

THE ST. MICHAEL'S LEAGUE

Issue 19

CWLstmichlon@gmail.com

December 2023

Message from our President Dorothy Solomon



Blessed Advent, members of the CWL and friends who are reading this good news.

We have just elected a new executive to lead us for the next two-year term. The chairpersons of the three pillars of Faith, Service and Social

Justice are members who have dedicated themselves to guiding the council onward in its discernment of which topics and activities to pursue. The discernment process then leads them to collaboratively endeavour to develop a guideline for 2024 and they will encourage all members to participate. We as Catholic women are adept at change, we adjust to different circumstances, we evaluate and make changes as needed. We as CWL members are common parts of a team that allows every woman to assist in attaining uncommon results. A successful team is a group of many hands and one mind. My deep gratitude goes to each of you in whatever capacity you live your CWL calling. My special thanks to those who served in many roles in 2021 - 2023.

My commitment as your council president has brought me enormous joy and fulfillment. I have abundant trust in the newly elected executive to challenge, encourage and guide us for the next two years. *Heavenly Father, give them and all members the eyes and heart to see and follow your plan; Jesus, ever present with us, teach us to be open to your call; Holy Spirit empower us to recognize our gifts and use them for the glory of God.*

It is my honour to share with you the names of the newly elected: Stephanie Mc Intyre -Vice-President; Mary Maxwell - Treasurer; Joan Lobsinger - Secretary; Faith Pillar Chair - Megan Young; Service Pillar Co-Chairs - Marilyn Morgan and Veronica Solis; Social Justice Pillar - Margaret Riehl. Other leadership roles come under these main ones. Membership Convenor - Darlene Charrette; Communication and Newsletter - Gail Brown and Connie Cote; Correspondence - Lucy Sollazzo. The President's role is still open; I, Dorothy, will remain as Interim President until such time that a president is

elected. Please consider if this may be where you are called to serve. You can rely on my ongoing support.

Each of these leadership roles depends on each of you, the members, to be part of the team in whatever capacity you are able. As a member you have opportunities to develop your faith, build new friendships, have a voice on current issues at all levels of government, participate in charitable acts, contribute to social justice concerns, and spend time with like-minded women.

Advent is a great, yet short, journey to prepare to meet the Lord. This blessed season invites us to sketch out time in our day dedicated to quiet reflection periods, offer thanksgiving for blessings, petition the Lord for the many needs while trusting in his timing to answer. May you be renewed as you encounter God in various ways and pass along the joy. The story of Jesus' coming is a story of great love played out through remarkably mundane, ordinary circumstances. So, it is with how God enters our lives in divine mystery. On Christmas, in the deepest silence of your spirit may God burst forth with joy, peace and love. Blessed Advent. Holy Christmas.



Prayer Intentions

We have offered specific prayer intentions for each month, and we are asking not only each of our members, but also all the members of St. Michael's community, to bring these intentions to the Lord. Let us continue to lift one another up in prayer. Below are the intentions for the next two months.

December: Let us pray for the unborn, and their mothers.

January: As the colder months come upon us, let us pray for our brothers and sisters who are homeless.

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From Our Spiritual Advisor Fr. Felix Odobi Advent: Embracing Unwavering Hope



Advent is a time of preparation and waiting. It is a time we prepare ourselves to worthily celebrate the anniversary of the Lord's coming into the world as the incarnate God of love. "This season is marked by devout and joyful

expectation as we recall the first humble coming of the Lord at Bethlehem. At the same time, we are invited to direct our mind and heart towards Christ's final coming in glory at the end of time" (The Daily Missal).

One of the key themes of Advent is Hope. We are reminded during the Advent season of God's promises of comfort, deliverance, and restoration. Such a message instills in us hope and confidence. In this edition of our newsletter, I come to you with a message of hope—unwavering hope. This hope helps us to look above our weaknesses, limitations, incapacities circumstances, shattered plans and set our gaze on the joy and peace that we will experience at the birth of Jesus at Christmas. Hope is the "theological virtue by which we desire the kingdom of heaven and eternal life as our happiness, placing our trust in Christ's promises and relying not on our own strength, but on the help of the grace of the Holy Spirit" (CCC, 1817).

We journey through this year's Advent season amidst wars, rumors of wars and growing cases of hate crimes. We seem to be surrounded by very many uncertainties, confronted with depressing and frustrating news around us, susceptible to worries, anger, resentment, and anxiety. Hope reminds us that in all these, we can still experience joy—the Joy that the birth of Jesus brings to the world. This is because hope invites us to place our trust in God and in his promises and not on our own strength.

Embracing unwavering hope means living with the knowledge that in the end, through the workings of the Holy spirit, the will of God will be done in our lives and in the world. It is believing that God is still in control of the world. Isaiah 40:30-31 says: "Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who HOPE in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles;

they will run and not grow weary; they will walk and not be faint". I wish you a hope-filled advent season!

Fall Regional Day Gail Brown

Several of our St. Michael's members were pleased to take part in this year's Fall Regional Day on Saturday, October 21st, hosted by St. Joseph Parish, Stratford. The program focused on the three CWL Pillars of Faith, Service and Social Justice and our members were inspired by the day's proceedings and excited to share their experiences at our November meeting:

Margaret Riehl was inspired by the question "What are my gifts and passions?" in relation to the three pillars. Are you outgoing or a quiet participant; a Leader or happy to be a helper; or someone who works in the community or for a cause? Possibilities for enriching our Faith as a CWL member include reading, sharing, discussing, participating in a Rosary circle before meetings, scripture studies, prayer groups and organizing or participating in retreats. Under Service, activities could include cooking, baking, crafts, decorating, visiting the home-bound, programs for the needy, and participating in the community through clothing, food collections and visiting. Suggestions under Social Justice include educating ourselves re current issues like MAID and homelessness, letter writing to MPs, inviting speakers and developing CWL resolutions.

Joan Lobsinger reported that Lori Alexander, our diocesan Service Committee chairperson, provided members with a handout which reiterated that we as members of the Catholic Women's League of Canada provide service to those in need, our parish, our local community, the country, and the world. In our league prayer we pray "teach us to share with others at home and abroad." The League is known and valued for this service. The handout also informed us of ways the Chairperson of Service could engage members. Lori shared with us that her focus will be on homelessness and so Joan invited her to be with us at our St. Vincent de Paul presentation.

Veronica Solis was excited by the amazing speakers who provided constructive, practical ideas for things we can do. Use your imagination; if you have an idea for something you want to do, you're not alone. Regional CWL can help and support your idea.

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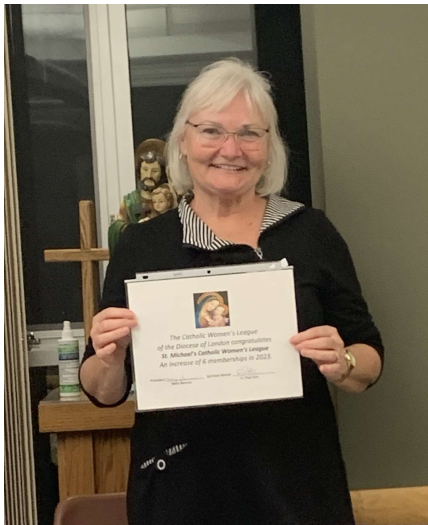
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Marilyn Morgan was most inspired by CWL Diocesan Secretary Nelly Kelders and all the helpful information she provided re communication and correspondence, ideas to retain members and recruit new ones, and online sources of CWL content such as the video for the new Welcome Program.

Stephanie McIntyre and Tiena Fraser agreed that it was great to find out about all the different things done by CWL councils in other places. Having joined us during the pandemic when activities were postponed, Tiena especially was impressed to learn about all our activities.

Our council also received a certificate of congratulations from the London Diocesan Council for having gained six new members in 2023. The certificate was presented to Membership Chairperson Darlene Charette at our November meeting.



Communications

Gail Brown

There is no shortage of online information about the Catholic Women's League, and London Diocesan Secretary Nelly Kelders has assembled a helpful list of websites and their links for us to check out:

National website: [The Catholic Women's League of Canada \(cwl.ca\)](https://www.cwl.ca)

National webpage, Catholic Women Unite: [Wear A Message of Unity - Catholic Women Unite](#)

Provincial Website: [Home - Ontario Provincial Council of The Catholic Women's League of Canada \(cwl.on.ca\)](https://www.cwl.on.ca)

Diocesan website: [Cwl London](#)

World Union of Catholic Women's Organizations: [WUCWO - The World Union of Catholic Women's Organisations](#)

These sites are a great way for us to keep up with what's going on in other councils and at other levels of the CWL, for inspiration and information that we can use here at St. Michael's.

Spotlight on St. Michael's

Connie Cote

I have some exciting news to share with you. Due to the tremendous success of our weekend Membership Drive, we decided to submit our story to CWL National for inclusion in the Spotlight section of their website and we were selected! As a result, a council in Alberta wants more information. You can read our submission at the links below.

<https://www.cwl.ca/spotlight/>

<https://www.cwl.ca/st-michaels-parish-council-london/>

In Remembrance

Marilyn Morgan

With fond memories of many shared experiences, we bid farewell to four of our League sisters this year. We ask that you hold them close in prayer as they are welcomed into God's heavenly Kingdom.



Rest in peace: Margaret Jacyno, Ilene Moir, Anna Kovacic and Louise Murphy.

We extend our deepest condolences to the families of these members and express our gratitude and appreciation for their many years of faithful service. Please keep them in your prayers.

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Featured Member Megan Young

Gerarda Smith-Hillier



Who is that YOUNG woman? Why is she always smiling? Those are the questions I asked myself several years ago as I continually noticed this lovely, YOUNG woman with the curly dark locks at church. Who is she? She is Megan Young. When one gets the privilege of knowing Megan, the mystery of her smile is revealed. Megan is full of the Holy Spirit and the joy of her love for the Lord radiates outward. She is a shining example of our core values of faith, service, and social justice.

Megan grew up in our parish community, attending St. Michael's Elementary School, Catholic Central High School and Fanshawe College. She is the eldest of three children with two younger brothers and loving parents. Her grandmother, now deceased, was the former parishioner Mary Flanagan. Mary had the biggest influence on Megan's faith life. Like her grandmother, who had a daycare in her home, Megan is an Early Childhood Educator. Megan is thrilled to teach at a Christian Daycare which suits her values and where her days with the children can be faith-centered.

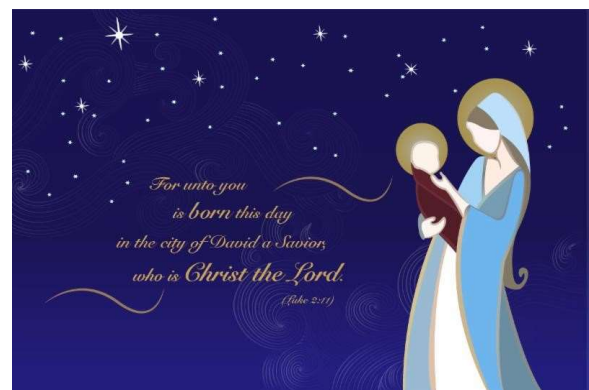
Megan's favourite saint is Ste. Therese, The Little Flower. She relates to Ste. Therese because they both had a loving family life, were drawn to faith at a young age and believe(d) in following "The Little Way" of doing small acts of kindness every day.

Even as a child Megan was aware of her faith. At Christmas her Barbie and Ken dolls became Mary and Joseph on their journey to Bethlehem, so it is no surprise that Megan has lived a life of service from an early age. As soon as she was old enough, Megan became an altar server. Next, she was a sponsor and a member

of the organizing teams for RCIA and RCIC (Right of Christian Initiation for Children). Megan has also been a leader for Children's Liturgy. She was on Parish Council, is a Eucharistic Minister, a Lector, attends Bible Study, sings with the 10:00 Choir, and hosts a Zoom Rosary every Monday evening for CWL members. As if this isn't enough, Megan has completed the three-year Certificate in Pastoral Ministry through St. Peter's Seminary. She would love to work for the Diocese in the future.

Megan has been a member of the CWL since 2018 and a year later joined the Executive as Spiritual Chairperson, followed by Secretary. She has just been elected to chair the Faith Pillar of our Executive for the upcoming term. She also manages our council's Facebook page, regularly posting inspirational quotes and league photos to help keep us engaged. Megan was inspired to belong to the CWL because she appreciates the community of sisterhood, and the support of charitable causes. She loves the variety of charisms evident among the membership, especially the wisdom of women and how we learn from each other. Although age is just a number to Megan, she has a hope for the future of the CWL. The age to join the CWL is 16, but Megan imagines a junior CWL where younger girls are active and where we can draw in that generation to the CWL.

So now we all know who that lovely YOUNG woman is! She's Megan and we are so happy and blessed to know her!!



May you have the spirit of Christmas
which is Peace, the gladness of
Christmas which is Hope, and the Heart
of Christmas which is Love.

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St. Vincent de Paul Affordable Housing Initiative

Cathie Gauthier



We all know the good work St. Vincent de Paul does in their compassionate, generous outreach to the poor. At our November CWL meeting we found out about a new and bold initiative from honorary co-chairs, Shelley Baker and Mary Michniewicz, of the St. Vincent de Paul Building Hope for Housing Campaign.

Shelley and Mary are life-long friends who have worked together on many projects, including local and international Habitat for Humanity initiatives and they were excited to tell us about an affordable housing project spear-headed by the SVDP. Not only have they had lots of hands-on experience, but Ms. Baker also formed a charitable organization in 2002 with her now deceased husband (2020): The Richard and Shelley Baker Family Foundation. The Building Hope for Housing Foundation is in capable hands.

This SVDP housing initiative is new to London, and is chaired by Larry McKenzie, one of our own parishioners at St. Michael's. We learned that the SVDP is a major builder of affordable housing in the USA as well as some building in Canada.

A parcel of land has been purchased from St. Andrew's Parish to build a six story, seventy-two-unit

affordable housing apartment. It was necessary to identify a population these apartments will be available to, and the committee has chosen single older women, new Canadians and, in general, the working poor. There will be a combination of one- and two-bedroom apartments. About three quarters will be one-bedroom apartments and all will be rented below market value. They will be rented to tenants who qualify according to affordable housing income levels.

Lots of work has already been done with many volunteering and donating their expertise including architects and builders. All permits are in process. They hope to break ground in the spring which first requires permits to be approved and the land purchase completed. This requires substantial funds to be raised by then. They are appealing to all of us to consider a generous one-time donation or perhaps a monthly donation to bring this plan to fruition. They hope to raise \$5,000,000 over the next five years.

The national CWL has chosen a deliberate focus on Social Justice in the last year. Social justice goes beyond charity to the less fortunate and looks at root causes. Homelessness and housing is an issue of concern to our council and a record number of members and guests turned out to learn about the Building Hope for Housing Campaign.



John Ketelaars, president of the London Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, and Joseph Dabrowski, auxiliary bishop of the Roman Catholic Diocese of London. Photograph taken on Friday, Jan. 13, 2022. Mike Hensen/The London Free Press

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Membership Drive 2024

Darlene Charette



One of the hallmarks of the Catholic Women's League is how powerful we are as a group. Our Membership drive at the end of October is a very good example of that teamwork.

During all the Masses on October 28 & 29, CWL members wore blue sashes as they took part in the various Ministries, serving as sacristans, greeters, gift bearers, lectors, Eucharistic ministers, choir members, and even just sitting in the pews. This made the CWL very visible, and many parishioners commented later on how nice it was to see so many members present and participating. After each Mass, everyone was invited into the Parish Hall for coffee and cookies. Some members were stationed at each door to hand out bookmarks to women who might be considering joining. There were several members in the hall talking to people and answering questions about the League while others were managing the coffee and cookies or taking membership dues.

Of course, the increase in membership was more than just a one weekend event, and although we are a growing parish, it took a concerted effort by many people to make this happen. It was the result of a year-long effort to promote the Catholic Women's League. This was done by having members invite guests to our meetings and social functions, promoting membership by word of mouth and social media, and by ensuring that our current members are informed through our regular emails and newsletters. We also made payment of membership dues more convenient by offering three ways to pay: in person at the membership drive, by dropping payment in the offertory basket during Mass, or by paying through e-transfer. We even had four of our members sponsor

another woman so that she could join. How heartwarming!



The membership payments continued to trickle in throughout the month of November. We currently have 24 new members, 4 new members who transferred from other Councils, and 3 members who are returning after an absence. I know of 2 other women who are planning on joining soon. As you can see, it was a busy year for us, but our efforts have paid off with a very large increase in membership!



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Monday Evening Rosary

Megan Young



"The Rosary is the weapon for our times" this powerful statement by St. Padre Pio is one that has struck me since I first heard it a few years ago, and as someone who has

prayed the Rosary from an early age it is a statement that I will always stand by. It wasn't until recently that I came to understand just how much this powerful devotion would lead me into a ministry that would bring me more joy than I ever thought possible.

During the pandemic when we were not able to gather together to pray and worship as a community many were left feeling alone both physically and spiritually. I was approached by our ever-thoughtful CWL President with the idea to pray the Rosary via Zoom. This was an idea that was originally meant to last for a week or so as a way to stay connected and give our members the sense of community we were all seeking, until we were able to gather in person once again. But the Lord seemed to have a different plan in mind, and through his gentle encouragement and

loving persistence this is a time of prayer that I am still sharing nearly three years later.

Each Monday evening can see between five and eight CWL members gathered to pray the Rosary together and to offer their own personal intentions or those of others as well. It never fails to amaze me how many prayers I have seen answered in one way or another thanks to the power of the Rosary, and the love among a group of sisters in Christ interceding for one another.

This small ministry is one that personally brings me so much joy (as I hope it does to all who join weekly) and I am so grateful to God for calling me to lead my CWL sisters in prayer; and to all those who join me every week I send out a big thank you for praying with me and choosing to be a part of this community we have created.

If you would like to pray the Rosary with us please feel free to email me for the Zoom invitation at meganyoung142@gmail.com. We gather each Monday evening via Zoom at 6:30pm.

Parish Team Appreciation



Marilyn Morgan presenting our CWL Christmas gift to the staff at St. Michaels

CWL / KofC Trivia Night



Congratulations to the 2023 Winning Team
The Smartinis

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Apple Pie Day 2023



A huge **THANK YOU** to all the volunteers who helped make the apple pies for our annual CWL Christmas Baking and Craft and Sale! A record number of volunteers, approximately 30, came on the morning of November 14th. Lots of smiling, chatting and camaraderie was a big part of our morning. Many hands made light work and by noon there were 70 pies in the freezer. With some left-over ingredients, we decided to meet again the following week. A total of 96 pies were made and ready for purchase at our November 25th and 26th sale.

A huge **THANK YOU** also goes out to Agnes Lansink, Corrie Gicante and Crunican Orchards for donating some of the apples for our pie making and to the many parishioners who purchased the pies. - Joan Lobsinger

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Christmas Baking and Craft Sale – A Very Successful Year



Our 2023 CWL Christmas bake sale was a huge success thanks to those who donated baked goods, preserves, candy and prepared our apple pies. Many thanks to the volunteers who helped with pricing, selling and clean up. We'd also like to thank the parishioners for their support the day of the sale. We raised just over \$2000.00.

- Joan Lobsinger



This year the CWL expanded our annual Christmas Bake Sale to include handmade items, jewellery, a draw table and silent auction items. Many thanks to all the parishioners and community businesses who donated items for the sale! Thanks also to Karen Owen and Veronica Solis for helping me to organize this event, and to the many CWL members who volunteered to set up, sell, or clean up after the sale. The craft portion of the Christmas Sale raised approximately \$3000 which will go toward supporting Hospitality North and the SVP Housing Project. These are two initiatives that were designated during our August Retreat as being ones the CWL would like to support. This is another example of teamwork and how we can have a big impact when we work together! - Darlene Charrette



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Still Strumming! St. Michael's Ukulele and Glee

Joan Roffey



The SMUGlees, short for St. Michael's Ukulele and Glee, began 7 years ago as a small group of women who thought it would be fun to learn how to play a new instrument and to make music together. Armed with just a few chords and the joy of singing, the group was only a few months old when they took it on the road for the first time, performing for their CWL sisters and then for The Sisters of St. Joseph. Since then, membership has grown to over 25 and includes women from different parishes and faith backgrounds.

The SMUGlees meet twice a month, on the second and fourth Mondays at 7:00 p.m. Gatherings always begin with sacred song and include music from many genres and eras. In the warmer months, they often meet in each other's backyards, enjoying the beauty of nature and the sounds of birds singing along.

Several times a year the SMUGlees continue to perform for others, most recently at the home of the Sisters of St. Joseph where they were joined by a number of CWL members who added their voices to the mix. Upcoming gigs include Kensington Village Long Term Care, Richmond Woods Retirement Village and Hospitality North.

New members are always welcome. All that is required is a love of music and an openness to fun and friendship. Hopefully they will continue to make music together for many years to come!