

# ST. MICHAEL'S PARISH WATERLOO

## FROM THE DESK OF THE PASTOR

June 2010

Dear Parishioners.

Every year as we creep closer to the last day of June, there is a sigh of relief in our schools and parishes that we have survived another year and look forward to the calm and soothing days of summer. This has been a very busy year for all of us here at St. Michael's and we look forward to the summer. How calming and soothing it will be depends very much on how quickly we get the new offices and the work on the kitchen in the parish centre finished. The work has gone much more slowly than expected (for a variety of reasons) but we do expect that by the time we get back into a full schedule in September all will be finished and the delays, dust and noise will be a distant memory.

We were not expecting that at the end of this month we would be saying farewell to Sister Lucy Godfrey CSJ after nine years of dedicated service to St. Michael's Parish as a Pastoral Minister. Since she announced her resignation, many people have made a point of talking about her presence in their lives either through her work in preparing children for the sacraments, in the parish schools, working with families who were preparing to bury their loved one or in visiting the sick. All spoke of her gentleness, her passion for what she was doing, her good humor and her dedication to her vocation as a religious sister of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Hamilton. As a staff, we will miss her steady and wise counsel as we go about the work of the parish. We wish her well in her important work as a member of the Leadership Team of her community and assure her of our prayers and support.

After consulting with the staff, I have decided that we will not be hiring a new staff person to replace Sister Lucy. Each of us will assume some of her responsibilities and during the summer and early fall will assess how that is working out. The sacramental programs that Sister Lucy had prepared for 2010-11 will go ahead as planned and we will arrange for meetings in late August and early September with the many volunteers that assisted her.

At the same time that Sister Lucy indicated that she would be leaving St. Michael's, I was approached by Deacon Nick Cherry, the coordinator of the Permanent Diaconate Program for the Diocese of Hamilton, if we would be interested in having a Permanent Deacon in our parish. After the Second Vatican Council, the ancient order of deacon was restored to the church's ministry and the Diocese of Hamilton in 1998 began the process of calling and training suitable candidates for the Permanent Diaconate in the diocese.

The ministry of the deacon depends on his ability and the needs of the parish and local community. Charitable service and the liturgical life of the parish community are the main functions of the deacon who, because he is ordained through the sacrament of Holy Orders, is called by the church to share in the ministry of Christ on behalf of the Church and the world. He continues to live in the world in his career and to support his wife and children who in turn support him in his ministry. In a parish, the deacon assists with liturgical celebrations including baptisms, marriages, preaching, funeral services, presiding at prayer etc. In the broader community, he has a

special ministry to hospitals and nursing homes, prisons, various ethnic and minority groups or other important ministries as the need arises.

After consulting with the staff and some members of the parish community, I have decided that we would be delighted to welcome Deacon Philip J. Fernandez to our parish as a Permanent Deacon beginning in late August of this year. Deacon Philip has served at St. Mark's Parish in Kitchener and was among the first group of deacons ordained for ministry in the Diocese of Hamilton. He is married to Joan and has children in university and high school and works in the financial sector in the community. At the present time his ministry is to Grand River Hospital and the Community Justice Initiatives in Kitchener (including weekly visits to Grand Valley Institute for Women).

I have asked Philip to help us to find ways to be present to the spiritual and pastoral needs of the many students at university and college who choose to worship with us on Sunday. The Sunday evening Mass at 7.00 p.m. has grown considerably during the past year and is now an important part of the life of the parish. As I have gotten to know the students and in the regular conversations that I have with the staff at St. Jerome's University, spiritual and pastoral needs are surfacing that demand time and creativity. I have been impressed by Philip's enthusiasm and considerable experience as a leader in the community and am confident that he will make a valuable contribution to the liturgical and pastoral life of our parish.

During the summer, Judy Shulist, Paul Lehman and I will process all of the information that we received during the Ministry Audit that we did during the winter. There is a lot of information and data and our plan is that the second phase will be ready for the fall for each group. Our Parish Finance Committee will also meet at the end of August to produce a five year strategy that will implement the recommendations of the Facilities Audit that was completed over a year ago. Harry Sullivan and Eleanor Horrigan have agreed to head up a committee that will begin the preparations for our fiftieth anniversary as a parish and fifty years of worshipping in this church. The committee will meet for the first time in a few weeks.

Last Saturday evening the Africa Project Committee met over supper with Sister Julie Lattner of the School Sisters of Notre Dame. She is home for a short visit from Kenya where she is training the African sisters in her community to be leaders. Her stories were truly inspiring and provided for a lot of reflection and discussion about the second phase of "Harambee" in the fall. The parish staff and the committee were especially delighted with the enthusiasm of the students in our parish schools during the first phase and we look forward to welcoming St. David's High School to the "Harambee" experience in September.

Finally, at the heart of every parish community is the community at prayer. Our primary prayer is our gathering for the Eucharist on Sunday and during the week. But as a community we have many needs that demand our prayer often. I would like to explore with our parishioners in September ways that invite us to pray beyond Sunday. If you have any ideas on this subject, or you would be willing to explore the topic further, please get in touch with me.

Thank you for your support and many kind words during the last year. May the Lord bless you with peace, rest and good things during these summer days.