



**The miscarriage ministry committee includes (back, l-r) Russ and Shirley Hannan, Carol Kostiuk, Blake Sittler; (front, l-r) Shannon Granger holding baby Alexis Granger, Deb Bauche and Elan Ehresman. Missing from the photo is Ethna Martin. (Spring 2011)**

## ***Miscarriage Ministry addressed in diocese of Saskatoon***

**By Blake Sittler**

Many parents who suffer a miscarriage often feel as if there is no place for them to mourn the loss of their unborn child. A new committee in the diocese of Saskatoon is hoping to provide resources to parishes and individuals to help address that problem.

“When the statistics say that 25 per cent of pregnancies end in miscarriage, that means there are a lot of people in our parishes who need this supportive ministry,” said Granger.

When Shannon and her husband Dan, experienced a miscarriage, they went to their parish priest but found that resources were not readily available to him.

“The pastor was very supportive but he didn’t know what to offer us...he was open to whatever we wanted to do so I talked to a few people and I organized a liturgy and he presided,” said Granger.

If a child is stillborn or dies soon after birth, doctors, nurses, chaplains and pastors know how to handle the death, because there is clear protocol. For parents who lose a child weeks or months after conception the answers to the questions become less clear

After her family’s experience, Granger approached the diocesan office of Marriage and Family Life and began meeting with parish nurses Deb Bauche, Ethna Martin and Carol Kostiuk. Russ and Shirley Hannan also joined the discussion. The Hannans had also

experienced a miscarriage and found, like the Grangers, that support was lacking.

“Our research reveals that this is very much needed but there isn’t much information out there to support a grieving family,” noted Russ.

The group has several goals and many of them are around education. When a couple approaches a parish to ask for help, many of the resources that are available are not compiled all in one place. The committee hopes to have a package of information prepared by the spring of 2011.

“We would like to make sure that all of the material that is useful in dealing with miscarriage is accessible to pastors, parish life directors and also to nurses and doctors,” said Granger.

In October, intercessions for miscarried children were sent to parishes. It was also suggested that the names of miscarried children should be added to a parish’s Book of Remembrance for the Feast of All Souls in November.

A special memorial liturgy prepared by Saskatoon Funeral Home for children lost in miscarriage has been held for several years at Woodlawn Cemetery.

“Many parents attend... one family had lost a child over 50 years ago and attended because they still felt the loss of the baby in their life,” said Don Shepherd, general manager of both Saskatoon Funeral Home and Westwood Chapel, who helps to coordinate the liturgy.

The diocese of Saskatoon plans to use the diocesan website to host a page where pastoral information will be available, including links to other sites and the outline of potential liturgies to be used at the parish level.

“This information needs to get out to everyone. Not just the pastors and counselors or nurses but also parishioners in the pews...so that when friends and family experience this, people will know that there is good, solid, caring information available,” said Granger.

Elan Ehresman of the diocesan office of Marriage and Family Life will be working with the group to act as a liaison between their work and the diocese.

Anyone interested in assisting with the miscarriage project can contact Ehresman at the Catholic Pastoral Centre at 242-1500, ext 229.