



NEWS ARCHIVE:

Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon

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Day of prayer for cancer organized by Holy Spirit parish and McClure United Church



By Kiply Lukan Yaworski

The impact of cancer was framed in prayer during an ecumenical event Oct. 20 in Saskatoon.

Holy Spirit Catholic parish and McClure United Church joined together to organize and offer the second annual Prayer Day for Cancer, addressing the repercussions that the disease has on individual lives, on families, on caregivers and on faith.

The event is held to offer “remembrance, courage and hope,” said organizers of the second annual ecumenical day of prayer.

“The Prayer Day for Cancer provides a time to remember those living with cancer, and those who determinedly faced the disease until their physical being expired. It also provides time to offer courage today

to those coping with the disease as a survivor, or as a caregiver or support person,” said planning committee member Florence Graham. “It provides time to foster hope through reflections, interaction and information.”

A speaker from HOPE Cancer Centre in Saskatoon was featured during the afternoon session, which also included scripture reading, prayers and a candle-lighting ceremony.

The Saskatchewan centre provides a number of programs and services “to all people, all cancers.” It offers client assistance, which might include contributing to extra costs of medication, supplies, equipment, services or living expenses related to cancer and its treatment. It also offers support groups (including a relaxation and meditation group), workshops, retreats, and a library of resources; in addition to providing some research funding.

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The Prayer Day for Cancer evening session included scripture, poetry, prayers and song, as well as reflection and testimony from cancer survivors, caregivers, bereaved family members and others, who explored grief and suffering, as well as healing and blessing, related to their journeys through and with cancer.

The fear and lack of control that comes with a cancer diagnosis were described by one survivor of breast cancer, who also focused on how her children and her students were affected by the experience.

The time spent fighting her cancer became a time to set priorities and to ground herself in prayer, she added, reflecting on the importance of faith in her journey.

“God never promised us a pain-free existence on earth,” she said. “God pledged to always be with us, even when we experience hardship and difficulty in the world, and I have always, always felt that, even through the worst of times.”

She also described being overwhelmed by the response and assistance from the families in the school where she taught, as well as from her church community. “It’s hard to accept help. It’s easier to be a giver,” she said. “I learned when you rely on others, we have to accept it and it humbles us. For me, this was a metaphor for what God does... when I realize how much I’ve received, I truly experience God’s love.”

A second speaker shared the story of her husband’s diagnosis of leukemia, the efforts at treatment, and his eventual death from the disease. The hurt her two young sons experienced at seeing the suffering and death of their father continues, she said.

Three years after her husband’s death, she was diagnosed with breast cancer, and found support from different organizations. As a cancer survivor, she has been involved in a number of supporting agencies and outreach efforts, using her own experience to help others. The experience has also led to her involvement in a dragon boat team made up of breast cancer survivors.

Another speaker described caring for her mother as she was dying of cancer. This difficult time also contained blessings of time shared, and brought about reconciliation within the family, she noted.

Prayerful selections by the Sacred Sounds Worship Band of McClure United Church resonated between presentations. The evening session concluded with the lighting of three candles placed on the altar, and labeled: “remembrance,” “courage,” and “hope.”