

# GENERATIONS

## Update # 3 - Spring 2014

St Mary of the Visitation Parish, Cambridge (H), Ontario  
16 Cooper Street..... 519-658-4443

[www.stmaryhespeler.ca](http://www.stmaryhespeler.ca)

Generations is about faithfulness not only to our mission statement which has led us since 2007: *AWe are connected to our past, committed to our future and compassionately focussed on being a Family of Faith with something for everyone@* but also our four values:

Eucharistic Spirituality  
Hospitality and Welcome  
Evangelization  
Faithfulness to Who God Made Us to Be

As you know, we hosted our Town Hall Meeting on June 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2013. The meeting was attended by close to 100 people and was very well received. At that meeting, and the following weekend, we made available special newsletters with the information concerning Generations, and had a display present in the Parish Centre, as well as ongoing information on our website. Feedback forms have all been positive and many offered very constructive suggestions and enhancements to our plans.

During the Town Hall Meeting we outlined the basic principles of Generations:

Expanded Parking  
Addressing Maintenance  
Children=s Wing Addition  
A Parish Team for the Future  
Making Sunday Matter

Since June 2<sup>nd</sup> and our updates in the Summer and Fall of 2013, and our updates in the Winter of 2014 as part of our parish Stewardship Report, there has been much progress and planning underway as we enter Phase Two, so I wanted to share a small update.

First, let me say that our parish is experiencing incredible blessings. Every day there is an opportunity to spend time with the Lord - whether at Mass or Eucharistic Adoration. Our attendance at Lord=s Day Masses has increased from 1,165 in 2006 to 1,485 persons. From our ever burgeoning Children and Youth Ministry, to our ever expanded ministry to Older Adults, to the continued blessings seen through our Bereavement Ministry and our Small Groups, to the quiet work being done by our Neighbourhood Ministry; there is a spirit of family, a sense of caring, and a sanctity of prayerfulness which is ever present in our Family of Faith.

This reality is because we have built upon the legacy of faith given to us over 155 years ago by the founding families of Hespeler to do all things AFor the Glory of God@. I am grateful for where we have come from and excited for where we are headed as a parish family.

Just like when we walked in faith and undertook our Parish Centre/Parking Lot Expansion in 2009, we are at a point where we are called again into a new chapter...which we are calling Generations. This undertaking comes from the vitality of our community but also because of our trust in God.

## Expanded Parking

Our new parking area at 15 Cooper Street has become a well-used great place for parking - complete with sign. We continue on Lord=s Day weekends to encourage its use, as well as the rectory lot when our main lot is full. We are also blessed with additional spots at the lower lot of the Johnson Centre. In terms of parking, it is important to also remember, that on Saturday evenings the use of the St. James Lot is permitted. On Sunday mornings, due to the adjustment of our last Mass to 11:30am this past Fall, both of our neighbouring congregations have concluded their 10:00am Services, and so downtown parking is also opened up more. I believe we are on the right path in terms of addressing our parking situation but always remain attentive to any new opportunities which may arise. This Spring, some minor landscaping remains to be finished on this site, and also on our Church Campus following our Phase One construction projects.

## Addressing Maintenance

Much has been accomplished since the start of Generations in this area. Our new LED sign for the front of the Church is operational and the feedback has been very positive. Given our focus as a Eucharistic community, we are a >light on the hill= (Matthew 5:14-16) with our new red light in the bell tower which symbolizes the red tabernacle light. Our new votive candles at the shrines of Our Blessed Mother and the Sacred Heart have become popular places of devotion, and the installed sound panels in the Parish Centre Narthex reduce the echo. As our attendance during Lord=s Day celebrations increases, we have noticed the need for a larger monitor in the Narthex space. The current monitor will be recycled into the ACafé@ and updated for presentation use during meetings. The current monitor in the ACafé@ will make its way to the Atrium Room and also be upgraded for meeting use. These adjustments will make for a more positive worship experience for all. During this past year we also undertook some maintenance to repair interior stone work on our Bell Tower, repaired drywall and paint chipping in our Parish Center, upgraded electrical work in the Church, and enhanced the presence of the Adoration Chapel with a stained glass window in its doorway and an exterior sign.

There are two major outstanding issues in this category: to address the rectory garage roof which is leaking and to develop a modern strategy for eliminating occasional flooding in the church and rectory basements resulting from older plumbing strategies. As we begin to address these questions, it has become apparent that we also have the opportunity to consider creating some additional space for programing and storage in the current garage area. We may also be able to put in place an accessible family washroom at the main entrance of the Church proper which would be of assistance to both older and young parishioners who currently make the trek to the front of the Church. In doing so we could also address the long standing question of the stairs to the Balcony which are dangerously steep and create a little more sitting room in the Church itself. We are currently developing a plan and seeking to secure a funding model which will not add to our current debt. Once we have such a model ready for presentation, hopefully for the Fall, we will host another Town Hall meeting to present such to the wider parish and obtain additional input.

## Children=s Wing Addition

The rooms of our new Children=s Wing are being well utilized. The Atrium Room will be used as offices by St Gabriel School until August, at which time it will be converted into Children=s Ministry space. Such space is badly needed as we approach 90 children in our Children=s Ministry programs, and equally large numbers in our sacramental programs.

With the additional Children/Youth space we have seen an increase in opportunities for Children and Youth ministry. The commencement of our new Plugged In/RCIC program, the start of Kids Zone for aged 2 & 3 year olds, the beginnings of AVisitation Kids@ for First Communion preparation and our new

Confirmation Preparation Program, *Searching in the Spirit*, our Steubenville youth gathering for high school aged teens, as well as our *Catholic Update* for young adults are all positive signs of growth and great tools of evangelization. Formal planning for our Atrium of the Good Shepherd Program, a religious formation program for children ages 3-6, and 7-12 introducing a tactile way to understand the Mass encouraging Eucharistic Adoration for Children, continues and our hope is to have a form of this program in place by the Fall of 2014.

Our improved storage space in sacristy and the additional natural light to the side staircase have been a marked improvement. Our goal over the next few months is to see our Children=s Wing become a fully technologically connected area where the presentation of the Gospel will be enhanced for today=s generation of sight and sound.

### **A Parish Team for the Future**

The presence of Sister Bernadette Caron, SOLI, as our Parish Catechist has been a true blessing for our community. Our Lay Leadership Day in the Fall of 2013 with David Dayler and Anne Jamieson from the Diocese of Hamilton continues to be a source of tremendous insight for all who attended. This coming Fall of 2014 we will take that positive experience and open it more widely to our parish community thru a special series of Tuesday Nights Together which will focus on Lay Leadership using the *Fours Signs of a Dynamic Catholic*. Details soon.

For several months we have been engaged in the process for the hiring of a Youth/Young Adult Minister. We are relying on God=s timing and His selection of the ideal person for this imperative role. Our Youth programs consist of Kids Klub, *Searching in the Spirit*, Da Crew and our Young Adults group, all of which have very healthy numbers. The hiring of a youth minister would give dedicated attention to continue to build upon this excellent foundation for evangelization and also permit expansion of ministry in our soon to be three parish elementary schools, not to mention our ministry at St Benedict Secondary and at Camp Brebeuf. We would value your prayers as we continue our search. As we do, some minor renovations to our current office area will take place to provide a work space for this new position.

### **Making Sunday Matter**

As God invites us into His family He invites us to *Go out into the world* so that we can bring hope to our world. This is at the heart of *making Sunday matter*. It is about knowing that *coming to Mass* is not something we do; it is a way to become who we are called to be. *A Heart to Home* is a weekly publication which continues reflections from the weekly homily. Prepared just for our own parish small groups, this is an excellent tool not only of evangelization but also personal growth and prayer for the growing numbers in small groups. Our new Welcome Centre is in place, and training and recruitment for Parking Lot attendants is underway B both of these will become positive tools of hospitality and information in our parish life. Our expanded Catholic Caf  continues and is being very well received as a tool of hospitality and community fellowship.

Our focus on Digital Evangelization has been highly successful since the start of Generations. Our website receives the *A highest number of hits* of any local Catholic parish, our facebook and twitter feeds, and our parish blog, are also viewed in high volume. *>Sursum Corda* our weekly e newsletter is distributed to over 300 parishioners weekly. We have also been able to provide a weekly audio feed of the Sunday homily for listening and downloading. We have produced a *A welcome video* for our parish, and several special event videos, including one for our very successful Tuesday Night Together series this past winter which attracted over 100 persons each of the four evenings and featured a fantastic children=s ministry and menu.

We continue to also reach out as a parish family to those in need. In addition to efforts by our Catholic Women=s League, St.Vincent de Paul and Knights of Columbus, our parish is committed to such local mission projects as our Red Stocking Campaign, Kindness Counts Toy Appeal, Day One Back Pack Appeal, Neighbourhood Ministry, Baby Shower for Michael House and Service Saturday events - all signs of the big heart and caring hands found in this parish family.

So too is our commitment to World Mission projects. In 2006 we began the Red Stocking Campaign where yearly we are able to collect over 400 stockings filled with school supplies sent to mission schools in Africa. In February 2009 we began our connection with the Daughters of Charity Orphanage in Bethlehem following a parish pilgrimage. Here we have sent monetary donations to provide aide to Holy Family Creche. Our Children and Youth Ministry also sponsor several children thru their Acoin cans@ in Haiti, as do dozen=s of parishioners through Chalice.

Our parish Mission in Haiti, however, has been our primary area of mission. Since the earthquake of 2010, we have contributed to the numerous immediate relief efforts, along with the construction of a 3,500 square foot medical supply warehouse and aided in the installation of a potable water well system for the Catholic Hospital in Port au Prince. We have also sent 2,348 Haiti Health Kits and numerous >Milk Bag Mats@ to aid those in need. We will continue to make a difference with our new AHomes for Haiti@ focus and our commitment to a Mission Trip in 2015.

### **GENERATIONS WEEKEND**

At St Mary of the Visitation Parish we are a grateful people. For we have inherited a legacy given to us by people who didn't even know our names, but they were faithful and believed we would be here as they were, and are, to worship and do all things for His Glory. They have given us a foundation that has poised us now to continue to grow, expand and continuing offering our Worship to God.

There is no doubt they are coming.....the development of St Gabriel School, the proposed expansions in the area around Hespeler, the continued arrival of new families from all over Cambridge coming to our parish are signs of our vitality and spirit led growth...we are preparing for them...just as others prepared for us.

To date, we have raised over \$30,000 toward our achievable and reasonable goal of \$75,000 which we must have in place by the end of 2014. This means we have achieved 40% of our goal. Achieving this goal will ensure the financial foundation we need to continue to undertake the good work being accomplished, as well as meet our debt repayment schedule to be debt free in 2016.

We are asking every active family in the parish to consider a >Seasonal Contribution= of \$150.00 over the course of 2013 and 2014. This will be in the form of a donation of \$50.00 above their current level of giving on each of the special AGenerations Weekends@. Two additional opportunities will be offered to help us meet this goal - the weekends of May 10/11, 2014 (Mother=s Day Weekend) and October 11/12, 2014 (Thanksgiving Day Weekend). Donations may also be made at any time toward Generations; special envelopes are prepared and available at the Welcome Desk. It is imperative that we meet our goals in order to progress in the next phase of Generations. We pray for this goal to be met during our two remaining weekends. Thank you for all of your patience and support during the various aspects of Generations.

May Our Lady of the Visitation continue to be our inspiration, model and guide.

Together in the Lord=s Service

*Father F. Freitas, Pastor*