

REPORT FROM PASTORAL COUNCIL – JUNE 2013

A new Pastoral Council was created in 2012 following the new Guidelines from the Archdiocese of Saint Boniface titled “The Upper Room”. It is part of the Spiritual & Pastoral Renewal of the Archdiocese implemented by Archbishop Albert LeGatt. What is new in our context is that we have reunited all three places of worship in ONE Council. Hence we don’t use the word “parish”, as we are not there to compete with each other but to work in a common goal under ONE pastor. You are invited to read the “Pastoral Council Guidelines” and learn more the who, the why, the where, the how, etc. The one thing we have to stress is that our focus is on **pastoral issues** not on finances. What are pastoral issues? Catechism, Liturgy, Youth, Social Justice, Faith Formation for Adults, which means all that deals with the spiritual side of the human person, fostering a life-long journey of faith amongst all the faithful from early infancy to the last stage of life, i.e. from cradle to grave.

At the present moment, besides your pastor being the President of Pastoral Council, here are your representatives:

- Saint Michael Parish
 - Frank Simard (empty nest representative)
 - Shawn Meadows (families with older children)
 - Therese Bodner (Mature Adult, Polish descend)
 - Shandy Walls (Convert)
- Sacred Heart Parish
 - John Yokimas (Young Adults)
 - Susan Kotello (families with young children)
- OakBank Catholic Community
 - Larry Allard (Retired)

In 2012, the challenge was to implement the *ARISE Together in Christ* during a busy year celebrating the Centennial of Saint Michael Parish and the 75th of Sacred Heart Parish. But a Parish Team, from all three places of worship and coordinated by Trudy Simard, came together and worked hard to start the Program that Fall. We are pleased to see many people getting together to share their faith, 6 groups with a total of 50 individuals from all three places.

During our meetings, we invited key people to make sure we have an open communication with them and offer our support such as Adrienne Dobell for Catechism, Liz Hogue for Social Justice (including Missions), Gerard Lannoo with Eastman Life’s Vision for National Family & Life Week (previously Respect for Life Week), and Trudy Simard for ARISE.

Also during the meetings, different issues are brought forward from the pastor, usually what concern him directly. The connection with the Archdiocese is very important, bringing forward correspondence on Pastoral issues or events such as “*Diocesan Protocol for the protection of children*”, Diocesan Youth Gathering & Family Day, etc. We also have input from the Deanery of priests, the Regional Pastoral Council and the Diocesan Pastoral Council. News coming from the Canadian and Universal Church reminds us that we belong to the Catholic Church.

We take time to hear all other issues coming from not only the members, but from all our Pastoral area, from Cooks Creek, Oakbank and Garson. We always ask who is sick, in the hospital, and also who has passed away. Announcements are made of what is happening in each area so we can appreciate and encourage our presence, our fellowship to all.

Our last meetings were focus on our own Guidelines based on “The Upper Room”. We do not call it a Constitution but Guidelines just as “The Upper Room” calls it. Workshops were made available for all pastoral regions to assist in the implementation of effective Parish Pastoral Councils and more will be offered on a regular basis as new members are appointed every year. It is important to understand and in defining the pastoral situation of our area and the initiatives required to meet all its pastoral needs in accordance with the Mission of Jesus Christ.

So what is coming for the future? First, we have a new pastor. It is important to work with him as he is not only the Archbishop’s representative, but he comes as if it is Jesus coming among us. We live in a changing world where we are all connected. It is no longer my little church, my little town. What happens in the world affects us more immediate than ever. As Saint Paul says, “There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus (Galatians 3.28). More and more we will have priest coming from elsewhere like Asia, Africa, South America, etc. This truly helps us to be Catholic, which means Universal. We learn from each other, and we become ONE.

Since the arrival of Archbishop Albert LeGatt in the Fall of 2009, together we have made many strides in identifying the spiritual and pastoral needs of the parishioners in all areas of pastoral services. We have done so with the assistance and guidance of a dedicated pastoral services team at all levels. As we continue to move forward, services at the diocesan level will continue to be offered even if new appointments are made and new projects will be established in each of the pastoral service areas in the next five years. This is all with a view to assist and encourage parishes to establish a diversity of ministries to serve parishioners of all ages.

ARISE Together in Christ will continue to be offered. You can join anytime even if you haven’t been involved before. Just watch for the registration.

We have now the National Life & Family week in May and that will continue with a different focus (Euthanasia, Marriage, etc.) each year. One focus we will have this Summer is on widows on Sunday August 18th at Saint Boniface Cathedral. A new Policy on Pastoral Care Ministry will soon be launched.

One major change is coming soon regarding Catechism. A Diocesan Catechetical Policy will come in effect in Fall 2014. A draft was just sent recently to those directly involved in Catechetics. However, this will affect most people. We have a full year to prepare by putting resources in place and finding people willing to be more involved. We will also be offering R.C.I.A. in the fall as we have received many requests.

To help in welcoming our new parishioners, Pastoral Council has agreed that each place find an event where we can acknowledge our new members. This will be done during the Annual BBQ in Oakbank, during the Annual Pig Roast in Garson and during the Annual Saint Michael Day in Cooks Creek. To promote unity, we are encouraged to participate in each other’s activities. Engaging the whole community of faith, we will experience a common journey of growing together in holiness, service, charity and justice.

In this Year of Faith, as we celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the Second Vatican Council, as we continue the Spiritual & Pastoral Renewal of our Archdiocese, as we come to understand that the pastoral council exists to foster the mission that comes from Jesus, its origin, its mode of operation, and its goals can best be expressed by the word “communion”. It seeks to nurture and build up a relationship of communion within a parish, and parishes in a “family cluster”. May the Holy Spirit continue to guide us day to day in unity and peace.