

Portrait of Prairie Region CLC – April 2016

CLC groups in Prairie Region, totalling 34 members, are concentrated in Winnipeg and Thunder Bay. In Winnipeg, 23 members are gathered in five groups: Diakonia, Kairos, Kenosis, Koinonia and Metanoia. Two groups in Thunder Bay, Joshua Tree and Oramus, comprise 11 members altogether. The number of years as CLC members in Prairie Region range from one year to seventeen years. In Winnipeg, there is one permanent member and nine temporary members. One group of eight has made the initial commitment at Session 13 in Manual I, and four members are still “journeying” with their respective groups. In Thunder Bay, four members have made their permanent commitment and seven members have made their temporary commitment.

Group meetings in the region are as frequent as weekly (except for July and August), bi-monthly, every two weeks, or whenever every one in the group is able to meet because of other commitments, physical distances from each other or weather.

Group Guide attendance varies from just at year-end, two or three times a year, every few months (more often at transitions) or according to the needs of a group. One group has even been fortunate in that it had a resident guide who was a Jesuit priest. This group, Koinonia, has also been the CLC group for three National Ecclesial Assistants!

For formation, Prairie Region groups are at different stages. Some have completed Manual I, others, Manuals I and II or for a couple of groups, Manuals I, II and III. Different groups have also studied books written by Jesuits, such as “Sandhana” by Antony de Mello, S.J., “Awareness” by Anthony de Mello, “The New Spiritual Exercises according to Pierre Teilhard Chardin, S.J.”, “Putting On the Heart of Christ” by Gerald Fagin, S.J., and “The Joy of the Gospel” by Pope Francis. Other Ignatian materials studied included: “Contemplative Retreat” by Franz Jalics, S.J., history written by the first Jesuit priests who arrived in Canada, specifically Northern Ontario, and “Reflecting Sunday Gospel for Lent” from the Irish Jesuit website, Sacred Space”. One group had also studied from the CLC modules on “Listening” and “Leadership”. Ongoing CLC Projects and the most recent encyclical, “Laudato Si”, were also used to help in formation.

Annual Fall and Spring Retreats are important to the Formation of Prairie Region Members. “Compassion”, “Family” and “Mercy” were some of the themes of the retreats. Both Winnipeg and Thunder Bay members had just held their recent silent Spring Formation Retreat on Saturday, April 2, 2016. The theme was “Jesus is the Face of the Father's Mercy.” Other Formation retreats are based on the Liturgical calendar, such as Advent and Lent.

Prairie Region members also celebrate the John English Memorial and St. Ignatius Feast Day annually. Last year, in line with the theme on “The Family”, Winnipeg members celebrated the John English Memorial by inviting the young children of CLC members to the event. It was a success and there have been plans to include children in as many CLC events as possible. Thunder Bay celebrates the John English Memorial and St. Ignatius' Feast Day on the 31st of July annually with an open invitation to the greater Ignatian family to attend.

Many discerned group missions are also missions in the Frontiers. Members of Koinonia (Winnipeg) provide professional and collective leadership, such as being part of the leadership team for the “Hearts on Fire” young adult retreat. They are part of the transformation taking place in

Winnipeg's Point Douglas through the Drop In, Gonzaga Middle school, Family resource centres and a housing initiative. Mike Radcliffe is active in Future Hope, which addresses support for released prisoners. Chris Butterill is active in all aspects of education from the University of Manitoba to RCIA at the parish. All members are involved with the Spiritual Exercises in various ways. They give support with food and on occasions, assist with spiritual presentations.

Members of Kairos (Winnipeg) give prepared "care packages", each containing a Tim Horton's gift card, water bottle, juice box, energy bar, socks and a small inspirational card, to panhandlers at traffic intersections.

Members of Kairos also support each other in the various individual missions that include: visiting the sick and those on personal care homes, comforting families of the sick, comforting the afflicted, being substitute decision maker for a vulnerable sister, comforting and healing the sick, counselling teens and mediating between troubled teens and their parents, teaching basic English to newcomers to Canada, coordinating the Prairie Prayer Circle, and caring about and responding to their own families.

Members of Joshua Tree (Thunder Bay) provide spiritual leadership by giving retreats at Anemki-Wadj Anameogamik Retreat Centre, using Ignatian material. They collaborate with Fr. Larry Kroker, S.J., and the Native community in Thunder Bay by giving spiritual and financial support to the newly initiated Native Diaconate Programme (which resulted in three men being ordained as permanent deacons and three women commissioned as ministers of service); support the St. Kateri Church Native Prayer Days through attendance and by giving financial donations; support friends who are seniors in their needs as they arise; and help families obtain school supplies and Christmas gifts. Joshua Tree members also work with Fr. Larry Kroker, S.J., of St. Anne's Church on an Environmental Project, which is the maintenance of a Community Garden. Group members are responsible for weeding, caring and harvesting the vegetable garden. The vegetables are then distributed to Gull Bay Reserve in Ontario, St. Kateri Church for Prayer Days and soups to be sent to Armstrong, Ontario. Carrots and other vegetables are also sent to the Dew Drop Inn Soup Kitchen in Thunder Day. They also hold Recycling Workshops, help the Native people integrate Christianity with First Nation Spirituality, support people with special needs, provide care-giving in home, and help in the soup kitchen.

Joshua Tree members also support each other in their individual outreach ministries, such as facilitating the Spiritual Exercises, maintaining, promoting/advertising, and developing contacts for the Anemki-Wadj Retreat Centre. Other individual missions for the group members include: helping in home care, journeying with the sick and elderly as they approach the end of their lives, participating weekly in Old Testament discussion group, visit with a sister of St. Joseph weekly who is home bound during winter, praying the rosary daily for those suffering in Syria, helping in palliative care and hospice work through Hospice Northwest, being in a committee for honouring citizens of exceptional achievement at a yearly banquet, participating in the work of Catholic Women's League, church choir, and singing with the Interlink Choir consisting of seniors and grade 5 students.

Members of Oramus (Thunder Bay) take up prayer requests, which are logged in a Prayer Request book. This is the primary mission of Oramus. There have been thanksgivings for prayers answered. Members of this group also support Joshua Tree in the running of retreats, helping to provide food and cleaning up. Some individual missions include: being involved in homilies, the Parkinson group, listening and giving support, mediating to resolve conflicts, decorating for retreats and church, soup kitchen, prison mission, music-drumming, and the Salvation Army. Some members also perform roles of minister of communion or lecturer.

Kenosis does not have a discerned group mission. Its members, mostly young professionals, are primarily focused on the mission (and Frontier) of "Family". Despite being busy with family life (raising young children), members are also involved in parish ministry, such as marriage preparation, play and pray for mothers (mostly) and children, and providing refugee support. Marek Gajda, the only one in the group not raising a family, is involved in CLC regional leadership and in his parish, helping in the RCIA and Eucharistic Ministry. Members are also involved in other care-giving roles, music, supporting group members currently taking the Spiritual Exercises, and exploring "Come and See" for people interested in CLC.

In terms of leadership, CLC Prairie Region has a Regional Council, comprising Fr. Charles Pottie-Pate, S.J., the Regional EA, Kwan-Sui Crowe (Prairie Region Rep), Marek Gajda (Winnipeg Rep), Penny Fitzpatrick (Thunder Bay Rep), and representatives from each Regional CLC group. There are altogether nine members in the Regional Council. This team meets, on average, once every two months from September to June. The meeting in November concerns the regional budget. Because Prairie Region does not have a CLC member who is an accountant, the Regional Treasurer, Christine Butterill (of Koinonia) receives support from an accountant, Monica Storozuk. Monica, a daughter of a member of Joshua Tree, is a volunteer and the Region is very grateful for her assistance.

There is also a Group Guides and Coordinators Peers Group that also meets, on average, once every two months from September to June, with Fr. Charles and Kwan-Sui Crowe. Among other things, this team plans the regional formation events and give each other support during meetings.

The generous collaboration of these leadership groups has sustained Prairie region as a collective. These two groups have supported the development of regional leadership.

Despite the diversity of Prairie Region in terms of "political/social" views, members of the different groups have grown in their capacity to listen deeply and respectfully to each other. The strength is in the members' deep caring for each other's well-being, both physical and spiritual. Members are very comfortable with individual and group discernment. There is a recognition that time is short and there is a need to focus on the sustainability and growth of Ignatian spirituality in Winnipeg and Thunder Bay. This will be a critical piece in the ongoing discernment of where to apply time, talent and treasure.

Although members have commitment to meetings and mission, Prairie Region face various challenges. As members age, groups become increasingly limited in their physical abilities. Discerning suitable future missions while considering those abilities may require new ways of thinking, such as learning more about how other communities in the Third World function.

As the number of membership in communities shrink, for example, Metanonia has lost two members who passed away and one moved away this past year, a couple of groups are left with only two or three members each. Although two people had "Come and See", they had decided not to continue. Still, these groups cherish the deep and honest sharing and stay focused on compassion of the past group. They recognize that it takes time to cultivate a new group of people.

Despite the challenges faced in the forms of aging, death, and members moving on, there is a general recognition in both Winnipeg and Thunder Bay that it takes time to find new members and finding members to take on leadership roles. There is deep faith in God and His way of working in mysterious ways.