

## Goal 4 - Affirmation Working Group

By Sharon Ciebin, Goal 4 Lead

Were you aware as a member in your parish council you have the most power and influence in the League? Did you realize decisions made at every level are for the benefit of the membership? Your invitation to membership is from God. You do, they are, and it is, let me explain.

Almost 100 years ago, Bellelle Guerin and other women were inspired by God to create an organization where all Catholic women would be able to grow in faith, take action to ensure the dignity and rights of all people are met, and provide service to the church, Canada and world. Membership allows each of us to be disciples for Christ.

The League was created as a grassroots organization. Members in parish councils have the ability and responsibility to take action and bring the face of Christ to an unsettled world. The structure enables members to stay true to the church's teachings and values through the various levels of leadership, with the national executive providing policies and procedures, using the voices of members obtained through instructed votes. In today's world, members' voices—through resolutions and actions—are heard most loudly in pro-life issues such as abortion, euthanasia, palliative care, human trafficking and care for God's creation. Members give their time, talent and treasure to the homeless and those suffering from mental health issues, addictions, incarceration, etc. Members' voices amplify as they vote at elections, for changes to the *Constitution & Bylaws* and actions taken in parish councils.

From time to time the national executive assesses how effectively the League operates. In 2017, a steering committee formed to lead planning efforts. More than 4,000 members gave feedback by way of a national town hall meeting, diocesan and provincial conventions, provincial meetings, and various sub-committee groups. The voices of members were documented in *The Catholic Women's League of Canada Plans Strategically 2018-2022* booklet, presented and approved for implementation by members at the 2018 national convention.

I am pleased to confirm all strategies for Year 1, Goal 4 "Address Critical Issues" (p.23) are being addressed. Working group members are busy researching material to make recommendations and create new processes. We continue to ask members to become involved in the work, so stay tuned. There are seven women from across Canada working on the Strategy G4.C2 "Include (leave no member behind) and affirm (make members feel welcomed, needed and wanted)." It is my pleasure to introduce you to two of these gifted members.



**Madge Somasundaram**

Parish Council President-Elect and Chairperson of Organization  
St. Peter and Paul Parish Council, Mississauga, Ontario

The mission statement calls us "to grow in faith and to witness to the love of God through ministry and service." What better way to grow in faith than through evangelization? Creating a sense of community with those who share the hope for eternal life is what transforms members into ambassadors. It is the reason a member like me, from South Western Ontario, encouraged by my mentor, put my name forward to be part of the evolution of this great

organization. I am honoured to be part of inspiring discussions as a member of the affirmation and validation working group. It has been a great learning experience. I have witnessed progressive yet practical thinking—a deep understanding of the motivations of the organization and its members and an overarching and revitalizing vision for a more engaged and passionate membership. It is these discoveries that continue to hearten me as we work towards helping every parish across our country affirm the faith of women, validate their participation locally while creating an accessible, inclusive and future-facing community for Canadian Catholic women for generations to come.



**Barbara Renaud**

Vancouver Diocesan Council President  
St. Luke Parish Council, Maple Ridge

I am excited to be working on the implementation team tasked with developing ways to affirm and validate members. My excitement sparked at the national convention in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island where I took part in the town hall meeting on planning strategically. I watched as responses popped up on the screen from women across the country in real-time and felt such a sense of connectedness with my League sisters. I was so impressed with the commitment the League made to move into the future, grow and change to ensure we remain relevant and continue to have an impact on a changing society. It is an honour to be part of that change.

When considering whether to apply to join a working group, I will admit to some trepidation. As a newly elected diocesan president, I considered whether I could fit in the time commitment. I wondered if I had the talents and vision necessary to help the League chart a new course. In the end, I could not say “no” to the opportunity to be part of this exciting new future. It was similar to my thoughts about resolutions, which originate from grassroots councils. This is a chance for the voice of the average member to be heard and to have a say in the direction of the League.

The first few months of work were a bit of a struggle to find our way, work on the vision and how to bring it to life. Remembering those words on the screen in Charlottetown, how could we make sense of them and turn those opinions into direction for the future? Discussions have been lively, with input from every member of the working group. Together as League sisters, we navigate the way through, sharing thoughts and ideas and working towards a League where no member is left behind!