaps is "evolving." We listen and go where we are called. *Here I am Lord, send me.* †

VICE-PRESIDENT



Betty Colaneri
Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario

The national theme, *Here I am Lord, send me* has resonated in my service to the League from the very beginning. As I presently serve in the role of vice-president, I find it has an even more profound, meaningful purpose. When Isaiah proclaimed "Here am I" in Isaiah 6:8, it was his way of saying he was here on earth for a specific purpose, and he wanted that purpose to be the one the Lord intended for him. Isaiah immediately added "send me" to let the Lord know he was willing to do whatever the Lord asked of him. Those words written thousands of years ago are still significant today. It is the answer to our ministry and our declaration of our commitment that we are available to God to do his will.

In humble readiness to embrace the role as vice-president, I found it touched on many of the working parts that make the League the wonderful organization it is. As liaison for the implementation committee and working groups, I attended meetings and relayed information to the national executive/board. Completed resources from the committee were communicated to the members by communiqués and announcements on the national website.

An education and training task force was implemented to establish if there was a gap in resources needed by the members and to ensure members have the proper tools to fulfill their ministry in the League. As chairperson of the task force, meetings were organized with board members, resources were researched, and a final report was given to national office for inclusion in the annual report to the board. The Mentor Skills Bank was also researched and included in the report. I also participated in the communications task force and the online government meetings.

In response to the growing concern regarding membership, the '1' Campaign was initiated. The logo stressed not only recruiting membership but also maintaining and regaining membership. Monthly communiqués were sent to the provincial vice-presidents for distribution with a catchphrase to be used to assist with sparking interest in the League.

When asked by the national president, the response "send me" came into being as I attended diocesan and provincial conventions. I was honoured to have the opportunity to give presentations on "Are you the '1'?" in reference to the '1' Campaign for membership and "The Vineyard of the Lord."

To maintain open communications and address concerns that may be occurring in various areas across Canada, monthly meetings were conducted with provincial vice-presidents and the three subcommittee members. The workshop that will be conducted at this year's convention will be in collaboration with subcommittee members as well as two board members who graciously answered the call.

God asked, "Whom shall I send?" He asks because he does not force anyone to follow. *Here I am Lord, send me*, is the humble thank you to God and choosing to follow. For God's universal plan, there is no expiry date for the response, "I say yes, my Lord!" †

NATIONAL SECRETARY-TREASURER



Dorothy Johansen
Edmonton, Alberta

"Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, 'Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?' And I said, 'Here am I; send me!'" (Isa 6:8).

A good way to become involved quickly in any organization is to serve on its executive, especially as the secretary or treasurer, assisting in setting agendas and budgets and communicating to members. It also requires paying careful attention to the business of each meeting and accepting the responsibility of managing the organization with the other executive members. The benefit of serving on the executive is knowing you are doing your best for all members and getting to know individual members so that they become your good friends.

The national secretary-treasurer is responsible for communications and is a member of five committees: administrative, magazine, website, finance and bursary.

From last year's Unity Outreach, communications to and from all levels were identified as needing improvement. This led to the national executive striking a communications task force to determine how we want to communicate throughout the League in a more coordinated manner using new or available channels. The resultant task force report will be reviewed by the executive and lead to final implementation this fall.

The magazine is published three times a year in hardcopy and is also available as a digital version on the national website. We have seen more members opt-in through their membership convenor to receive only a digital version, saving money and the environment.

We continue to update the website, cwl.ca, and we added an event calendar, which is currently on the home page with the most recent news. We have retired the promotional catholicwomenunite.ca website.

We maintain and post on the League's social media accounts on Facebook, Instagram, X, YouTube and Pinterest. Many councils are submitting news of council events for Spotlight, highlighting the good works and events throughout the country that we can share to provide ideas for others.

As chairperson of the finance committee, and with the help of the executive director, we led the executive to set and approve the annual budget in the fall and then continue to manage it throughout the year. As noted in the 2023 financial statements, the per capita increase and our investment returns have allowed us to start rebuilding our treasury. This year, we have set a balanced budget, and with six months in hand, we are meeting the budget. As we have budgeted 10% of per capita fees for League development this year, we continued to encourage councils to consider applying for League development funds. We also continue to encourage individual members to apply for a bursary for studies that meet the Objects of the League. †

PAST PRESIDENT



Fran Lucas
Edmonton, Alberta

Here I am Lord, send me is our reminder that the gifts God has given us are meant to be used for his glory and the benefit of others. To not explore where you can share your gifts with others is to miss out on many possibilities.

In January and April, I met with the provincial past presidents for energized and fruitful discussions. Some of the suggestions generated from thoughtful consideration included:

- offering an orientation for all presidents while stressing the importance of joyfulness and following the theme *Here I am Lord, send me*
- leading a national novena for an increase in membership and or successful filling of executive positions at all levels

- modelling how to write joint communiqués
- explaining and showing the benefits of mentoring

The archive committee has been discussing a request to create an archiving webinar/training video, which has led to research across the country for suitable presentation content. A variety of options are being explored, and the plan is to have a finished resource in the fall.

I have begun working with a small group of members to undertake a close, methodical review of the *National Manual of Policy and Procedure*. What a great refresher this has already been, and we are only one-third of the way through the manual. Past presidents at all levels are encouraged to do a similar review of their policy and procedure manuals.

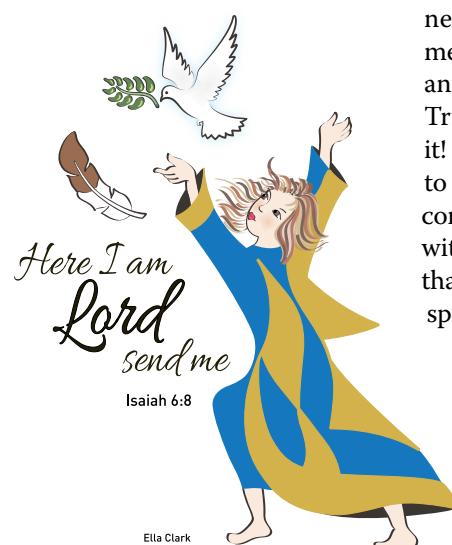
The past provincial presidents I have been so blessed to be working with take the theme to heart knowing that as a past president, our work continues. This is also true for the committees I serve on—we are rejuvenated by the thoughts and proposed actions of what is to come.

The history of the League has been beautifully preserved in the 100th anniversary coffee table book available for sale through the national office. All councils are encouraged to capture their history. It is surprising what you may learn. An opportunity for me to learn more about our history and our members resulted from the random visit of a friend's mom who, at 106 years of age, has many League memories to share. A long-time member, her personal story is inspiring and heartwarming. Also, recently spending time with a new member gave me insight into an earlier life lived under the most challenging of conditions, followed by a transformation that would make for a bestselling novel.

The theme, *Here I am Lord, send me*, is a great reminder to think about how and where each of us in our respective roles is being "sent." The Lord's "sending" can be to someone as close as across the table from you at a meeting or to someone you met at a convention miles from home.

It can be a call to both new and seasoned members to stand for an executive position. Try it... you'll love it! Feeling honoured to have been "sent" continues to fill me with an abundance of thankfulness for the spiritual and personal

growth that I totally attribute to The Catholic Women's League of Canada. †



NATIONAL CHAIRPERSON OF FAITH



Rolande Chernichan
Île Des Chênes East,
Manitoba

National President Shari Guinta's theme, *Here I am Lord, send me*, became her clarion call to members to actively and intentionally listen for God's call. The theme's complementary prayer gave a fresh spiritual focus for the 2023-2025 term.

I have been especially mindful of listening for God's call in my personal life and through my role and responsibilities in serving the League. All chairperson of faith undertakings have been in support of the theme and in the hope that a point of information being communicated might resonate as a 'call' to one or more members... that they might be inspired to respond "*Here I am Lord, send me*".

My article on the theme in *The Canadian League* offered members points to ponder for listening and discerning God's call through ordinary life circumstances, supported by the guiding words of Pope Francis, where everyday encounters and situations are occasions to respond to God's call.

My second article, "Faith and Mental Health," supported the theme's focus, offering members an understanding of mental health and the relationship between physical, spiritual and mental health. It urged support for those who suffer through accompaniment with love and dignity. Another article, "Women in the Life and Mission of the Church," co-authored with Sr. Susan Scott, presented members with a synodal report of proposals specific to women arising from the Synodal Assembly in October 2023.

Communiqués contained various 'calls' to members: to a year of prayer in preparation for Jubilee 2025 and for energies to be guided by the church's liturgical calendar, calendar of faith events and list of faith resources available on the national website. A Lenten webinar featuring "Mary's Way of the Cross" was well received. On a bi-weekly basis, an educational message supporting an attached prayer was posted to the League's website and social media.

Members were encouraged to discuss the synodal synthesis document, with attention to the role of women in the life and mission of the church. Ecumenical and interfaith endeavours were encouraged in conjunction with the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity and World Day of Prayer. Prayer and support for consecrated religious men and women was promoted.

Subsequent communiqués promoted webinars offered through the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCB) in preparation for Jubilee 2025. Members were urged to be informed about Catholic teaching on the dignity of the human person, summarized in the position papers regarding abortion and euthanasia and medical assistance in dying. Support and participation in events promoting a positive, life-affirming message were encouraged. Members were called to participate in the CCCB's National Family and Life Week, to be informed about Catholic social teaching, and to organize and participate in 12 Hours of Prayer for Palliative Care.

Chairpersons were called to encourage spiritual advisors to attend a webinar National Spiritual Advisor Bishop Wayne Lobsinger offered. The League's longstanding affiliation with the World Union of Catholic Women's Organisations (WUCWO) was promoted. Members received an invitation from WUCWO's World Women's Observatory to participate in an online event, "Conversation in the Spirit," regarding the future role of women in the life and mission of the church.

The theme beckons members to listen deeply for God's call "with the ear of your heart" in encounters and situations, as women share in the hopes for the church's future, begun by the synod on synodality. †

NATIONAL CHAIRPERSON OF SERVICE



Joline Belliveau
Overton, Nova Scotia

- Provincial subsidies were available to councils who wanted to host a workshop. Six councils applied; three of them gave workshops on mental health, including speakers.
- Members were made aware of Mental Health Week and encouraged to visit the Canadian Mental Health Association website and view the compassion toolkit.
- Donations of clothing were gathered, and quilts were made to support patients in mental health units and programs.
- A shower was held for women and children at a shelter that offers a haven for women involved in abusive relationships.
- Councils shared resources and issues affecting mental health among members.
- To reduce loneliness, councils acknowledged milestone birthdays and anniversaries in long-term facilities, sent cards, donated to a haven home, and served dinner to a seniors' club.

- A female was sponsored in a recovery house for women with addictions.
- Members collected personal hygiene items and socks for shelters. Some councils organized food and clothing drives and financially donated to shelters and food banks.
- The impact of domestic violence on women's mental and physical health was emphasized during a webinar on domestic violence.
- Members attended "We Care Days," which addressed issues such as mental health and wellness for seniors.
- Members attended a seminar called "Beyond M—Mental Health Challenges."
- A resolution was put forward at the provincial level regarding the elimination of the mature minor doctrine in mental health, urging the provincial government to include parents/legal guardians in the implementation of mental health treatment plans for children 16 years and younger.
- Some newsletters focused on research showing how certain foods can affect mental health, feelings and behaviours. References were made to a newsletter with information on "Nutrition, Your Brain, and Mental Health." The article was written with references to March being nutrition month and the importance of a proper balance in the right foods we eat and the accurate amount of food we eat, which can affect our mental health.
- Members across Canada watched the ShareLife Speaker Series "Healing with Compassion: Mental Health and Substance Abuse Recovery"

All of the above actions were taken by members of the Catholic Women's League to alleviate the anguish and heavy toll on people who suffer from mental health issues—depression, suicidal thoughts, loneliness and homelessness. †

NATIONAL CHAIRPERSON OF SOCIAL JUSTICE



Glenda Carson
Dartmouth, Nova Scotia

Social Justice Subcommittee
Members: Life Member Sharon Ciebin, Nancy Boucher and Shelley De-Serres.

Resolutions Subcommittee
Non-Executive Members: Life Member Patricia Weller and Susan Kaller.

This report covers the most prominent areas of activity for the reporting period. It does not reflect all role activities, such as participating on the national priorities task force and coordination of the

vetting of provincial council resolutions for 2024.

The national theme, *Here I am Lord, send me*, holds significant relevance for social justice initiatives. An article in *The Canadian League* winter issue provided examples of social justice initiatives for members relevant to the theme. The spring issue of *The Canadian League* included an article on ageism and how this widespread bias affects seniors' mental health. National social justice communiqués encouraged members to lend voices of advocacy for those at risk from medical assistance in dying (MAiD) and the protection of youth from pornography. Members were urged to use the newly developed MAiD postcards to motivate legislators to protect those most vulnerable, including a call to remove mental illness as a criterion for MAiD. Action was also taken regarding the request from the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCB) for members to support a petition regarding *Bill S-210: Protecting Young Persons from Exposure to Pornography Act*.

Online meetings occurred with the provincial chairpersons of social justice/legislation and the national social justice standing committee subcommittee members. These online meetings afforded a practical way to share information, discuss initiatives and provide peer support. The online meetings will remain a priority in the upcoming year.

A national executive visit to Ottawa to discuss resolution topics was planned for February 2024. Scheduling challenges for in-person meetings prevented the visit from taking place. It has been rescheduled for fall. From the perspective of national resolutions, "The Tragedy of Child Soldiers" and "Fast Facts About Fast Fashion" (Resolution 2023.01 Combating Textile Waste in Canada) were published in the winter issue of *The Canadian League*.

I attended the Palliative Care Symposium in Toronto in May as a League representative. A collaborative effort by the CCCB and the Pontifical Academy for Life, the event outcome called for palliative care services to be prioritized as a viable option for MAiD. A complete report has been submitted. I also attended discussions on MAiD legislation hosted by the CCCB Office for Life and Family and participated, by invitation from the Ontario Provincial Council, in an online discussion regarding the need for support for Bill S-210.

Recommendations for revising and developing position papers were presented to the national executive for adoption in February. More information will be available after the national convention.

Adoption of the terms of reference for the new national Indigenous relations subcommittee occurred in February. This subcommittee is a national leadership response to "give life to the apology by Pope Francis in his penitential pilgrimage in 2022 to Canada and to build on the 94 calls to action of truth and reconciliation"

(*Walking Together with Indigenous Catholic Women*). The committee will provide resources, recommend education initiatives for Indigenous and non-Indigenous members, and foster national Indigenous relations initiatives. The subcommittee will begin its work in earnest in the fall. †

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Kim Scammell
Winnipeg, Manitoba

How does national office amplify the theme *Here I am Lord, send me*? By answering the call to be adaptable and flexible, to be present to members within the limits set by the board, and to be faithful and good stewards of members' time

and treasure.

Staff members are adaptable. They often rise to new opportunities placed before them. It may be to use technology to summarize a 900-page annual report survey into 60 pages. It may be to determine how to track downloads on a website. It might be how to be present as an assistant at a board meeting. It may be how to work with councils that don't want to be contacted. It may be to expand the knowledge of how to manage an Excel spreadsheet of convention registrants. It may be how to summarize the results of the immense amount of feedback from the Unity Outreach. It may be how to pay expenses via e-transfer. It may be in the development of an e-shop for the sale of supplies. Whatever the project and no matter the complexity, staff must be and are ready to learn each and every day. They are DIY, do-it-yourselfers. With a team of five, this is a must. They expand and broaden their experiences well beyond their position descriptions.

Staff members are empathetic. While they are hired to provide administrative support to national board members, they will respond to grassroots members and regional leaders who reach out. They listen with care and compassion to the stories they are entrusted with, to the curiosity, the achievements, the pride, the frustration, and, yes, the overwhelm. Staff members help these members navigate this very complex and complicated organization we call the League by helping them find the local leader who is best placed to answer them. Staff members do so with tact and kindness, treating members as they would members of their own families. They are present to members—within the limits set by the board.

Staff members are prudent. They are aware of their duty to manage carefully the fiscal and human resources

given to them through a board approved budget and board approved staff position decisions. They examine ways to complete tasks in the most efficient manner so as not to consume labour hours unnecessarily. They make frugal choices when a purchase is required, and often delay purchasing decisions as far as is reasonably possible so as not to misuse the fees that members provide. They manage the assets they are entrusted with carefully and with due regard to ensuring excess funds do not sit idle but are invested in a socially responsible manner; they know every extra dollar of investment income reduces the needs for future per capita increases. They are faithful and good stewards of members' time and treasure.

Staff members amplify the theme in all they do. The Lord has sent them to serve in the League—to be adaptable, empathetic and prudent. They do so in awe of and support for the mission of this great organization. †

ALBERTA MACKENZIE



Betsy Fletcher
Cold Lake, Alberta

Members of Alberta Mackenzie Provincial Council welcomed the new theme *Here I Am Lord, send me* and were eager to use it in their councils. We soon realized that the theme speaks to our faith, witness and intentional discipleship.

As members, we are invited to put faith into practice every day and assist others in doing the same. We are challenged to think about where we see Christ in our lives and how we can spread his light to others.

Councils began using the theme prayer at meetings and gatherings. At the Provincial Council Midwinter Meeting, we invited Rev. Jim Corrigan, Vicar General for the Archdiocese of Edmonton, to speak to us about intentional discipleship, and we were reminded that as members, we hear the collective call to come and follow; all that we do falls within the realm of intentional discipleship as we incorporate faith, service and social justice in our planning and activities. Mention has been made to arrange an online retreat(s) and to provide theme-related information, quotes and questions for parish bulletins.

In April, I, then chairperson of organization, along with then-President Mary Hunt, Past President Judy Look, and Vice-President and Chairperson of Spiritual Development Janet MacPhee met with the provincial minister of health at the Alberta Legislature. It was a very productive meeting. We presented some concerns we

have regarding our ongoing Seniors' Advocate Initiative, euthanasia, palliative care, and food waste. We also took the opportunity to mention some of the League's other past resolutions. It turns out we were "speaking to the choir" as the minister has been a long-time League member.

Diocesan conventions and the provincial convention focused on the new theme. National President Shari Guinta joined us at the provincial convention and shared with us how she was inspired to adopt the theme. Speakers were invited who touched on the theme while including the topics of palliative care, mental health, dignity of life and euthanasia, Catholic education, poverty, witnessing Christ in others, intentional discipleship, programs for youth in government care, etc. Workshops provided information and encouragement to explore the theme in their parish councils. At our closing banquet, we offered a skit entitled "Here I Am Lord," which, among much laughter, reminded us why we joined the League and continue to belong.

Members were encouraged to contact their members of parliament (MP) regarding Bill S-210 *An Act to restrict young persons' online access to sexually explicit material*. This bill was before the Senate in June and, as yet, has not been passed. Our letter-writing campaign was to encourage our MPs to vote in favour of this bill once it was presented to the House of Commons. We were happy to hear that some, but not all, MPs responded favourably to letters sent.

"For God and Canada." †

B.C. & YUKON



Catherine L'Heureux
Vernon, British Columbia

We, the members of the B.C. & Yukon Catholic Women's League prayed, crafted, studied, read, wrote, emailed, served, fundraised and stood up for life constantly, consistently and continually "For God and Canada." *We did it all!*

When national council said go, we went.

God is calling us to educate members on the new three core values. To do this we had a photo contest titled "A picture is worth a thousand words" asking members to tell us how they pictured faith, service and social justice. The winners were announced at our provincial convention and given award certificates. At the convention, National President Shari Guinta gave a workshop on the three core values with the highlight being suggestions for projects.

The new national sub theme mental health was acted on by our councils in many ways. One diocesan council had an emergency room doctor speak on the topic of good mental health and Provincial Spiritual Advisor Fr. John Garden (who is also a registered counselor) spoke to us on anxiety.

A workshop titled "Welcoming our New Immigrants" was presented at the provincial convention. We asked all convention attendees to wear a costume, hat or flag from their country of origin. We sang songs and broke into small groups to discuss various aspects of immigration. Because we believe new immigrants will make up a significant portion of our councils, we also discussed ways on how to welcome and invite them to join the League.

Councils were concerned about the environment. God is asking us to plant trees, reduce, reuse, recycle, repurpose, regift and conserve water. We did not give out bags at our convention and instead donated money to Chalice. Councils studied *Laudato Si'* and cleaned roads and parks. We have a 101-year-old member who picks up litter weekly. Some councils ask members to bring their own coffee mugs instead of using disposable cups. Other councils ask their members not to buy bottled water and to recycle meeting agendas. Many councils have recycling and compost bins in their kitchens to use after League breakfasts, lunches, teas and dinners. Councils acted on the resolutions concerning combating textile waste and reducing food loss and waste by writing letters to the various levels of government and having speakers at meetings.

We always try to have fun at meetings and encourage laughter because laughter is good for the soul. We have jokes, quizzes and song evenings. At the provincial convention, we had a colouring contest titled "All for God's Glory." The winners submitted masterpieces and were awarded certificates. Two skits were performed that brought the house down with laughter.

We are so thankful to our League spiritual advisors who say Mass, prepare retreats, give advice and humour us.

As provincial president, I heartily agree that our members did adhere to our national theme. *Here I Am Lord, send me* with enthusiasm, hard work, integrity and joy! †

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.

MANITOBA



Lucille Rossington
Flin Flon, Manitoba

In looking at the annual reports and being at the three conventions that I attended, parishes councils are slowly starting to focus on the theme.

At St. Boniface Diocesan Council's convention, the keynote speaker was

Archbishop Emeritus Sylvain Lavoie, who gave a presentation on the "12 Steps to Everything," comparing all addictions relating to our mental health.

On April 20th, I attended Winnipeg Diocesan Council's convention. At this event keynote speaker, Tara Snider, chief executive officer of Sara Riel Inc. spoke about mental health and addictions. Postcards on mental health were distributed to be forwarded to elected officials.

Mary Mother of the Church Parish Council (Winnipeg) hosted an April 21st luncheon where the guest speaker was Sheryl Giesbrecht from the Canada Mental Health Association. Her topic covered mental health and wellness.

Keewatin-The Pas Diocesan Council's convention in May included a resolution workshop that was brought forth and adopted entitled "Expand Bill C64 to include prescription drug coverage for people with mental illness." This resolution was also adopted at the provincial convention and is being brought forth for consideration at the national convention. †

MILITARY ORDINARIATE



Theresa Schopf
Nepean, Ontario

I am very pleased to report how the councils of the Military Ordinariate Provincial Council have begun to implement the theme of mental health, which was chosen as the focus of the national theme, *Here I am Lord, send me.*

One council started the year off with a 12-week course including various topics on mental health, including depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, Alzheimer's disease, chronic pain, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and sleep disorders. The course used the format

of weekly newsletters, providing information and tools to support the members of their council and the base community. Once word got out, an invitation was extended to all councils within the Military Ordinariate to participate.

Further to the theme, the provincial council chose to focus on houselessness, which is very prevalent in our communities. It is not known how many veterans are houseless, as the literature states between 2,000 and 10,000 veterans are houseless. At the end of March 2024, all councils were invited to participate in the provincial project by learning, listening and acting on the issue of houselessness in their community. Instructions and suggestions were included in the invitation, as well as a prayer for the houseless written by the provincial chairperson of faith. Councils were invited to submit a report and present their project at the 56th annual provincial convention. Just under one-half of the councils submitted a report and/or presented their project. Other councils will be starting their project in the fall and report on them within the next year.

We are learning so much about houselessness; however, due to space constraints, I am only highlighting a few.

- Home for Heroes is a national organization that provides villages of 15 to 25 fully functional tiny houses (300 ft²) temporarily for veterans facing a crisis as they return to civilian life. The villages include shared spaces such as a community garden and sports area, as well as supports to help residents transition to civilian life. Currently, there are villages in Calgary, Edmonton and Kingston, with another one being built in Winnipeg.
- Veteran's House Canada is a national organization that provides permanent, affordable and supportive housing for veterans. The residences are fully functional apartments with shared spaces such as a community garden and recreational areas and access to supports for veterans. The first building opened in February 2021 in Ottawa and land has been secured in Edmonton to build another. They hope to build residences across Canada.
- The Legion Foundation B.C./Yukon has recently partnered with South Vancouver Housing Society to support Veterans House Victoria in Colwood, British Columbia. This local residence provides transitional housing and connections to services to help integrate Veterans to civilian life.

There are many other supports available in the communities of the Military Ordinariate base councils. They will be published in our newsletter, *Maryline*, over the next year. Please let us know if you are interested in learning more by emailing mocwl.info@gmail.com. †

NEW BRUNSWICK



Madonna Clark
Fredericton, New Brunswick

Greetings from New Brunswick, located under Quebec's Gaspe Peninsula and beside Maine.

In January, New Brunswick embraced the new theme *Here I am Lord, send me*. The first thing we did was to change the cover photograph on the provincial council's Facebook page to reflect the new theme. This social media tool is a great way to share what parish councils have done and continue to do "For God and Canada." We have friends from all over the country who comment on the wonderful things going on in New Brunswick, and it encourages us to continue our work.

All occasion cards were ordered and used as thank you and congratulatory messages spreading the word of the national theme. One was sent to welcome Bishop Michel Proulx to Bathurst. In his return thank you message, he wrote, "Your national theme is very meaningful for me." When asked to become bishop, "I had to say deep in my heart, *'Here I am Lord, send me!*'"

Theme cards were sent to all outgoing presidents thanking them for their service and encouraging them to let their name stand for provincial election in 2025, listening to God's call to serve.

At the monthly meeting, the provincial chairperson of faith encouraged members to reach out to God when they get up every morning and say, "Today is a new day Lord, send me to do your will." What a great way to start the day. When the League magazine came out with two prayer cards, members were encouraged to give one to a friend to help spread the meaning of the theme and entice new members. Members reported reciting the prayer at their meetings.

During the convention, members were asked to open their hearts to the Holy Spirit, seek to deepen their spiritual lives and strengthen their faith. The theme challenges us to be open to God's call and to respond with a willing and generous spirit. It has been proven that friendships have a huge impact on our mental health and happiness. Lasting friendship is a blessing for everyone.

Convention presider and guest speaker Bishop Proulx spoke of the theme in his homily. On the Saturday morning, a YouTube version of what we call the 'theme song,' "Here I am Lord," was playing. Bishop Proulx shared his interpretation of Exodus 3, verses 2–14. His words, "This convention is possibly a detour in our life to seek God and enhance our understanding. 'Here I am,' may be a way of saying to Jesus, 'I'm ready to collaborate in your

wishes.'" Joking, he said, "Be careful with your theme. It can be dangerous!" implying that making that commitment comes with great responsibility. Bishop Proulx also joked that "[he] is very popular—a lot of people want[ed] your bishop to be with them, but [he] was here with [members] today."

Here I am Lord, send me, and inspire us to live out our faith with renewed spark and dedication. †

NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR



Linda Corbett
Colliers, Newfoundland and Labrador

The provincial executive decided not to implement a specific project relating to mental health issues but to support current activities within councils and to consider any new initiatives/activities brought forward

under the lens of how each council can support these initiatives/activities. Given our geographical distances and diversity, each project would not be suitable for each area, but there were areas of commonality.

One area in which all councils were active was the postcard campaign for medical assistance in dying (MAiD). The focus has not just been on the physical distribution of postcards but on education on the changes in MAiD with the inclusion of mental illness as an eligible category. Councils provided presentations on the history of MAiD, and the ensuing discussion highlighted the importance of members as women of faith and action as obvious advocates to fight this criteria inclusion. Members were encouraged to become advocates for more and better mental health facilities within the province and to support the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCB) in its demand that Catholic hospitals not participate in MAiD.

In addition to the MAiD postcard campaign, postcards regarding mental illness were distributed with a special emphasis on one requesting that Canada provide for the mental health needs of its youth. Federal and provincial government representatives' contact information was provided so members could address their concerns. Related to youth, information was provided on the summary of national chairpersons' request to support Bill S-210: *Protecting Young Persons from Exposure to Pornography Act*.

A third area of continued importance was palliative care. Councils participated in 12 Hours of Prayer for Palliative Care and were educated by a symposium on the topic, highlighting how members could support the call

for more and better palliative care. The sanctity of life is foremost in the minds of members, and relatedly, many support the provincial Centre for Life and help enhance the lives of seniors by visiting them at their homes and in senior care homes. Similar support is provided to local food banks and to the Relay for Life Campaign, which raised funds for Daffodil Place—a hospice for youth cancer patients and their families.

The three areas of faith, service and social justice are intertwined, and as a provincial executive, we continue to educate ourselves on the responsibilities of each area. At the provincial convention, we had a discussion on the connectedness of these areas and decided that the executive would prepare information on overlap and distinctions to help make new initiatives easier to address with the focus on mental health.

Ongoing (and previously existing) activities in support of mental health crossed over the three areas as follows:

- participated in National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, World Day of Prayer, International Day of Prayer and Awareness against Human Trafficking
- used the League magazine, website and Facebook to become informed about current legislation, especially in relation to mental health issues
- provided a service project to inmates at His Majesty's Penitentiary—a collection of books, art supplies and other materials.
- educated our parish and wider communities on MAiD, youth, homelessness, human trafficking, bullying and palliative care.

We continue to consider the theme *Here I am Lord, send me* as we work on projects already in place and consider new projects relating to mental health. †

NOVA SCOTIA



Jessie Parkinson
New Glasgow, Nova Scotia

Members in Nova Scotia joyfully welcomed the new theme, *Here I Am Lord, send me*, in January. I received numerous emails from individual members reminding me that the hymn of the same name in our parish hymnals (CBW III) would be a wonderful addition to celebrations in 2024-2025.

Both diocesan councils ordered banners displaying the theme for their diocesan conventions/annual meetings of members (AMM) and for the use of their parish councils. Antigonish Diocesan Council loaned its banner to the provincial council for its AMM.

All councils used the new theme as the focal point at our spring AMMs, and guest speakers expanded upon the theme in their presentations. We used the theme image as the cover for our report books and liturgy books and incorporated theme messages in our spiritual programs. We also used the wonderful prayer given to us by Bishop Lobsinger and printed it for all members to use in their prayer services.

Our three speakers compared the responses of various prophets to the call of the Lord; while Moses said, "Send someone else," Isaiah said, "*Here I am Lord, send me*." Just as their responses differed, there are many ways to accept God's call. Fr. Daniel MacLennan, the newly appointed spiritual advisor for Antigonish Diocesan Council, urged members to "respond as Isaiah did: step out of your comfort zone, take risks, make sacrifices. Responding helps us to grow."

With that in mind we will hold our provincial executive meeting in person in September with the theme *Send me to respond to the mental health crisis in our communities*. The meeting will be an information session on mental health with a guest speaker as well as a guided brainstorming session on what we can offer to parish councils as suggestions for projects. We will work on the topic through the lens of the three pillars of faith, service and social justice. If possible, we would like to offer two or three suggestions in each of the three areas which are doable in communities large and small. I will issue a challenge to each of our diocesan councils to work with their parish councils on resolutions for 2025 on issues related to mental health.

This spring, Antigonish Diocesan Council adopted a resolution calling on Canadian Blood Services to establish a blood collection centre in Sydney, the second-largest city in the province. With a population of over 100,000, a university with a significant immigrant population, and a soon-to-be school of medicine, residents of Sydney must travel six hours roundtrip to donate blood. Despite repeated requests, Canadian Blood Services has refused to respond to overtures to discuss the creation of even a mobile centre. Yet during this time, in newspaper and television advertisements, Canadian Blood Services has issued a warning about low blood and blood product shortages. The initiative received overwhelming support at both their diocesan and our provincial AMM. In taking leadership on this deficiency, Antigonish Diocesan Council has taken up the challenge to "send me." †

For God and Canada

ONTARIO



Colleen Martin
Thunder Bay, Ontario

The 33,000 members of The Catholic Women's League of Canada in Ontario focussed on the Objects of the League and the national theme, *Here I am Lord, send me*. Projects were initiated by provincial officers and the diocesan

presidents to bring this theme to life. The programs include faith development, projects to educate members, webinars, letter writing campaigns, as well as service projects.

The *ad hoc* truth and reconciliation working group continued to be important in Ontario. In order to support the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishop's Indigenous Reconciliation Fund—A Catholic Commitment to Healing and Reconciliation, the provincial council pledged a \$25,000 donation spread out over five years a few years ago. The third cheque was presented at the provincial convention.

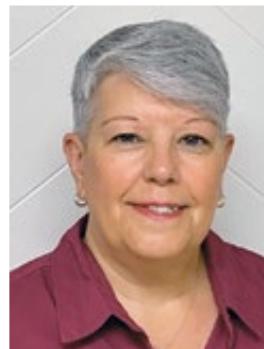
Peterborough Diocesan Council partnered with an Indigenous community, donating supplies that were lacking in their region. A few members from the Hearst-Moosonee Diocese regularly visit the parish in Moosonee to reach out to women living in these isolated communities in friendship. The trips are made at their own expense. Several councils held food drives and collected socks, warm clothing and toiletries to help the less fortunate.

The support of the clergy is vital to all councils. Annual meetings are held with the Assembly of Catholic Bishops of Ontario. The provincial council offers bursaries to seminarians, with donations coming from councils and members across the province.

One of the highlights of this year was the provincial council's visit to Queen's Park on April 9th. A breakfast reception was held in the dining room of the legislature building and every member of provincial parliament and the premier were invited. It was a wonderful opportunity to tell them about the work of the League and to talk about the resolutions that were brought forward. It is faith in action.

The Catholic Women's League in Ontario continues to work "For God and Canada," facing its challenges with the guidance of the Holy Spirit and our patroness, Our Lady of Good Counsel. †

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND



Karen Rossiter
St. Peters, Prince Edward Island

When the new theme, *Here I am Lord, send me*, was introduced in January, the 27 councils of the Prince Edward Island Catholic Women's League were delighted to have a new theme to focus on for the next two years.

The provincial council had an education session on the new theme and what it represented. When the subtheme of mental health was chosen, the provincial council decided that Prince Edward Island would keep the theme general this year to allow the parish councils to develop activities and events that focused on mental health the way they would like to.

There was an education session on the new theme at the winter area meetings that were held across the province in March. This included an explanation of the image and prayer chosen for the theme. There were also sessions on what we were already doing within our parish councils that revolved around the theme. This was very productive as many councils realized that they were already doing many activities and hosting fundraisers that were directly or indirectly affecting people with mental health within their parishes, communities and the province.

Parish councils have incorporated the theme into many aspects of their meetings and events. Councils have used the theme prayer in either the opening or closing of meetings. There have been educational and brainstorming sessions on the theme to see what councils are currently doing and what more can be done within their parishes and communities regarding mental health.

The new theme was chosen as the theme for the provincial convention held in May. Friday evening's spiritual reflection was theme-focused. On Saturday, guest speaker John Ruetz, President of the Catholic Health Alliance of Canada, focused on what the Catholic Health Alliance is and what it represents in health care. The second guest speaker was National President Shari Guinta, who presented the workshop "How to be a Mary in a Martha World," which was very well received and allowed members to contemplate how we interact with others and how that relates to our mental health.

Our provincial subsidy is open to all parish councils in Prince Edward Island who wish to apply. The council must host an education session, retreat or workshop and incorporate the new theme into that event. There are usually multiple applications for the subsidy each year.

The provincial council held a brainstorming session at its June meeting to discuss what could be done to further assist parish councils in acting on the new theme and the focus on mental health so that they could incorporate this into all upcoming activities, workshops and presentations.

Both the provincial and parish councils will continue to embrace and engage the new theme of *Here I am Lord, send me* with a mental health focus throughout the next year with enthusiasm and devotion to the League and Our Lady of Good Counsel. †

QUEBEC



Anna Bawer-DiLallo
Candiac, Quebec

Quebec Provincial Council's executive participated in a presentation on the healing powers of many flowers that grow in Quebec. It was decided that the council would lead an initiative to put together a document to be called *Bouquet for Mental Health and Wellness*. This living and evolving document will be developed based on feedback from all councils across the province and will be available to all as it develops over the next two years. As each initiative is undertaken by each council, the presidents have been asked to send in a summary with all pertinent information that other councils may refer to and use.

To launch this project, every council in Quebec was sent a presentation on the symbolism and healing powers of flowers. Each council was asked to pick at least one flower and to identify initiatives they will undertake over the next two years that will focus on mental health and wellness under the three pillars of faith, service and social justice. To affirm their commitment and to share their ideas, council presidents were asked to bring centrepieces using their flowers for the tables at the provincial convention and provide a brief summary of their plans. An extra flower was brought to create a centrepiece for the head table to symbolize that in working together, we can create a beautiful bouquet to symbolize awareness and how many acts combined create an abundance.

Initiatives identified include:

- Sunflower, a symbol of resilience and strength, encouraging acts of kindness, especially towards seniors and the homeless.
- Lily of the Valley, which alleviates depression countered by visiting the lonely and supporting the vulnerable.
- Forget-me-nots, a symbol of memory reminding members not to forget those suffering.

- Chamomile, used to treat anxiety and insomnia, seeing members reach out to those needing comfort.
- Lavender, whose fragrance alleviates stress and anxiety seeing members deliver care packages to mental health facilities.
- Hydrangea, which represents the complex nature of mental health issues, encourages the need for continued education by experts
- Roses, whose perfume releases endorphins and symbolizes friendship and love as members extend a hand to the suffering.

Quebec's *Bouquet for Mental Health and Wellness* will include summaries of initiatives, activities, resources, contact names, prayer services, and anything councils think should be included that may help other councils and members. The hope is to share information and learn from each other. By recording an abundance of ideas, members can witness the strength of their works as women in the League and see the impact of each act.

At the provincial convention, Resolution 2024.01 Increased Supported Housing for Homeless Persons with Mental Health Issues was adopted and sent to the 104th annual national convention for consideration. The resolution asks the federal and provincial governments to provide support and increase funding for more alternative housing models, such as community-based long-term supported housing programs, for individuals with mental illness. †

SASKATCHEWAN



Helen Kayfish
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan

The Saskatchewan Provincial Council has taken the national theme, *Here I am Lord, send me*, to the councils in the province by inviting speakers to visit either provincial or diocesan meetings and the annual conventions. We have encouraged members to become involved in leadership workshops, to understand and be comfortable taking on a leadership role, and to say, "*Here I am Lord, send me*."

At its 100th annual convention in April, Prince Albert Diocesan Council invited Honorary Life Member Claire Heron as the guest speaker to speak on the League and taking an active role in the executive at the parish, diocesan and provincial levels. She spoke on how fulfilling it is to do so and how you have the strong leadership of those before you assist and guide you. The members have seen firsthand how many leaders have done just that.

The Regina diocesan president reported that leaders are ordinary people who can accomplish extraordinary things—they make things happen. They motivate others to excel by creating a culture where everyone knows their strengths and is encouraged to stretch and develop their potential. In the Saskatoon Diocese, they have done a workshop on parish mental health ministries with guest speakers. Members will take part in a walk titled “Step up for Mental Health.”

At the provincial level, I created a PowerPoint to help members transition to the League’s new structure. I have been asked to share the PowerPoint with the provincial vice-presidents and National Vice-President Betty Colaneri, which I did. The presentation was simple, easy and a bit humorous in helping members with the transition to the new structure. I have heard some rural councils are concerned about the new structure as they don’t have many members. I explained how the new

structure can work to their advantage as fewer executive members are needed to fill the positions. I know some councils have not filled all the positions, though I believe they are working through this. I created a membership contest where councils with an increase in membership with new or returning members absent for more than five years could enter. The council with the highest increase based on the percentage of membership won a free registration for those attending the provincial convention from their council. The names of the new members were also entered in a draw for two prizes. There were 66 new members by the cutoff at the end of February and others who missed the cutoff date.

With the projects that were held in the past year, we feel we have a good start on the national theme, *Here I am Lord, send me*. As the newly installed provincial president, I will be answering the call—*Here I am Lord, send me*, but only with God’s help! †



National Council Regretfully Advises The Passing of Life Member:

Shirley George

Simcoe, Ontario

Claire MacDonnell

Halifax, Nova Scotia

Irene Lefort

Honorary Life Member
Antigonish, Nova Scotia

Peggy Roche

Torbay, Newfoundland
and Labrador

In Grateful Appreciation for Service to the League

Implementation Committee

With deep appreciation and gratitude, the implementation committee recognizes and thanks the members of six working groups on the successful completion of seven strategies. Members from these working groups volunteered more than 2,300 hours and produced numerous resources and recommendations.

GOAL 1

Members of The Catholic Women's League of Canada grow in faith by sharing, witnessing, and developing leadership skills to create positive change.

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

Strategy covered: G1.F1 Improve, streamline and expedite internal and external communications.



Marilyn Blew
Grand Prairie,
Alberta



Lisa Fillingham
St. Catharines,
Ontario



Anita Kreutzwiser
Wingham,
Ontario



Maria Tejero
Prince George,
British Columbia

TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT USING TECHNOLOGY

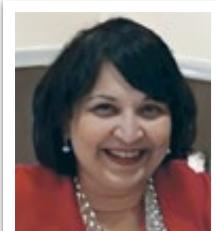
Strategies covered: G4.D2 Develop training programs to meet needs of members using technology and G1.E1 Employ technology to develop training tutorials to meet the needs of our current demographic.



Mary Capobianco
Etobicoke,
Ontario



Gail Kopp
Lumby,
British Columbia



Lynette Mendes
Mississauga,
Ontario



Anna Tremblay
North Bay,
Ontario



EVALUATE SPIRITUAL PROGRAMS

Strategy covered: G1.A3 Develop a protocol to periodically evaluate existing spiritual programs.



Marie-Claire Arseneau
Halifax,
Nova Scotia



Belinda Halbach
Legal,
Alberta



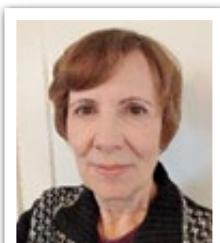
Diane Lemay
Longueuil,
Quebec

RECRUIT PARISH LEADERS

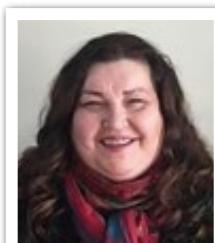
Strategy covered: G1.E2 Recruit existing parish leaders.



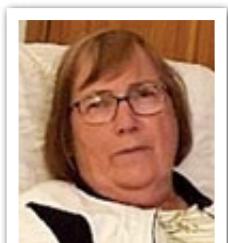
Denise Forgeron
Sydney,
Nova Scotia



Linda Maddaford
Yorkton,
Saskatchewan



Liz McInnis
Kapuskasing,
Ontario



Joan Schurter
Kitchener,
Ontario

GOAL 4

Address Critical Issues

REDESIGN CRITERIA AND ELIGIBILITY

Strategies covered: G4.D4 Evaluate and possibly redesign eligibility to run for office at higher levels and G1.C4 Expand the criteria for eligibility for office.



Annette Chaplin
Deep River,
Ontario



Jean Culliton
Teeswater,
Ontario



Margot de la Gorgendiere
Edmonton,
Alberta



Rebecca McCarrell
Tilbury,
Ontario

REDESIGN CRITERIA AND ELIGIBILITY (Continued)



Linda Marie O'Hagan
St. Catharines,
Ontario



Laurel Phyll
Campbell River,
British Columbia



Francine Tournier
Duncan,
British Columbia

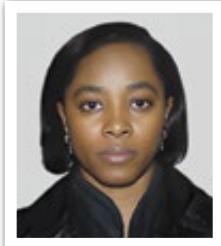


SOFTWARE TO FACILITATE COLLABORATION

Strategy covered: G4.E2 Research software to facilitate collaboration and ease the burden among teams.



Cheryl Boom
Kinkora,
Prince Edward Island



Felicia Onateh
Montreal,
Quebec

2025 ANNUAL NATIONAL CONVENTION TORONTO, ONTARIO



APRON FUNDRAISER

This handy apron, available in blue, is imprinted with the League crest. It is a one size fits most with a neck strap and waist ties to keep the apron in place. There are two spacious front bottom pockets to hold pens, paper pads, cell phones and other essentials. Great for those League functions.

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Toronto, Ontario M1C 3Y4

FOR MORE INFORMATION:
Email: lucia.vacca@sympatico.ca
Telephone: (416) 283-3536



In Memoriam

Irene Lefort

HONORARY LIFE MEMBER



Irene Lefort was born in East Bay, Cape Breton, to a family of modest means. She was the eighth of nine children and had to be kept near the fire to increase her chance of survival. Perhaps that explains Irene's determined and tenacious approach to navigating life.

Together, Irene and her husband Henry raised seven children. At the time of her passing, the Lefort family had grown to include 11 grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren, all of whom she cherished.

For 71 years, Irene was dedicated to God and Canada through The Catholic Women's League of Canada. She served at every level of the League—parish, diocesan, provincial and national. Irene served on the national executive for 12 years before becoming the national president from 1986–1988. She was never one to say, "No, I can't do that"—she always stepped up and served in whatever capacity she was needed. She revised the National Leadership and Public Speaking course and presented many workshops on it across Canada. During her time on the executive, Irene used her professional finance expertise to improve the League's financial practices.

The values Irene brought to the League also saw her serve her community in various ways. Proud of her Scottish roots, Irene

volunteered for Clan Donald at the local, provincial and national levels. She was a founder of the Naomi Society for Victims of Violence in Antigonish. In 1978, she was a founding member of the Nova Scotia Advisory Council for the Status of Women and was awarded the Queen's Jubilee Silver medal to recognize her many years of community service. Irene was a lifelong learner, studying part-time and completing her bachelor of arts degree in 2005 at the age of 71.

After retirement, Irene spearheaded the development of the diploma in ministry program at St. Francis Xavier University, a distance education program for Catholic lay ministry throughout Canada. She was responsible for many League members across the country enrolling in and completing the diploma in ministry. She also served on several boards, including the board of governors for St. Francis Xavier University and the Credit Union Deposit Insurance Corporation. Irene also promoted and served on the board of the Catholic Women's Leadership Foundation. In 2004, St. Francis Xavier University conferred on Irene a doctor of laws, *honoris causa*, recognizing her as an "exemplary community-minded citizen who has given of her talents from the local to the national stage."

A fantastic storyteller, Irene spent a lot of time regaling members with her stories. One such story that members will remember is about the time when the women of the world descended on Antigonish, a small Nova Scotia town. In

1983, the General Assembly of the World Union of Catholic Women's Organisations (WUCWO) was held for the first time in North America. Irene co-chaired the event with more than 500 Catholic women from 62 countries. It was no small feat to accommodate the languages spoken and the diversity of the attendees. She would often tell the story of the delegates using the special commemorative Mother Theresa coins from their welcome kits in the coin-operated laundry and payphones—wreaking havoc for the university maintenance who had to answer the calls for clogged machines. They talked for many years about the time the world came to Antigonish.

Irene was a cherished friend, and she will always be remembered as a leader, a role model, and an encourager, for her common-sense approach to solving problems, for her fantastic sense of humour, her love of God, family, and her neighbour.

Finally, from the reflections of Irene's family,

"If Irene could leave each of us a message, perhaps this quote from St. Theresa of Calcutta would best express her final instructions as to living our own lives: 'We must work in great faith, steadily, efficiently, and above all with great love and cheerfulness, for without this our work will be only the work of slaves, serving a hard master... spread all around you the joy of belonging to God, of living with God, of being his own.' †

Six Promises of Service: 2024 New Life Members

Jacqueline Nogier

National Life Member Liaison



Life membership is not a retirement gift for years of generous service—it is a promise members make to the League to continue to support and actively serve national council. In 2024, six women were accepted as life members. These new life members have demonstrated their love for the League by taking part in research, presentations or workshops and their encouragement of others. They are all willing to serve on committees, prepare briefs or facilitate workshops if asked. These life members have vast experience on diocesan and/or provincial councils. Members welcome these women and are grateful for their willingness and desire to continue to serve.



Connie Crichton

A late joiner to the League, Connie was first inspired by its social justice aspects. This was soon followed by the joy of sharing her Catholic faith through positions on her parish council executive and, later, on the provincial council as chairperson of spiritual

development.

During the past 13 years, Connie has served on her parish council as president and in other executive positions. She has served as treasurer on her diocesan and provincial council, serving on the provincial executive since 2013. Connie was a member of the marketing working group from May 2019 to February 2023 and was humbled to work with so many gifted and enthusiastic women. In June 2024, she completed her two-year term as Saskatchewan provincial president.

Connie has served in her parishes of St. Patrick's and then St. Mary's in Saskatoon, in the Eucharistic, music and liturgical ministries. She has served on parish and diocesan pastoral councils, chaired the finance committee and has been on her diocesan justice and peace advisory council for the past 13 years. Connie was also treasurer of the CN Pensioners Association for eight years and is currently on the board of directors of Sherbrooke Foundation.

Connie devotes her retirement to volunteer work in prison, hospital, school and care home ministries. Working and building relationships with people is her greatest joy. Once the snow melts, you will find her on the golf course, gardening or taking her grandchildren on an adventure. In winter, you will find her at a rink watching her grandsons play hockey or at the pool swimming. One place it is hard to find her is at home!

Connie looks forward to continuing her work with the League for many years to come.



Gwen Elliott

Gwen joined the League in 1979 in Westlock, Alberta and has belonged to parish councils in Edson, Killam and now in Camrose at St. Francis Xavier Parish. She has been married to Keith for 48 years, has three sons, one daughter, a son-in-law and daughter-in-law, and four wonderful grandchildren.

Gwen is a music minister, choir leader, proclaimer and liturgy committee chairperson. She has held many positions at the parish level over the years and is presently chairperson of faith. Some of her activities in service at the local level include being a funeral lunch coordinator, leading singing at League gatherings, creating cards for visiting members, posters for fundraisers, meetings and celebrations, and programs for meetings.

Gwen served at the diocesan level for 12 years, holding several positions, including past president. She was the registration chairperson for two conventions and co-chaired the diocesan convention in Camrose (2022). Gwen was called upon to lead music at conventions and diocesan and provincial meetings. At the provincial level, she served as treasurer for five years.

Gwen believes that supporting parish councils is very important. She shares her knowledge of the League and mentors women by encouraging and supporting all parish council members and officers.

Gwen loves attending conventions and meetings because it is like a family reunion, visiting, meeting new women and connecting with her sisters in the League.



Paddy Fitzgerald Nolan

Paddy Fitzgerald Nolan is wife of 45 years to Brian Nolan, mother to Marie, Karen and Carol Anne, and "Grammie" to Scott, Kylie and Ethan.

Paddy is a grief and bereavement counsellor who specializes in suicide and trauma grief. She has experience

handling acute stressful situations, while organizing referrals and emergency services. Paddy has studied forensic psychology and psychology of law, play therapy, therapeutic art, therapeutic touch level two and reiki level two. She holds diplomas and certificates in the areas of critical incident stress management, victim crises assistance, criminology, suicide intervention, crisis intervention and mental health crisis intervention.

Paddy volunteers with many community service clubs and sports clubs at different levels, including as a manager of Team Ontario, which won gold in 2017 and 2022 at the Canada Summer Games. She was a supervisor at the 2022 and 2024 Ontario Summer Games.

This year marks 45 years for Paddy as a member. Her time with the League includes 14 years serving at the diocesan level and as a provincial subcommittee member. She is excited to be able to mentor and support members at every level as a life member.

Paddy's passions are educating members, communities and school councils on human trafficking and homelessness. She believes we all can make a difference one day at a time, one person and at time, one cause at a time.

Hilarion Mitchell

Hilarion joined St. John Fisher Parish Council in Brampton, Toronto Diocese, in 1998 on her mother's advice.

Hilarion served a three-year term (2019-2022) as diocesan president during the historic 100th anniversary years for national council (2020) and

Toronto Diocesan Council (2021). Her term was transformative with the evolving COVID-19 pandemic, which required the ability to adapt to using virtual and live-streaming technology to engage members when in-person gatherings were not possible.

Hilarion has served in many positions at the parish and diocesan council levels. She has written resolutions and relaunched the Leadership & Public Speaking Course. During her term as diocesan president, a temporary voluntary fund for Ukraine relief collected \$14,655.45

from councils in seven weeks. Hilarion also hosted the Moira Ste. Marie Memorial Lecture Series on addressing food insecurity in September 2023, with more than \$1,900 collected from members and donated to Yonge Street Mission and the Society of St. Vincent de Paul.

Hilarion served on her provincial council executive (2022-2024) as chairperson of education and health and was the *Catch the Fire!* spark for Ontario. She was a member of the working group that created resources to embrace diverse cultures and ages (2020-2021). Hilarion received her maple leaf service pin in 2009.



Audrey Shelton

Audrey was born and raised in the Woodstock, Ontario area. She and Russell were married in 1981 and have two daughters and a son. After four years of living in Saskatchewan, they moved back to the Woodstock area, where they dairy farmed until 2000. In 2000, they moved to New Liskeard, where they had a woodworking shop and made canoe paddles and yokes. They retired from that business in 2023.

Audrey has worked as a personal support worker for 10 years. She worked from home supporting the carpentry business and is now the activity coordinator for the local retirement home. She loves to bring joy to the seniors she works with.

Audrey's mother enrolled her in the League when she was 16. She has served her parish and diocesan council in many positions. She was Timmins diocesan president (2016-2019) and is happy to be back in that role. For the 2022-2024 term, she was a member of the subcommittee of the provincial council's Christian family life standing committee. Audrey was awarded the maple leaf service pin in 2015.

Audrey loves to garden, canoe, bird watch and spend time with her five grandchildren. She works towards making the world a better place through involvement in her community and the League.



Linda Vandenberg

Linda joined the League in 1984 and has held several positions at the parish, diocesan and provincial level, including chairperson of the legislation and education and health standing committees on the provincial executive. She hopes to work on building membership and leadership at the grassroots.

Linda was born in Fort Vermilion, Alberta, as the oldest of eight children. Her mother and father homesteaded and worked a small mixed farm. Linda married her high school sweetheart almost 50 years ago, and they are still having fun together. They have two children and four grandchildren.

Linda worked in the school system as a teacher assistant, instructor, teacher and administrator. She has

since retired but continues to volunteer with the Royal Purple Elks, on her local parish pastoral council and as a St. Paul's Parish Council (High Prairie) member.

She tries to keep up with what's going on in Canadian politics, and her hobbies include reading, gardening, watercolour painting, fishing, crafting and travelling. †

Congratulations to 2024 Bursary Recipients!

In 1988, the League received two generous donations in response to the call for lay formation in Pope John Paul II's exhortation, *Christifideles Laici*. In light of the expressed desire of the League to encourage members' service "For God and Canada," the national executive agreed by motion that these donations be used to establish a bursary fund.

The bursary fund is used to provide financial assistance to members pursuing studies, courses, seminars, workshops and diploma/degree programs that align with and promote the Objects of The Catholic Women's League of Canada.

Bursary applications are available upon request from national office or can be downloaded from cwl.ca.

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE FOLLOWING RECIPIENTS!

Alissa Jones	Edmonton	Alberta
Ashanthi Munaweera	New Westminster	British Columbia
Jennifer Lazar	Port Coquitlam	British Columbia
Kimberly Wilbur	Saint John	New Brunswick
Liz McInnis	Kapuskasing	Ontario
Margaret Macklem	Edmonton	Alberta



Introducing



Lucille Rossington

Manitoba
Provincial President

Lucille was born in Grand Falls, New Brunswick. She has 11 siblings and is number 10 in the Bernier household. The family consisted of six boys and six girls. She worked

at the General Hospital in the admission/outpatient department and then in the archives department.

After marrying Ray in 1978, she moved to Flin Flon, Manitoba, where she worked for an optometrist. She supports her husband in his business ventures. They have two adult children, a son and daughter and two grandchildren.

Loving to be surrounded by young children, Lucille was a catechist at St. Ann's parish for 25 years in Flin Flon. She joined the League at St. Ann's Parish Council in 1990 and was awarded the maple leaf service pin in 2018.

Lucille has served at the parish council level on all standing committees and enjoyed the learning process. She also served as Keewatin-The Pas Diocesan Council president for three terms and an extra year due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Lucille has helped present workshops on *Catch the Fire!* and S'Mores and workshops on the bible and the "Virgin Mary's Journey Through Scripture" (Scott Hahn) as well as the "Bible and the Sacraments Through Scripture" (Scott Hahn). In her diocese, she gave a presentation on the 2015-2017 national theme, *One Heart, One Voice, One Mission*. At a 2018 diocesan convention, she raised awareness about human trafficking by hosting guest speakers, including a trafficked survivor. In 2023, she presented on "women in the bible" at the provincial convention using a time capsule. In winter 2024, she presented a workshop with IWIN Initiative co-founders as part of the Manitoba Day of Celebration. She supported the strategic planning efforts by organizing and delivering workshops in her diocese.

Lucille was elected to the provincial council as chairperson of spiritual development and, in August 2023, became the acting Manitoba Provincial Council president. She looks forward to continuing to learn new things and represent Manitoba at the national table.

Her hobbies include gardening, reading and travelling. She also enjoys spending time at their cottage with family. †



Betsy Fletcher

Alberta Mackenzie
Provincial President

Betsy was born in France to a Royal Canadian Air Force member stationed there. The family moved back to Canada when Betsy was 10 months old. She grew up on military bases in

New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Alberta.

After completing her education, Betsy worked temporarily as a waitress while waiting for her new boss to open his dental practice. She worked as a chairside dental assistant for six years. During that time, she married Tom, an engineer at the Aerospace Engineering Test Establishment at 4-Wing Cold Lake. After the birth of their two children, Betsy decided to be a stay-at-home parent—an excellent decision for their little family at the time.

Betsy's journey in the League began with a personal invitation in 1986. She served in several positions as a member at Holy Name Base Council (CFB Cold Lake) for several years within the Military Ordinariate Provincial Council before transferring to St. Dominic's Parish Council (Cold Lake), part of the Alberta Mackenzie Provincial Council. Over the years, she has moved through the League serving as president of her parish and diocesan councils, and on to filling standing committees and positions on the Alberta Mackenzie Provincial Council.

The League is a very important part of Betsy's life, and she is very grateful for that first invitation to become a member. Through the past 38 years, she has met so many wonderful women and learned more about the League and herself.

Being a member of the League has enriched Betsy's faith life and helped her to become more confident. †



Women in The Life and Mission of The Church: Part II



Sr. Susan Scott

Faith Subcommittee Member

In reading the synthesis document titled *A Synodal Church in Mission—Synthesis Report*, released following the October 2023 synod in Rome, there are many references to women's role within the church as it is and how it might be. Foundational to this is a quote from the report's Part II: All Disciples, All Missionaries. "In Christ, women and men are clothed with the same baptismal dignity (Gal 3:28) and receive equally the variety of gifts of the Spirit. We are called together into a communion

of loving, non-competitive relationships in Christ, and to a co-responsibility to be expressed at every level of the Church's life." One of Part II's "Matters for Consideration" is, "Churches all over the world have expressed a clear request that the active contribution of women would be recognised and valued, and that their pastoral leadership increase in all areas of the Church's life and mission. ... To give better expression to the gifts and charisms of all and to be more responsive to pastoral needs, how can the Church include more women in existing roles and ministries?"

Following this first assembly of the Synod on Synodality, Pope Francis established 10 groups to study some of the most controversial issues. He declared that the groups would remain in effect beyond the synod's final assembly to be held in October 2024. Some of these issues include addressing how bishops are selected, seminary formation and the role of women in the church.

Historian and theologian Catherine Clifford, a professor at St. Paul University (Ottawa) and a Canadian lay delegate to the synod, has said that "you cannot have a synodal church where there are not women participating at every level of the structures and decisional practices of the life of the church, no question" (*National Catholic Reporter*).

On a personal note, I was invited to participate as a facilitator for the World Union of Catholic Women's Organisations (WUCWO). The training allowed me to facilitate one of the breakout rooms for the "Conversations in the Spirit on Women's Mission in the Synodal Church" sessions held in April 2024. It was a powerful experience to be on the same call with women worldwide and listen to their experiences of church where they live. Women globally are warmly embracing the synodal path, and the WUCWO School for Synodality is one of the tools leading them forward.

It is in this church that we exist as women of the League. It is in this church that members share the gifts the Holy Spirit has showered upon them, "For God and Canada," as they nurture God's kingdom on earth. How very exciting to be part of the League of the future. One in Christ, in unity with the Holy Spirit. Amen! †



The proposals for consideration in Part II of the report moving forward include:

- Local churches are encouraged to extend their work of listening, accompaniment and care to the most marginalised women in their social contexts.
- It is urgent to ensure that women can participate in decision-making processes and assume roles of responsibility in pastoral care and ministry. The Holy Father has significantly increased the number of women in positions of responsibility in the Roman Curia. This should also happen at other levels of Church life, in consecrated life and dioceses. Provision needs to be made in Canon Law accordingly.
- Theological and pastoral research on the access of women to the diaconate should be continued, benefiting from consideration of the results of the commissions specially established by the Holy Father, and from the theological, historical and exegetical research already undertaken. If

possible, the results of this research should be presented to the next Session of the Assembly.

- Cases of labour injustice and unfair remuneration within the Church need to be addressed especially for women in consecrated life, who are too often treated as cheap labour.
- Women's access to formation programmes and theological study needs to be considerably expanded. We suggest that women should also be integrated into seminary teaching and training programs to foster better formation for ordained ministry.
- There is a need to ensure that liturgical texts and Church documents are more attentive to the use of language that takes into equal consideration both men and women, and also includes a range of words, images and narratives that draw more widely on women's experience.
- We propose that women receive appropriate formation to enable them to be judges in all canonical processes.”



Magazine Deadlines

Winter issue

November 15, 2024

Spring issue

February 15, 2025

Fall issue

July 15, 2025

104th National Annual Meeting of Members

RESOLUTIONS

2024.01 Increase Supported Housing for Individuals Experiencing Homelessness with Mental Health and Mental Illness Issues

Resolved, that national council of The Catholic Women's League of Canada in 104th national annual meeting of members assembled, urges the federal government to increase funding for and promotion of more supported housing models for individuals experiencing homelessness with mental health and mental illness issues.

Action Plan

1. Invite guest speakers, and have workshops around topics on homelessness, mental health and mental illness, and alternative housing programs.
2. Engage in activities with community-based long-term supported housing programs.
3. Write letters to the prime minister, minister of health and minister of housing, infrastructure and

communities to increase funding for and the promotion of alternative housing models, such as community-based supported housing models.

4. Write letters to the premier and provincial/territorial minister responsible for housing to increase funding for and the promotion of alternative housing models, such as community-based supported housing models.
5. Monitor the federal government's response to this issue.

2024.02 National Universal Pharmacare Program to Include Coverage for Drugs Prescribed for Mental Illness

Resolved, that national council of The Catholic Women's League of Canada in 104th national annual meeting of members assembled, urges the federal government, in the implementation of a national universal pharmacare program, to include coverage for drugs prescribed for mental illness.

Action Plan

1. Raise awareness on the topic by inviting speakers, offering informative videos, holding workshops and providing resources to members, parishioners and the community at large.
2. Write letters to the prime minister and minister of health with copies to local members of parliament, encouraging them to support this resolution.
3. Monitor the federal government's response to this issue.

2024.03 Grant the Canadian Ombudsperson for Responsible Enterprise Legal Authority to Investigate Environmental and Human Rights Abuses

Resolved, that national council of The Catholic Women's League of Canada in 104th national annual meeting of members assembled, urges the federal government to enact legislation giving the Canadian Ombudsperson for Responsible Enterprise the power to subpoena witnesses and documents when investigating complaints of environmental and human rights abuses attributed to companies registered in Canada and operating outside Canada.

Action Plan

1. Write to the prime minister and the minister of export promotion, international trade and economic development asking the federal government to enact legislation giving the Canadian Ombudsperson for Responsible Enterprise the legal authority to respond to complaints of environmental and human rights abuses attributed to Canadian registered companies that operate outside of Canada, including the ability to subpoena witnesses and documents.
2. Educate members on the environmental and human rights abuse allegations attributed to Canadian registered companies that operate outside of Canada.
3. Monitor the federal government's response to this issue.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE FOLLOWING CENTENARIANS

Anne Muggleston
104 years old on May 29, 2024
Holy Family Parish Council
Medicine Hat, Alberta

Emelda (Millie) Reid
104 years old on June 12, 2024
St. Finnian Parish Council
Alexandria, Ontario

Mary Visutski
103 years old on June 23, 2024
St. Francis Xavier Parish Council
Camrose, Alberta

Marian Rutledge
102 years old on August 15, 2024
Holy Cross Parish Council
London, Ontario

Helena Arsenault
101 years old on March 25, 2024
St. Joseph Parish Council
Guelph, Ontario

Iona Doherty
101 years old on August 20, 2024
St. Peter Parish Council
Cornwall, Ontario

Laurianne Gaucher
101 years old on May 31, 2024
St. Joseph Parish Council
Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan

Emily Schmaltz
101 years old on May 21, 2024
Holy Family Parish Council
Medicine Hat, Alberta

Margaret Butler
100 years old on May 16, 2024
St. Peter Parish Council
Nanaimo, British Columbia

Marion Chisholm
100 years old on August 7, 2024
Holy Family Parish Council
Amherst, Nova Scotia

Eunice Cordery
100 years old on May 12, 2024
St. Stephen Parish Council
North Vancouver, British Columbia

Frances Denn
100 years old on March 9, 2024
Sacred Heart Parish Council
Langton, Ontario

Christine Duffenais
100 years old on May 4, 1924
St. John the Baptist Parish Council
Kitchener, Ontario

Jean Galozo
100 years old on April 14, 2024
Holy Trinity Parish Council
Vancouver, British Columbia

Myrla Murray
100 years old on February 2, 2024
St. John the Evangelist
Parish Council
Gananoque, Ontario

Frances Nanni
100 years old on May 11, 2024
St. Patrick Parish Council
London, Ontario

Margaret O'Connor
100 years old on June 26, 2024
St. John the Evangelist
Parish Council
Gananoque, Ontario

Mary Ortlib
100 years old on June 4, 2024
Sacred Heart/St. Louis
Parish Council
Norman/Keewatin, Ontario

Charlotte Rowse
100 years old on July 2, 2024
Annunciation Parish Council
Prince Rupert, British Columbia

Mary Shrubsall
100 years old on March 2, 2024
Annunciation Parish Council
Prince Rupert, British Columbia

Concetta Signorelli
100 years old in February 2024
Holy Trinity Parish Council
North Vancouver, British Columbia

Lea Sinnavee
100 years old on August 21, 2024
Blessed Sacrament Parish Council
Chatham, Ontario

Angela Sommisse
100 years old on June 1, 2024
St. Benedict Parish Council
Sarnia, Ontario

Mary Weinberger
100 years old on February 24, 2024
Holy Family Parish Council
Medicine Hat, Alberta

Edith Zerr
100 years old on February 1, 2024
St. Joseph Parish Council
Indian Head, Saskatchewan

Spotlights



Holy Trinity Parish Council, Nanaimo, British Columbia – On April 6th, Holy Trinity Parish Council put the national resolution 2023.01 Combatting Textile Waste in Canada into action by reusing, reducing and recycling. Members and parishioners contributed to a used clothing sale by donating and purchasing gently used items. The money raised at the sale helped to support the council's various charities.



St. Patrick Parish Council, Carbonear, Newfoundland and Labrador – St. Patrick Parish Council initiated a collection of baby items in conjunction with its parish that proved very successful! Items were collected in the church and later delivered to the Centre for Life in St. John's.



Mary, Mother of the Church Parish Council, Winnipeg, Manitoba – Mary, Mother of the Church Parish Council held its annual spring rummage sale on May 4th. Parishioners generously donated the items for the sale. The collecting, sorting and pricing were labour-intensive, and the council was grateful to have non-members help with the preparations.

A Ukrainian family obtained items free of charge, and leftover items were taken to Centre Flavie-Laurent. The Knights of Columbus were a great help in setting up and packing up leftover items. The monies raised were used to support the council's standing charities and to provide a monetary donation to the parish.



St. Mary's Parish Council, Fox Valley, Saskatchewan –

For nearly 20 years, St. Mary's Parish Council has hosted its annual "Care, Share & Wear" used clothing and household item project. People donate their gently used clothing and other items throughout the year. This year, on April 18th, students volunteered to haul the clothing (three truckloads) to the community hall (loaned free of charge). Members and local individuals helped organize, size and display the items on the stage, floor and 28 tables! The doors were then opened for anyone wanting these items at no charge! The remaining items were repacked and sent to Salvation Army centres, the Nurture Pregnancy Centre and the League Clothing Depot.



St. Francis Xavier Parish Council, Camrose, Alberta – Each month, St. Francis Xavier Parish Council members are invited by teachers at St. Patrick Catholic School in Camrose to spend quality, faith-filled time helping students in Kindergarten to Grade 4.

Some activities include reading to students, praying the rosary, doing craft activities and assisting with projects. Following each visit, the staff invites members for coffee and refreshments, which serves as an excellent opportunity to invite staff to join the League.



St. Clement Parish Council, McGregor, Ontario – Members of St. Clement Parish Council held a spiritual baby shower for the unborn and donated the items to Our Lady of Guadalupe Home, a residence that provides shelter and support to pregnant women and new mothers who have no other place to go.

St. John the Baptist Parish Council, Amherstburg, Ontario –

St. John the Baptist Parish Council celebrated its 8th annual Ole English High Tea Party on June 1st. The tea party is the council's biggest fundraiser of the year, and donations go to local charities.



ANNUAL DISBURSEMENT OF NATIONAL VOLUNTARY FUNDS

The national voluntary funds constitute monies forwarded by councils to national office for disbursement annually to the appropriate agencies. Collected from July 1st to June 30th each year, the amounts are announced at the national meeting of members. The 2023–2024 collection amounts for these funds are as follows:

Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops: Horizons of Hope	\$450.00
Catholic Missions In Canada	\$30,235.71
Catholic Near East Welfare Association	\$16,726.45
Coady International Institute	\$19,210.63
Development and Peace—Caritas Canada	\$29,981.37

Congratulations!

CONGRATULATIONS TO COUNCILS CELEBRATING ANNIVERSARIES!

100 YEARS

Sacred Heart Parish Council
Walkerton, Ontario

St. Clement Parish Council
Cambridge, Ontario

St. Joseph Parish Council
Fergus, Ontario

St. Louis Parish Council
Waterloo, Ontario

St. Patrick Parish Council
Medicine Hat, Alberta

St. Patrick Parish Council
Napanee, Ontario

90 YEARS

St. John's and Missions Parish Council
Kirkfield, Ontario

St. Joseph Parish Council
Douro, Ontario

75 YEARS

Sacred Heart/St. Louis Parish Council
Norman/Keewatin, Ontario

St. John Bosco Parish Council
Port Colborne, Ontario

St. Patrick Parish Council
Sturgis, Saskatchewan

50 YEARS

St. Matthew Parish Council
Edmonton, Alberta







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