

## Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, St. Mary's Conference, Lindsay



**Christmas Basket Program:** A synopsis of last year's program follows:

The 2020 Christmas basket program began at St. Mary's, Lindsay in late September with a parking lot meeting and flyers and ¼ page handouts ready for delivery to all schools in Lindsay. Phone calls were made to last year's recipients and to anyone we had helped throughout the year. We set up interviews on Tuesdays and Fridays in October. Neighbours in need were asked for delivery or pick-up information, names, ages and gift list for clothing and toys for each preschool child or those in elementary school. Children in high school were given a gift card from Giant Tiger. All families were assigned numbers: 200s (48) for families with children on the Angel Tree, 300s (10) for families with children in secondary school, 400s (19) for families sponsored by four parish Catholic schools, 500s (20) for the Adopt-a-Family Program and 600s (24) for adult(s) only families. Family names were checked against other basket programs and duplicate names were removed from the other programs which began in November. Our monthly November collection included an envelope specifically for our Christmas programs. Several schools did a monetary collection. As well, donations were received from other benefactors.

Because social distancing around a tree was not advisable, parishioners were invited to submit their contact info and preferences for ages, clothing or toys for sponsored children through the Angel Tree program and later matched with a child(ren) by committee members. Gifts were returned unwrapped and numbered; then checked and sorted by family. Extras like toques and baby blankets were added. Some extra angels were designated for infants and gifts given to Kawartha Lakes Crisis Pregnancy Centre. The schools were given profiles of children and their wishes. The Adopt-a-Family sponsors were given a profile of the whole family. Several members shopped for items at donors 'requests. Neighbours' names and personal information were kept confidential.

About this time, we were made aware of funding available from the Emergency Community Support Fund through Community Foundation of Kawartha Lakes. Through this grant we applied for additional food money, two masks per person in the program, and sanitization supplies. As we received half of the amount, we revised the amount, distributed only to families with children (94) and dispersed this early in January, because month-end child tax credits were issued before Christmas and we knew people would be experiencing food insecurity.

Because we have no parish hall, and the schools were not available due to COVID-19, we voted to give food cards instead of actual groceries. No food collection would take place through the parish or the schools. Thankfully, a local business provided us with space at Celebrations. Instead of 5-6 bags of groceries, we were down to one new reusable grocery bag. So, we added a box of chocolates per family, a pair of socks for each adult, the two masks per person and a bottle of sanitizer to the gift cards and Christmas message inviting them to attend mass. On delivery day, with a skeleton crew, two members delivered bags to adults only, while the Emergency Medical Personnel delivered the packages to families. The remainder were picked up or delivered at a more convenient time.

So, all in all it was a win-win situation. Our neighbours in need were pleased to receive their choice of President's Choice, Food Basics or Giant Tiger food cards. Many members of the committee were involved with phoning, interviewing, record-keeping, shopping, sorting, packaging masks, wrapping socks or chocolates or other gifts, and delivering packages. Truly, the Holy Spirit was guiding our works. Thanks to all who helped.