



Report to Vestry (Feb. 2022)

Healthy End of Life Project (HELP) - Ottawa

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For the CCBC site of HELP Ottawa, 2021 has been a very busy programming year despite COVID. 2020 had been occupied mostly with research as the facilitators, Alexa Keeshan and I, conducted interviews and identified themes. Remember that our five target populations are the frail, chronically ill, dying, bereaved, and their caregivers. Based on parishioner feedback, the Advisory Council explored the top two themes: provide better support for caregivers and address the impacts on the parish of an aging population. This resulted in some exciting initiatives including the following:

Caregivers' Workshop: a seven-week online workshop for those caring for a loved one who is ill or dying, co-facilitated by lay leaders from Orleans United Church, the other HELP faith community. Topics included Dealing with Anger, Fear, Frustration, Loneliness & Fatigue; Gentle Movement for Stress Reduction; Strategies to Cope with Caregiving, Loss, and Grief; and Where is God in this? We are planning to reprise this workshop in 2022, hopefully in person.

Pastoral Care: CCBC has benefitted for decades from the quiet work of our clergy and an active Pastoral Care Team (PCT). Among other things, they faithfully visit the sick, the dying, the "shut-in", and the bereaved. Caregivers have now been added to the list of recipients of their compassionate care. Of course, the success of the PCT depends on clergy knowing about those in need, so please continue to keep them informed if you would welcome support and as your circumstances change.

Advance Care Planning (ACP): Participants identified their wishes, values, and beliefs related to end-of-life care. Compassionate Ottawa facilitators explained the importance of preparing individuals and families for a time when a person might be unable to communicate his or her wishes. A second ACP workshop will have been held in January and February 2022 by the time Vestry is held. Two parishioners are currently taking the training to become facilitators for this workshop.

Into the Heart of the Matter: Grief & Bereavement: This workshop was attended by participants wanting to learn how to interact with and comfort those suffering any kind of loss including, for example, the death of a family member or friend, or the loss of a pet, job, or independence. Many find it awkward to speak with the bereaved; facilitators explored the concepts of empathy versus sympathy and provided some handy "Dos" and "Don'ts". A parishioner is training to deliver this workshop at CCBC and in the broader community.

Coping with COVID-19: Successes and Challenges: More two years into the pandemic, most of us have experienced successes in coping with certain stresses and worries of COVID and we're still dealing with some challenges. For many, COVID has sharpened our focus on priorities. This casual Zoom conversation enabled parishioners to compare notes, share insights, and talk about what really matters in life. Is it time to have another conversation?

Cards of appreciation: Protests targeting workers at hospitals and other health care facilities have demoralized staff and upset many Ontarians. To express CCBC's solidarity with and appreciation to Queensway Carleton Hospital staff, hand-made cards were sent to all 45 departments in early December. Thanks to card makers, we will run a second card campaign at Easter 2022.



What does 2022, our third year, hold in store for HELP Ottawa at CCBC?

The Happiness Project: will have been launched in January at the CCBC Zoom Cafe. This is a collaborative mental health initiative among the three churches on the Old Richmond Road 'strip', and we hope that the Jami Omar Mosque will join us soon. Check out our website at <http://happinessprojectottawa.weebly.com/> and our FaceBook page at <https://www.facebook.com/happinessottawa>. Feedback is welcome.

Information sessions: In collaboration with the other HELP Ottawa sites, we plan to organize several information sessions on topics that have been suggested to us. These may include: Palliative Care & Hospice, MAiD, How to Access our complex Health Care System, and Housing Options as Life Circumstances Change.

Resource Directory: Many of the project interviewees at all four sites expressed the challenge of knowing about or accessing resources, particularly for health care and home support. Many hours have been spent identifying resources and services serving Ottawans. The current task is to choose those most needed by Bells Corners residents and to organize them according to best practices. If there are resources you wish you'd known about when you needed them or if you have suggestions, please email your ideas to colleen.mayo@carleton.ca.

After two years with the HELP Ottawa project, Aly Keeshan left the team in September 2021 to pursue graduate studies in epidemiology. We welcomed Jen Hubbard as a co-facilitator at CCBC. On your behalf, I thank both of these dedicated, creative, and capable women for their contribution to the project and the parish.

Many thanks to the members of the CCBC HELP Ottawa Advisory Council for their encouragement and hard work in support of our target populations: the frail, chronically ill, dying, bereaved, and caregivers.

We continue to be indebted to our sponsor, Compassionate Ottawa (compassionateottawa.ca/), and our funder, the Mach Gaensslen Foundation (mach-gaensslen.ca/).

To learn more about the HELP Project, visit <https://carleton.ca/socialwork/helpottawa/>, and don't forget to keep your eyes on the Lychgate for updates.