



45 Spaxton Street
Methven 7730

Cwlanz.nat.president@gmail.com

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Dear Catholic Women's League Family

It is with heavy hearts that the National Board has decided to cancel our National Conference in July. We acknowledge the hard work of the Hamilton Diocesan Council and thank the organising committee for all their planning and efforts towards making this conference a success for us all.

Last weekend I was at the Arch Diocesan conference. One of the speakers was speaking of the challenge to welcome change that we didn't like. Change that held uncertainty and fear for us. She encouraged us to take the pandemic seriously. She predicted that there would be no public Masses within two weeks. This was a reality check for many of the women present. Less than a week later we had the unheard-of announcement. Things are changing at an alarming rate. This afternoon New Zealand has moved onto Level 3 Covid-19 Alert and Level 4 Lockdown in 48 hours. We would not be human if this did not fill us with some fear and anxiety.

We were all looking forward to hearing our conference keynote speaker, Anna Stretten, tell us of her charity RAW while introducing our new theme. (Hopefully we can engage Anna at another time.)

We are not going to wait until July. I feel now is the time for me share with you the new theme for 2020- 2022:

*Kia Kaha
Courage – Take Heart*

You will find this promise repeated throughout both the New and Old Testaments.

Isaiah 35:4-10 "Courage! take heart! God is here..."

John 14:27 "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid."

Little did we know how apt this theme would be. Our faith gives us such peace and reassurance. One of our board members has commented that the Holy Spirit must have been helping us in our deliberations.

If like me, you need help to find your way around the scriptures, a quick Google search will bring up many more similar passages.

Make a list and use them as prayer and inspirational starters during the coming weeks.

In the coming weeks it is imperative that we grasp this lockdown as an opportunity to build strong connections. To have courage and stay strong. Be positive. . It is a challenge, but we are CWLANZ.

We must care for each other.

I ask each branch to write a plan of how you can do this.

The Prime Minister has spoken of showing kindness to each other. We know this as love.

John 15:12 "Love each other as I have loved you."

Now is the time to put into practice the talk about doing things differently

There are already so many prayer opportunities online and via email. Our diocesan websites are streaming Masses and scripture.

Here are some other ideas:

Ring around, email or use social media.

Activate an old-fashioned telephone or email circle for all those who don't use social media.

Set up a *ring for a chat* roster

Establish a Branch Facebook page or Group on Messenger.

Share news and encouragement. Don't forget some fun.

Have virtual meetings, cuppas and challenges.

If knitting and sewing are your thing it could be gloves for the homeless, or craft items for a fundraising stall when this is all over.

I am part of a Virtual Running Group. Members live all over the country. The members mostly don't meet in person. We agree online to a challenge, say 100 ks in five weeks and log in our progress.

I am currently completing a six week; walk each day fundraising one dollar each walk for *Hagar*. We share photos of our efforts to encourage each other.

Identify who in your branch and parish are most vulnerable or who lack a support network.

Involve as many members and others within your community as possible.

Take the lead or actively support others.

Use our new theme within an internet prayer circle.

Pope Francis has asked us to pray for each other, for those in the frontline, medical personnel, caregivers, and the vulnerable.

"To the pandemic of the virus we want to respond with the universality of prayer, of compassion, of tenderness. Let us unite. Let us make our closeness felt to the people who are most alone and most deprived," Pope Francis March 22.

Follow the Ministry of Health advice

May you be safe and well

May God keep you always within the palm of his hand

Dear treasured members I urge you, *Kia Kaha Courage – Take Heart.*

Nga mihi

Susan

In Faith and Service

CWLANZ National President