



## Holy Family Parish & Missions

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September 2023

I hope you have had an opportunity to enjoy the summer. I want to take a few minutes of your time to discuss stewardship within our parish, before the “busyness” of autumn.

We have had some wonderful things to celebrate within the churches of our parish this year and in the past couple years. Holy Family parish celebrated its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2021, and also in 2021 it was 125 years since the first Mass was said in Hanover. St. Francis Xavier church just celebrated its 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary in June of this year. And St. Anne church has operated for over 100 years in Chesley.

What blessings these milestones have been for the churches in our parish, and our community! Have you ever reflected on how these tremendous milestones were accomplished? What did it take for our churches and parishioners, past and present, to get to this point? What is the underlying common thread to the past 150+ years?

A foundation of faith, hope and love.

And Belief...

Sharing of ourselves;

- Our time...
- Our God-given abilities, whatever they may be, each of us with something different to offer...
- Our resources...

Imagine the faith and the belief that our ancestors 100 to 150 years ago had to have to build the churches that make up our parish!

Imagine the sacrifices of time, abilities, hard work, and financial offerings to get the churches built in the first place...

And imagine also the on-going sacrifices by four, five or six generations of our families, and newcomers to our parishes over the years, to support our parishes through two World Wars, the Great Depression, and many other trying times.

That’s stewardship! Taking care of what we’ve been given, maintaining it, cultivating it, improving it, and turning it over to future generations, ready and able to go forward for many years...

Now, it’s our turn...

Our parish is going to embark on a stewardship program to

- engage and re-engage with parishioners new and old
- re-energize our parish family
- rebuild our parish family

There are many good things happening in our parish every week. Various groups meet on a regular basis to carry out the mission of the church and to support one another spiritually; youth ministry events and meetings; CWL and KC meetings and events; visits and sacraments taken to parishioners who are unable to get to church; Masses held at nursing homes; St. Vincent de Paul efforts to feed the poor in our community; evangelization outreach events led by our ministry team; bible study; children's liturgy; packing donated food, used clothing and household items for shipping overseas to Third World countries by our local Canadian Food for Children chapter; and so on. Thank you to all those who help with and participate in these groups and ministries! We will be taking some time over the coming weeks/months to celebrate these good things which not only reflect the love of Christ that we are living out in our world, but also strengthens us spiritually both individually and as a community. It's also good to remind ourselves that these things cannot happen without the ongoing support of all of you. Taking care of our churches and parish enables these good things to continue into the future!

There is no doubt that the past few years have been difficult for all of us, as families, businesses, institutions, churches, etc. For the parishes in our diocese, the pandemic resulted in temporary closures and temporarily shutting down many of the ministries and groups. But our parishes have been through tough times in the past, and past generations always managed to not only survive, but thrive! And we will too! Our parish has been gradually building back since last fall, with many of the ministries and groups functioning and meeting regularly again.

However, all our ministries and groups could use more members and helpers. This is part of the re-engaging, re-energizing, and rebuilding that we are setting out to do over the coming weeks and months. We invite you to think about groups or ministries in the parish that you could participate in, and get involved! This is Stewardship!

Another part of our stewardship journey to consider: there are seasonal jobs and tasks that our churches could use help with, such as decorating the church at different seasons, spring and fall yard cleanup, gardening or lawn care throughout the growing season, church cleaning and snow clearing, etc. There are many jobs each year, and others that come up from time-to-time. It would be great to have volunteer lists of people prepared to help when the need arises! Please think about putting your name on a call-list for help when needed. This too is Stewardship!

And of course, a part of the stewardship of our parish is financial support. Like past generations, we must consider our financial support for our parish. Just as our household budgets have been affected by cost increases, so too has our parish budget. To be clear, though, the focus of our stewardship program will not be on financial matters or financial commitments. Rather, our focus now will be on the sharing of our time and talents within the parish.

We plan to form a new parish committee for the three churches of our parish to work on this engagement, re-engagement, re-energizing, and rebuilding initiative. Members from all three churches are welcome to participate on this committee. The committee will lead this initiative within our parish, with help from all parishioners, focused on sharing our time and talents within the parish. I invite you to get involved - please let us know if you are interested in participating on this important new committee. You may call Anne at the parish office 519-364-1973, or email her at [anne@holyfamily.ca](mailto:anne@holyfamily.ca). I look forward to your participation as we build for future generations in our communities.

Father Romelito