

## Office for Justice and Peace Annual Report June 2010

Work continues in addressing a complex series of problems. Some parishioners have felt our responses to some issues may be too political. Yet more so than ever before, Canadian governments have begun to reshape our social fabric. Grants are abruptly denied to volunteer social initiatives. Government agendas which pay scant attention to the fundamental rights of even the poorest to food and shelter are blindly promoted and enacted. Inherent rights of freedom of expression and access to information are being gradually strangled by various insidious Government devices. How timely is the Pope's encyclical, Caritas in Veritate whose contents are still to be studied throughout the diocese.

Besides the issues that have arisen, local to world wide, the office sponsored a September 2009 evening of listening to city parish representatives.. Out of this came call to act on

- The building of the new cathedral to include 'Leed' principles.
- Research and education on climate change particularly the future of nuclear energy in this province.
- Continuing the awareness campaign related to human trafficking and the Olympics.

Other issues that arose were poverty in the city and care of the planet. A variety of ways were used to address the issues including Saturday morning sessions with the expectation that parish events would be hosted. In some cases, collaboration extended to groups beyond the

Catholic community. This applied also to the two public events, Stations

Of the Cross and the New Years Day peace service. Intervening issues have been the defunding of Kairos and ongoing attempts to finance Station 20 West.

Inevitably work does not decrease, yet the Advisory group system functions well with its members accepting responsibility for certain projects and certain parishes. It has problems since all work and action has to filter through the office with its communication equipment.

(Meeting monthly are the committee members are Darlene Demeria, Carmel Dodd, Mildred Kerr, Brian Murphy, Virginia Scissons and Carol Zubiak.)

Unfulfilled gaps include making contact with parishes outside the city, although the idea of Congress going to the deaneries has merit.

However the city work is still paramount for these reasons: population base, agencies serving the powerless, presence of government services, and the number of callers financially stressed.

Huge increases in food costs and rental accommodation – an absence of affordable housing – are the obverse to the belief that both the city and the province are places of economic wealth.

Other issues on the horizon are the Truth and Reconciliation hearings, the future of Station 20 West, the offer of optional units of work in “spiritual ecology” for the Catholic School Services, the influx of newcomers, employable or not, alternative forms of energy – renewable.

The Church’s liaison work continues through Community First Development Fund,, Kairos, Circle M, Saskatoon Anti-Poverty Coalition, Saskatoon Overnight Shelter, Aboriginal Women, FRAP – meetings of Muslims, Jews and Allies, understanding homosexuality in the church, ecumenical restorative justice work, Nashi, CWL and the larger community in the victims of human traffickingLiving with Aids, connecting with the Ukrainian Catholic justice and peace groups, city and provincial Clean green groups. Some of these agencies are covered by advisory group members; some of them are at times dormant.

Communication and propagation is effected, not necessarily in an orderly fashion given the wide sweep of issues, through the web site, a quarterly newsletter, e mail contacts and other electronic devices.

One more time, the advisory group is being challenged to assist in meeting with the city parish groups. While each member has responsibility for three city parishes, they are being asked to assume a connection with two rural Saskatoon parishes. And we know that the present weather will call for the Church to act, as it was asked in the last crises facing the rural people and their economy.

**Our first task will be to consider what form a September gathering should take.**