

The Catholic Women's League of Canada



Antigonish Diocesan Council

Here I am Lord, send me!

TO: Parish Council Service Chairs
FROM: Diocesan Service Chair Rita Wojtyniak
DATE: October 19, 2024
SUBJECT: Welcome from Antigonish Diocesan Service Chair
MEMO: # 1 (2024-2026)
CC: Parish Council Presidents, Diocesan Officers, Life Members, Provincial Secretary (for distribution to provincial counterpart)

Sisters in the League:

As summer ended and things got into a new routine in my life, I received a call from President Anne McCormick to join the diocesan executive as service chair. Our CWL meeting was that week in St. Mary's East Bay and so we discussed, and an able member stepped up to replace me as president. My second 10-year tenure as president was over!

A little about me.....My CWL journey started in my youth as a Brownie and Girl Guide called to assist the CWL (my mother, leaders to provide service at Tea and Sales, church suppers, as flag-bearers, etc.). My mother had joined the CWL as a young woman in Holland and joined the Catholic Women's League of Canada when she emigrated to Winnipeg and then Kenora, Ontario.

Once I moved to East Bay, Cape Breton, I joined the CWL to meet parishioners and the community as I was a stay-at-home mom with, eventually, three young children. I joined in 1995 helping the membership chair and eventually doing organization. In my early days we made a quilt, as a group; bags for national convention in Halifax; organized Christmas in the Country (for Palliative Care); wrote cook books; held Tea and Sales; and knitted prayer shawls. My first tenure as president was 2001-8 followed by 2 years as diocesan community life chair. I had to step down for family and health commitments. I am a breast cancer survivor over 10 years now.

I was a Registered Nurse in BC and Connecticut but there were no jobs in Cape Breton in the early 90s. Times have changed; they are desperately seeking nurses now but, alas, my credentials have expired. Later I became too busy with my children, school and volunteering. Currently I work for "Home Instead" as a home care assistant for the past 7 years. My husband developed Alzheimer's 8 years ago and was admitted to Long Term Care at the end of August.

Now about CWL.....In the fall season most councils begin planning activities to support service-related activities. The following suggestions and dates may be useful as councils engage in activities:

1. In the news Scurvy is making a comeback. The lack of citrus fruits and other sources of Vitamin C have resulted in symptoms of disease in the marginalized and elderly. Remember

to add oranges when collecting food for food baskets for the homeless, soup kitchens, and food banks!

- 3 October remains Breast Cancer Awareness month. Do not forget to book your mammogram and do self-exams as part of your daily routine. The incidence of breast cancer is rising in the 35–45-year age group.
- 4 October 21-27, 2024 is Waste Reduction Week. Encourage recycling in councils, use reusable items and reduce the use of plastics and Styrofoam.
- 5 The theme for Family Literacy Day (January 27, 2025), sponsored by ABC Life Literacy Canada, (<https://abclifeliteracy.ca/>) is *Learn to be Green, Together*, to reduce, recycle and reuse. In her Sept 15th memo, Jolene Belliveau, National Service Chairperson, included the following facts: *"One year of parental education has a bigger positive impact on whether a son or daughter will attend a postsecondary institution than an extra \$50,000 in parental income. Family Literacy Programming enhances children's social and emotional development and parents' confidence as parents."* My council, St Mary's East Bay, will try to start a lending/gifting library of recycled children's books in the church foyer.

Globally, our national League supports two foundations through the National Voluntary Fund:

1. Development and Peace-Caritas through the 1% partnership supports 2 major projects:
 - a) Food and Nutritional Security and Climate Change in the Sahel (Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger)
 - b) Management and Prevention of Acute Malnutrition (Gedo, Somalia) in children and pregnant/lactating mothers.
2. The Catholic Near East Welfare Association which supports projects in Northeast Africa, Middle East, Eastern Ukraine and India:
 - a) The Infant Welfare Center (Jerusalem) which provides critical support for at risk teenagers to stay in school.
 - b) The Shepherds Field Hospital (near Bethlehem) provides health care to poorest mothers and babies.

The Fall 2024 issue of *The Canadian League* and the national website at <https://www.cwl.ca/> contain information on three resolutions passed at the national convention in August. Briefs and action plans are included. Two related to service are:

1. 2024:01 Increased Supportive Housing for Individuals Experiencing Homelessness with Mental Health and Mental Illness Issues
2. 2024:02 National Universal Pharmacare Program to Include Coverage for Drugs Prescribed for Mental Illness.

Standing committee chairs can work together in implementing these action plans.

Your sister in the League,

Rita Wojtyniak
Service Chair