



The mission of the Vicariate is to be responsive to the ministry of its parishes, schools, institutions, and agencies by:



Coordinating pastoral planning



Enhancing communications and networking



Promoting collegiality



Identifying and utilizing all resources which can be shared

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Catholic Community Response Team: Our Area Church in Action

In July 2004, CCRT opened its doors in Pontiac. Since then almost 600 people have sought help seeking food, clothing, shelter, job referrals, or just a hot cup of coffee. It was a new venture, but it responded to a need that the Catholic communities of the Pontiac Area Vicariate could not ignore. Thus was born the Catholic Community Response Team, one of our first Vicariate outreach endeavors.

Why Was CCRT Formed?

The geography of the Pontiac Area Vicariate (PAV) presents contrasts and opportunities. I-75 tends to divide residents into two worlds: one comprising those who, by in large, experience security, knowing that shelter, food and basic needs are met on a day-to-day basis. The other is made up mostly of people living at or below the poverty level, with many experiencing homelessness, daily needs for food, bills that need to be paid, and despair. In view of this reality, the Pastoral Ministers' Association of the Vicariate, in cooperation with the Vicariate Pastoral Council, identified a way of responding to the needs of those who are the most vulnerable. This was to be not only a response of charity, but also one of justice by making advocacy a key component of CCRT.

The Catholic Community Response Team is the story of many people who take the Gospel seriously and understand that all are called to be neighbors to those who live in poverty. It is the story of communities which have joined together as Area Church to respond to those in need.

Whom Do We Serve?

A person who spends a few hours with the Catholic Community Response Team would quickly discover that poverty has many faces: all ages, all races are impacted. While statistics help us grasp the depth of the problems, it is important to recognize that each client served has a unique story, a unique struggle.

- 43% of clients have children, and 70% are single mothers with several children.
- 71% of clients have no income (and little or no savings) at the time they enter CCRT.
- 32% percent of clients have been either evicted or face eviction or have had or are facing a utility shut-off.

Some clients are homeless or are reentering the real world after months or years of incarceration. Others are struggling with drug or alcohol addictions. Others have lost their jobs due to layoff or sickness. Some need food or clothing, others a bus pass or money to buy their medications. But all need some-

one who will listen to them and who will offer support in their present struggle. When asked what is the common denominator for all clients, Barb Williams, Director for CCRT since its beginning, answered, "For most of our clients there is a lack of vision for a better life. The children especially do not see that things are going to be different."

What Does CCRT Do?

The Catholic Community Response Team is presently made up of two part-time staff members, each working 15 to 20 hours a week, and five or six volunteers. It is not your typical agency - nothing fancy or elaborate, just two small rooms in the Pontiac offices of Catholic Social Services, a couple of computers and a large number of bags of food or clothes that are waiting to be picked up by clients.

Clients are referred by parish communities in Pontiac, Catholic Social Services, or the Oakland Jail Ministry. Others hear about CCRT and come looking for help, but all need immediate assistance. When a client comes in, the staff evaluates their needs. It is an opportunity for many to tell their story and experience a listening ear. Often the quality of contact is as important as the help received.

CCRT is supported by many agencies to which clients are referred. When the need is simply clothing or food, packages are prepared by Ladies of Charity (St. Hugo Parish) and clients come and pick them up at CCRT. When a client is facing eviction or utility shutoff, CCRT will try to provide some financial help through limited donations of the Vicariate or by asking for help from other agencies such as Lighthouse, Oakland Livingston Human Services Agency, or PAV parishes. When the client is in need of a job, CCRT turns to Work First agencies.

Many PAV communities have offered their services as well. When a house needed repair, the St. Mary of the Hills youth group provided the necessary help. When CCRT organized Christmas packages for families, St. Joseph of Lake Orion donated many gifts. Financial support is received from all around the PAV. Other services have included training in how to budget, dental services, and referrals for legal aid and parenting programs. Whatever is needed, CCRT uses all its contacts to make sure that the client is helped.

Members:

Parishes

- Christ the Redeemer, Orion Township
- Pontiac Catholic Community
St. Michael
St. Joseph
St. Vincent
- Sacred Heart of the Hills, Auburn Hills
- St. Andrew, Rochester
- St. Benedict, Waterford
- St. Irenaeus, Rochester Hills
- St. John Fisher, Auburn Hills
- St. Joseph, Lake Orion
- St. Mary of the Hills, Rochester Hills
- St. Paul Albanian, Rochester Hills

Schools

- Holy Family Elementary, Rochester/Rochester Hills
- Marist Academy Lower Level St. Benedict Campus, Waterford
- St. Joseph School, Lake Orion
- Marist Academy Middle School, Pontiac
- Notre Dame Preparatory, Pontiac

Together In Faith

In his March 2006 pastoral letter Cardinal Adam Maida notes that throughout time our Catholic Church has undergone enormous changes. When the Cardinal arrived as archbishop in Detroit in 1990, church closings were taking place. “With ever-shifting populations, diminishing numbers of priests, aging parish plants in many places, and need for new construction in other areas, clearly we needed decisive and creative planning.”

To address the problem, in 1994 the Council of Vicars and the Archdiocesan Pastoral Council decided to make Vicariate Pastoral Planning one of its highest priorities. As a result, the Together in Faith process was launched in the fall of 2004. Thousands of people across the Archdiocese provided input and participated in parish, school and vicariate discussions. Also the Presbyteral Council developed a Total Pastoral Plan for Priests to address the critical priest-to-people issue. An Archdiocesan Tracking Committee was formed to monitor, on an ongoing basis, both the Together in Faith implementation plan and progress being made through the Total Pastoral Plan for Priests.

The Cardinal points out that “As we go through the necessary changes detailed in this pastoral communication, obviously, there will be some pain

for our whole Archdiocesan family” due to parishes and schools clustering, merging, or being suppressed (closed). He says that, “with hope, we look to the future. As Jesus taught in the Gospel, from tiny mustard seeds, great things can happen. While change is painful, it is necessary for growth; it is actually a sign of new life.” The Cardinal wanted to thank all who were involved in the Together in Faith planning process: vicars, regional bishops, Coordinating Committee members, the thousands of committee laity and religious of the archdiocese who participated in discussions, and the staff from Central Services. In closing the Cardinal said, “May God, who has begun this good work, bring it to completion!”

The “Big Three” goals or focus areas of Together in Faith were identified as: Mission-Mindedness, Leadership Development, and Stewardship, and the highest priority was placed on Youth and Young Adult Ministry. The timetable calls for Together in Faith to begin to be implemented in June 2006. For more information, please refer to *The Journey Before Us* and *Mileposts on the Journey* at the Archdiocese of Detroit website, www.aodonline.org.

Submitted by Art Seidler, Vicariate Pastoral Council Rep from St. Irenaeus *

PROTECTING GOD’S CHILDREN: Update to the Pontiac Vicariate

Since the fall of 2003, the Archdiocese has offered “Protecting God’s Children” workshops to parishes, schools and agencies. This 3-hour workshop is designed to increase awareness and action by adults within our faith communities to create safer environments for our children and youth. To date, more than 400 workshops have been conducted with over 21,600 adults.

All parish and/or school staff and volunteers who have contact with children need to attend the workshop. All parents of school and/or parish children are urged to participate. THE BENEFIT: you will learn the warning signs of potential abusers and how to ensure programs and facilities are safe for children – whether they are involved in parish/school or in broader community activities.

The table below indicates total participants from each parish or school in your vicariate as of February 28, 2006:

Location and Total Participants)	
Christ the Redeemer, 13	St John Fisher Chapel University, 45
Holy Family Regional School, 174	St Joseph, 17
Marist Academy 55	St Joseph Parish & School, 136
Notre Dame Preparatory, 137	St Mary of the Hills, 35
Sacred Heart, Auburn Hills, 34	St Michael, 36
St Andrew, 83	St Paul Albanian, 0
St Benedict, 20	St Vincent de Paul, 28
St Irenaeus, 39	

We invite you to ask your pastor and/or principal when workshops are scheduled for your faith community. *

TOTAL STEWARDSHIP: Bringing People, Process and Ministry Together to Build the Kingdom of God

St. Mary of the Hills was the scene of the Pontiac Area Vicariate Pastoral Council Meeting held on March 27, 2006. A total of 103 people were in attendance, representing the entire Vicariate. They enjoyed a delicious soup and salad supper provided by Steve Zelinski, parishioner at St. Mary's.

After the opening prayer, Theresa McCuish Brown, VPC Chair, welcomed the audience and spoke on why we gather as a Vicariate. She then introduced our Vicar, Fr. Jerry Brzezinski, who gave a presentation on the Together in Faith Process and provided updates from the Archdiocese of Detroit and the Pontiac Area Vicariate.

Fr. Jerry then introduced guest speaker Bernard DuMond, Senior Associate, Institute of School & Parish Development, to speak to us on "Total Stewardship, Bringing People, Process and Ministry Together to Build the Kingdom of God." The presentation focused on the need for redefining Total Stewardship and in the process having to make drastic changes, something most people resist. He said there was a wealth of talent in any parish that goes untapped and explained in detail how a parish goes about finding these individuals and allowing them to share their resources of time, talent and treasure that they received as gifts from God. The goal of Total Stewardship is to involve these individuals in providing their gifts resulting in an active and vibrant parish, working together to build God's Kingdom. Mr. DuMond concluded his remarks by saying this process is never-ending and continues to promote Stewardship As a Way of Life.

St. Mary's was delighted to welcome those that attended and shared in the fellowship. Our thanks to Terry, Laura, Steve, Chris, Dan and Deacon Gene for a job well done.

Submitted by Bill Travnik, Vicariate Pastoral Council Representative from St. Mary of the Hills *

Members:

Religious Communities

- Oxford Dominican Sisters
- St. Benedict Monastery

Chaplains

- Crittenton Hospital
- North Oakland Medical Center
- Oakland County Jail
- Oakland County Juveniles
- POH Medical Center
- St. Joseph Mercy Hospital

Nursing Homes

- Lake Orion
- Mercy Bellbrook
- Oakland County Medical Care Facility
- Lourdes Campus

Oakland County

- Catholic Community Response Team
- Catholic Social Services
- Genesis Young Adult/Campus Ministry
- Fusion Ministry
- Guest House

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CCRT's Future Needs

Only two years old, the Community Response Team is dreaming of what CCRT could be. Located in Pontiac, staff and volunteers face daily problems of systemic poverty and know that stable employment, affordable housing, good education and mentoring would provide the beginning of a solution to these problems.

CCRT is here to stay. It was not a quick response from the Vicariate to a perceived need, it is the response of a Catholic community making a long term commitment to charity and justice. Several needs have been identified which require a response by the Vicariate. The first is to find larger facilities to accommodate serving several clients at the same time. Ideally, CCRT would like to offer a daily shelter, especially during the winter, to the many people who have nowhere to go for warmth and food. Job training is necessary for many, especially those who are released from the penal system and find it difficult to reenter society. A response to these needs will require funding. For the last two years, a grant from the Archdiocese has provided the salary of the two paid staff. Since its opening, CCRT has provided almost \$20,000 through direct services to people in need. A large part of these funds, provided through private



Mary Ann Poniatowski and Dot Wolff sort through donations for CCRT clients.

donations, is used to prevent eviction and to pay utility bills. CCRT is looking for creative ways of raising funds to continue its response to present clients and expand services.

CCRT was also formed to be an advocacy organization for those who do not have a voice. This can be done only by all members of the Pontiac

Area Vicariate. It requires us to understand the systemic causes of poverty. It demands allowing our hearts to be touched, and it calls for a willingness to speak against policies which discriminate against the most vulnerable.

The story of the Catholic Community Response Team is the story of many people who take the Gospel seriously and understand that all are called to be "neighbors" to those who live in poverty. It is the story of communities which have joined together as Area Church and wanted to respond to those in need. But the story just began two years ago, and it is only the first chapter. The Catholic communities of the Pontiac Area Vicariate are called to write the second and third chapters. This will require a commitment from each member of the Vicariate. *

