



NEWS ARCHIVE:

Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon

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Catholic Health Association of Saskatchewan develops ministry of care manual for parishes

By Kiply Lukan Yaworski

A new manual to help parishes establish or enhance their ministry of care to the sick and suffering has been developed by the Catholic Health Association of Saskatchewan (CHAS).

“This ministry is what CHAS is all about – bringing the compassion of Christ to those who are sick, suffering and dying,” said Rev. Jim Kaptein of Nipiwini, the bishops’ representative on the CHAS board of directors and the chair of the project team that developed the new resource for parishes.

“The challenge of suffering is addressed most adequately when a faith community journeys with those who are sick and sorrowing,” begins the Community of Care parish manual.

“In our faith communities, there are many individuals who suffer, often quietly, from isolation, loneliness, depression, loss of a loved one, chronic illness, physical disability, or being housebound due to lack of mobility,” the manual describes. “A ministry of care program invites parishioners to the possibilities for service to these members of the community who may not be visible or feel connected to the community.”

The resource begins by considering the dignity of the human person and scriptural foundations for the ministry of care, before exploring different models of ministry (including parish nursing), and providing practical suggestions about establishing or enhancing a ministry of care program in a parish. Subsequent chapters examine the needs of those being served, as well as the selection, training and support of visitors.



Sandra Kary, executive director; Deacon Bob Willison, mission educator; and Trish Holst, administrative assistant (l-r); with the new Community of Care: A Parish Ministry of Care Manual developed by a Catholic Health Association of Saskatchewan project team.

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The Community of Care manual also includes liturgical resources and prayers, and a resource list.

“This has been a project two years in the making,” said Sandra Kary, executive director of CHAS, noting that the new manual builds upon an earlier CHAS resource developed 14 years ago by a team led by Sr. Anne Collins, SCIC.

The new parish ministry of care manual was developed under a project charter structure being pioneered by CHAS as an alternative to standing committees. “Members walk through a particular tangible project that has a more precise timeline,” said Kary of the new process, describing how the project teams are task-oriented working groups that develop a real sense of ownership for a project. Development of the new Ministry of Care manual has been a highly collaborative process, she added.

The project team for the ministry of care manual included representatives from the dioceses of Prince Albert, Regina and Saskatoon: individuals involved in pastoral care in a variety of roles and settings.

“It has got a Saskatchewan flavour,” noted Deacon Bob Williston, CSsR, mission educator for CHAS. “There are people’s experiences in here; people who have been active in ministry of care as coordinators, as parish nurses, as volunteers, as individuals.”

“The thing that is impressing us is how comprehensive this has ended up being,” said Williston. “We wanted people to be able to take this and feel equipped to go into homes, into hospitals, into long term care facilities, and provide ministry of care.”

It was necessary for the resource to be broad in scope, said Kary. “We are very cognizant of the fact that this will go to both urban and rural parishes, and of the many models of ministry that exist in a variety of different settings.”

The question of how the resource will be promoted and used is now being addressed, added Williston. The hope is that the resource will not be sitting on a shelf, but will be actively utilized, he said.

A workshop session at the upcoming annual CHAS convention in Prince Albert Oct. 26-27 will hopefully be the first of many such sessions exploring the new resource and its implementation, said Williston. Another workshop is already planned at St. Augustine parish in Humboldt Saturday, Nov. 7, organized through the diocese of Saskatoon ministry development office.

“We’ll try to take this to as many parishes and settings as possible to introduce the manual,” said Kary. “Once you see this and want to develop a ministry of care or rejuvenate a program that you already have, you want to be able to develop some structure around it,” she said. “We’re trying to inspire the ministry to take root and move forward.”

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The new manual will also help provide a greater uniformity of practice across the province, added Williston. “For example, there are a variety of ways to bring communion to the sick, but some of them are better than others. We do need that common reference point, and that is what this gives, right from the bishops’ liturgical texts.”

All of the Saskatchewan bishops have endorsed the resource. “Every once in awhile, a reference book comes along which advances the Kingdom of God,” Archbishop Daniel Bohan of Regina writes in a message from the bishops of Saskatchewan about the publication.

“From the initial chapter of what it means to be a human being, to the parish models in use, to needs of those being visited and those doing the visiting, to the training sessions that are included, and to the cutting edge information on Parish Nurses; not to mention the excellent liturgies that are part of this ministry; this work can only be described as comprehensive,” Bohan said.

“The gospel is filled with instances when Jesus helped those who were ill,” he added. “In a society that sometimes sees sickness or age as a scourge to be removed from sight, it is a blessing to see a book which helps us understand that the sick and aged need to be treated with the utmost respect.”

Kary said it is highly appropriate that as a provincial network for all those involved in Catholic health care, CHAS is working to provide tools and resources at a parish level. “Catholic health care doesn’t just live in Catholic health care facilities, but is part of the baptismal calling of every Christian to share in the healing ministry of Christ.”