

Halifax-Yarmouth Diocesan Council

President's 2023 Annual Report

Dear sisters in the league,

The year began in the hope of in-person meetings and events once again. For our council it began in January with the planning meeting of the 2023 Halifax-Yarmouth Diocesan Convention with host councils St Andrew, St Clement and St John XXIII of Divine Mercy Parish. Then the May President's meeting and Diocesan Convention in Cole Harbour, the June NS Provincial Convention in New Glasgow, the National Convention in St John NB, the August diocesan executive meeting in Halifax, the September General meeting (host councils St. Bernard and St Rose of Lima) in Enfield and the November Diocesan Retreat (host council Holy Family) in Amherst. Those events in NS were the first since 2019.

Our diocesan council as well as all parish councils who conducted elections in 2023 incorporated the new structure. Those councils who did not have elections in 2023, will conduct elections in 2024 with the new structure.

Unity Out Reach presentations commenced in November. All but three of our 24 parish councils were completed by December 31st. The last three are scheduled for the first quarter of 2024. The diocesan executive established teams of two to facilitate the presentations. The councils were open to us and the presentation. The councils participated fully in the presentation. The diocesan council presented the unity outreach program and it was received very well with many positive responses. Even non-members participated to ensure the good works of the CWL in their parish were captured. Positive comments were received from both the diocesan and the parish councils.

Seven councils completed the on-line survey and four submitted them via email. A total of eleven councils submitted a 2023 annual report for their council. Many, many projects and activities have been completed to support their parish, community, province, country and the world by parish councils. Food drives supporting St Vincent de Paul Society, Beacon House, Daily Bread Outreach and local food banks. Fundraisers for St. Vincent de Paul Society, Walk for Life for local palliative program, Ukrainian families through Chalice, parish youth bursary, Pro-life, Save-A-Family families in India, parish Backpack Project for the homeless, parish youth to attend Steubenville, local school breakfast programs and parish. Collections of hygiene products to support local Women's center, hats and mitts for local schools, pillowcases and bibs for local Children's hospital, items for new-borns to two years of age for Birthright baby shower, new socks for Socks for Shelters, memory blankets for local nursing home residents, various items for those in need. Other ways of supporting were via various means of support through no-bake bake sales, cake walks, chili tailgate party, chowder lunches, penny auctions, goodwill offerings, coffee socials, luncheon catering, making/knitting/sewing items, information workshops on employment, housing, education, activities, tea & sale, turkey dinners and lending helping hands for the maintenance needs in our church. Hosted international potlucks to bring people in the parish together, Helping Community Helping Community outreach box—24 people/families have requested information and/or help in the form of employment, housing, education and activities Monthly coffee socials on the 2nd Sunday of each month Information workshops, Shelter NS, cater to ongoing luncheons, session About Women in the Bible, learn more about Halifax Hospice and palliative care, support youth programs at our church, Preschool, Save-a-Family, Archdiocese Emergency Shelters and hosting receptions and/or purchasing gifts for those who have received 1st Eucharist, 1st Reconciliation, RCIA new members and married couples.

Parish Councils have been creative in campaigning, promoting and maintaining membership. Through CWL Sunday in January, hospitality after the Sunday Mass for the parish, a presentation on the CWL at Sunday morning Mass, inviting parishioners to our social gatherings and fundraisers, focusing on the joy of CWL to others in our community through newsletters and using the National Postcards to invite women to meetings, inviting women to gather and share a presentation created using National Catholic Women's League information/photos/videos from Catholic Women Unite, council pays the membership fee for all first-time members, members are encouraged to invite potential members to meetings, forwarded links from to the National Website (Why Become a Member); sharing the videos and stories of

members to entice them to see what CWL has to offer, speak with the moms of the children in Catechism and post our meetings in the bulletin inviting all women to come. Saying and using Catholic Women's League instead of CWL. New executives call members to introduce themselves, focus on those who have not been attending meetings, keeping members up to date on activities and issues, provide information from the monthly meetings to all via email, phone calls, newsletters and cards, encourage members at meetings to reach out to their sisters in the nursing homes and are homebound, pray for those members who are sick, lost a loved one or need companionship, we care about our members and their families, offer to assist those who struggle with membership dues, restructuring our meetings, limiting the business side and incorporating more prayer, fellowship and social time, keeping meetings structured and on track, creating teams to work together so no one needs to go it alone, encourage new ideas for activities and fundraisers, holding potlucks, banquets, special anniversary event and social nights for women to come together in sisterhood, laughter and faith. There are challenges in recruiting the younger generation and getting new members to become involved. As well as some senior members do not like travelling at night, trying to remove the notion that we are much more than bakers, not being permitted to promote CWL and the activities allowed in our parish make it difficult to be noticed, amalgamation, keeping members who do not use computers informed. In order to be more visible in our parishes we encourage our members to wear their scarves, pins, ribbons etc. while attending Mass and while working within other church ministries. We sponsor parish events with guest speakers on topics of interest. Members are involved in the ministries of the parish.

Many councils express the need for more prayer time. During meetings this has been incorporated through using a variety of prayer styles, online webinars, praying the psalter, praying the Rosary, daily mass readings and pro-life prayers. As well as taking some time for reflection, sharing and specifically praying for those in need at this time as well as for ourselves and scheduled guest speakers on religious topics. To promote prayer outside of meetings through encouraging spiritual reading/participation in a book club on religious topics, encouraged spiritual reading/participation in a book club on religious topics and read Vatican II documents, participate in afternoon of reflection, Novenas for Holy Souls in Purgatory, prayer service for season of Creation, distributed upcoming Feast Days usually with specific prayers and or Novenas, scheduled guest speakers on religious topics, honored our deceased CWL members and deceased CWL family members at the Carnation Ceremony, led Stations of the Cross and the Rosary and participated in 12 Hours of Prayer for Palliative Care.

They are many issues where we raise awareness, educate and take action. i.e. Health care, mental health care, teen suicide and bullying, hospice and palliative care, human trafficking, women's health, COVID vaccinations and FLU shot, food insecurity, housing crisis and homelessness. Also, National resolutions on "Food Loss and Waste" plus, Bills C-7, C-314, C-37, C-319 and C-340.

Councils have experienced many achievements and a series challenges this year. Parish Councils have seen a growing number of new members. Our diocese welcomed a new Parish Council, St Mary's Cathedral who signed their Charter on June 27, 2023. Parish Councils are striving to maintain and grow their membership. Earlier this year St Ambrose Parish Council decided to become inactive; hopefully, they will become active next year. Parish Councils who have new parish restrictions and who no longer receive support, co-operation and/or encouragement from their parishes, strive and remain hopeful for change. All have been doing their best to adapt and embrace the old and the new.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Craig

2023-2025 President

Halifax-Yarmouth Diocesan Council