

## SOCIAL GROUP FORMED

In the request for parishioner input in September, one of the areas that was mentioned several times was social events for the parish. Over the years, St. Joseph's has held a variety of events to build community within the parish. These events tended to be initiated by one or two individuals who thought of a social event and planned it. The recent positive results of the Variety Night (a farewell to Fr. Andy) and the International Weekend (honouring our 160<sup>th</sup> anniversary) and the parishioner input encouraged our Parish Pastoral Council to create a Social Group for the parish.

The aim of the Social Group was to initiate a minimum of two parish events a year, that would be open to all parishioners, and at least one of these events should be of interest to children. Any events that are undertaken should be revenue neutral for the parish and if possible, could be organized as to raise some funds for the parish. However, the price should not be established so as to exclude parishioners.

An announcement in the bulletin seeking volunteers for the Social Group met with some considerable success. To date, 11 parishioners have agreed to be part of the Social Group. Their first meeting will be held on Feb. 8<sup>th</sup> at which time they will mutually decide on what events should be held in the parish this year.

If you would like to be part of the Social Group, please contact Terry Byrne at [TerryByrne@sympatico.ca](mailto:TerryByrne@sympatico.ca).

## THE SEASON OF LENT

Ash Wednesday is March 1, marking the beginning of Lent. This season is a time for us to quietly reflect on our faith lives and prepare to celebrate the great feast of the Lord's Resurrection. Traditionally we chose to "give something up" for Lent—partly as a penance as well as a way to discipline ourselves.

The invitation to Lenten practice is three-fold: prayer, fasting and almsgiving and the three are intricately linked.

Our fasting can and should facilitate our almsgiving and both should be underpinned by a life of prayer. In other words, we might fast from some activity or some goods and use the money saved to share with others. Or we may choose to invite others to share in our meals, recreation or other activities. In either case, we take something that we would use for ourselves and share with others. This almsgiving is to be not simply from our surplus, but even to some extent from our need.

Taking time for some "extra" prayer during Lent is meant to help us reflect on our call to live the Gospel in our daily lives. It can also be a time to reflect on our blessings, to give thanks to God for those blessings and seek ways to express our thanksgiving by sharing the blessings with others.

The admonition on Ash Wednesday to "turn away from sin and believe the Good News" is a challenge for us to grow in faith during this season and to continue that growth through the rest of our lives.



# OUR PARISH NEWSLETTER

Issue 1

February 12, 2017

Over the past four months, the Parish Pastoral Council has been reflecting on the feedback that you gave in September regarding some of the needs and wants you see in the parish. A social group has been formed to help us come together as a parish community in a social setting to continue to grow as a community. At the last meeting of the PPC the idea of resurrecting the parish newsletter (previously called SPIRIT) was raised, and we are launching a sample newsletter to get a reading on the possibility of publishing on an ongoing basis. If the response is positive and people tell us there is a need for such a publication, then we will be seeking assistance in keeping it published. Please take the time to read through the input questions on the back page and give us your feedback. You can leave a paper copy of your response at the Welcome Desk or email it. Either way, we need your feedback in order to make a decision about the future of a parish newsletter.

Thank you again for your feedback in September, and know that your ideas and suggestions continue to be part of our reflection and discussions at Parish Pastoral Council meetings.

## STEWARDSHIP OF CREATION

From the address of Pope Paul VI at the Stockholm Conference in 1972 until the present day, the Church has been speaking out about the need to care for and protect Creation. There are many perspectives from which the Church speaks: Biblical, practical, spiritual and scientific. There is much written and said by scientists and environmentalists on the subject of care for the environment, but the Church gives us a unique perspective, one that perhaps is even more compelling for us as Christians.

If we go back to the Hebrew Scriptures, beginning with Genesis, we are given a different perspective on our relationship with Creation than the one that has grown out of modern philosophy. Society in general today sees the environment or creation as something separate from humans, subject to us and there for our use. Even from that perspective, we can begin to see that the environment cannot sustain humanity in the long term under the present conditions.

The Scriptures show us another view of our relationship with Creation. In Genesis, we are reminded that all of Creation (us included) proceeds from the hand of God. (This isn't a creationism vs. evolution question, but a spiritual viewpoint that is not concerned about the scientific how, but the relationships within Creation.) As God created, God saw that all was/is good. Each part of Creation is related to the rest, and there is an interdependence within Creation. Each part of Creation contributes to the well-being of all the other parts and makes up the

whole. Humans are entrusted with the stewardship of creation – to care for it and nurture is as Creation nurtures humanity. The injunctions in Leviticus require that the beasts of burden are to be given a rest on the Sabbath, along with the humans. All are to be regenerated and renewed by this weekly Sabbath rest. Every seven years, the land is to rest – no planting or harvesting, the land is to be allowed to renew itself. And in the fiftieth year, everything is given an opportunity to be renewed and reset.

Throughout the Scriptures, we are given reminders to care for the needs of Creation. In the Gospel, Jesus reminds us of the intimate relationship within Creation when he sends out the disciples to take up the mission: "proclaim the good news to the whole creation" (Mark 16:15). The good news of God's redeeming love is for all Creation, not just some parts of it.

The official prayers of the Church also point out that we are intimately related to Creation: listen carefully to the offering prayers over the bread and wine, or this passage from Eucharistic Prayer III: "You are indeed holy, O Lord, and all you have created rightly gives you praise, for through your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, by the power and working of the Holy Spirit, you give life to all things and make them holy...".

The Church calls us to reflect deeply on our relationship with Creation, and to express that in action to renew,

### INPUT/FEEDBACK REQUESTED

Two-way communication in a parish community is critical, and so we are asking for your feedback on the idea of a newsletter for the parish. The newsletter would be a vehicle to share news, educational or faith-formation articles and other information which does not generally get into a Sunday bulletin.

Is this idea worth pursuing?  yes  no

How often?  monthly  quarterly  semi-annually

What kinds of content would you like? \_\_\_\_\_

Would you be interested in assisting? If so, give us your name and email: \_\_\_\_\_

Any suggestions for a name for the newsletter? \_\_\_\_\_

Other Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

(leave your completed form in the basket at the Welcome Desk or email a response to: [rbeaudette@omilacombe.ca](mailto:rbeaudette@omilacombe.ca))

## ST. JOSEPH'S REFUGEE OUTREACH COMMITTEE

*Robyne Warren*

St. Joseph's Parish's Refugee Outreach Committee (ROC) is a group of dedicated volunteers engaged in learning, reflection, and action on behalf of refugees within and beyond our community. Over the past year members have been involved in numerous activities including private sponsorship training, applying for the sponsorship of Syrians refugees, and providing settlement support for newly arrived individuals and families within our local community.

Recently, several ROC members completed an online ten-week course provided by the Refugee Sponsorship Training Program (RSTP) and offered by a Catholic Toronto-based refugee agency on behalf of the Canadian Government. This course is designed to provide members of sponsoring groups a solid introductory understanding of the Canadian Private Refugee Sponsorship program and to strengthen the participants' knowledge base to work more efficiently with current and future refugee sponsorships. It is interesting to note that several supplementary courses have been offered in and around Ottawa by RSTP and Ottawa-based Refugee613. At these, ROC members have been both attendees and collaborators.

Thanks to financial support graciously extended by St. Joe's Parish community, we are currently awaiting the arrival of two Syrian refugee families. Since January of 2016 we have been expecting a family of five presently in a refugee camp in Jordan. Since September 2016 we have been waiting for a family of three, a mother and young daughter in Lebanon and the teenage son in Germany. While we communicate by telephone and email with each family, their unpredictable arrival time is now in the hands of Immigration Refugee and Citizenship Canada (IRCC).

As we wait patiently for our two Syrian families to arrive, members and other parishioners continue a St. Joe's tradition of hosting individuals and families within our midst. Over the years, ROC hosted 49 families and individuals, from 23 different countries. We reach out to refugees by providing information, guidance, practical assistance, and friendship. Typically this important work is completed with the support of personnel from the Catholic Centre for Immigrants (CCI). It is also interesting to note that several "hosted" individuals are now giving back to the community by volunteering in our local food banks. With the unconditional support of parishioners, individuals have made important steps towards becoming independent and are paying forward the helping hand that was extended to them.

## PRESERVING AND DEVELOPING OUR COMMUNITY'S HOME

*Christopher Adam*

In November 2016, we celebrated our Parish community's 160th anniversary. While these opportunities serve as a time to look back, they also pose a question: what are our responsibilities to ensure that the St. Joseph's community can continue to serve as a welcome spiritual home, reaching out in compassion and justice, to people from all walks of life and backgrounds in Ottawa? A church includes both the people who shape our community and also the land and building that gives us shelter and a home to which we are able to invite our friends, neighbours and fellow Ottawa residents, and where we can serve those who are marginalized.

In 2017, we are investing in our building in a number of ways. In late 2016, St. Joseph's Parish applied for and received a generous grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation to replace the stair lift in the parish hall and make our space more accessible for parishioners, our on-going renters and for the broader community that uses our facilities. The Ontario Trillium Foundation provided the Parish with \$34,000 in funding. We will cover the remaining costs of a new stair lift from our capital budget and will providing the community with regular updates as this project progresses this spring.

Parishioners will see other improvements this year to our hall. In 2016, we began replacing our tables and banquet chairs. In 2017, we will continue this process with the purchase of 50 new banquet chairs and 10 new tables. This spring, those of you who have meetings in the Oblate lounge or who use the facilities on the upper floor will notice that we will be replacing the carpets in the hallway and staircase. A little over a year ago, we replaced the carpet in the lounge itself. We will also be putting in a new air conditioning for the top floor and we will continue to upgrade our parish computers.

Our largest investment remains the on-going roof project. We completed the first two phases of this project in the last two years and the most pressing areas of the roof have been addressed. As we proceed to the third phase, we will be providing the Parish with an update on the next steps and will renew our on-going fundraising efforts.

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## ST. JOE'S DIALOGUE CIRCLE ON RENEWED RELATIONS

Parishioners remember the efforts over the past number of years to be attentive to the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and to keep that historic Commission in our prayer, study and action. Indeed St. Joseph's Parish was well represented at the closing events where Commissioners Justice Murray Sinclair, Marie Wilson and Wilton Littlechild tabled the final report. The Dialogue Circle on Renewed Relations is a recent expression of that ongoing work in the parish.

On September 21, 2016 about 50 parishioners gathered for an evening discussion focused on those TRC Calls to Action that are directed to faith communities. The evening titled *Nurturing our Hearts for the Work of Reconciliation* unfolded in a good way with the blessing and guidance of Kateri Native Ministry of Ottawa and many present sensed that this is a moment of opportunity in Canada and the right time for significant work as a parish. Ideas were generated that reflected a variety of approaches to the work ahead. A small planning committee gathered that input and developed a plan to promote a minimum of four more dialogue opportunities between the Fall of 2016 and the Summer of 2017 taking care to provide a variety of ways for people to enter the conversation. All of these events were planned in collaboration with Kateri Native Ministry who have become partners with us on the journey toward renewed relations.

- On November 21, another group of about 50 people gathered to view a documentary film entitled *Reserve 107*, an inspirational story of indigenous and settler communities daring to face an historical injustice together.
- On the First Sunday of Advent we began our 161<sup>st</sup> year as a parish worshipping on unceded Algonquin territory with a century and a half late acknowledgement of the land on which we have worshipped in peace. We were graciously welcomed by Algonquin elder Barbara Dumont Hill who blessed us with sage and offered a prayer and honor song to four directions. The parish answered with a sustained applause that revealed our great desire to be in right relations.

Looking ahead we have three events planned:

- On February 21, parishioners are invited to continue the dialogue by participating in the Blanket Exercise, an interactive tool designed by Kairos Canada to help us to engage experientially in our colonizing history.

- On April 30, Kateri Native Ministry will join us for a special Eucharistic celebration and get together marking the Feast of St Kateri Tekakwitha. It is an opportunity to meet as one community of faith.
- Plans are being made for an evening in May conversation with Mohawk elder and lecturer Rarihokwats focused on the challenges and opportunities for reconciliation presented by the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

St. Joe's Dialogue Circle on Renewed Relations is growing; new participants committed to exploring and embracing our responsibilities as treaty people as a foundation of our work for reconciliation are welcome.

***Below are some of the CALLS TO ACTION that were the result of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. These form part of the foundation of the work we are trying to accomplish at St. Joseph's through the Dialogue Circle on Renewed Relations.***

48. We call upon the church parties to the Settlement Agreement, and all other faith groups and interfaith social justice groups in Canada who have not already done so, to formally adopt and comply with the principles, norms, and standards of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as a framework for reconciliation.

49. We call upon all religious denominations and faith groups who have not already done so to repudiate concepts used to justify European sovereignty over Indigenous lands and peoples, such as the Doctrine of Discovery and terra nullius

59. We call upon church parties to the Settlement Agreement to develop ongoing education strategies to ensure that their respective congregations learn about their church's role in colonization, the history and legacy of residential schools, and why apologies to former residential school students, their families, and communities were necessary.

*Take some time to read the Calls to Action of the TRC - they touch every aspect of life in our country and involve all of us. The document is easily accessible on the internet.*