



Covid-19 has made us all become more aware of what's important – family, friendship, love, and caring for others. These are things intrinsic to our faith and to our broader sense of community.

Not everyone has the emotional support of family that they would like to have. Someone may feel alone because their family lives in another province or another country. Or it may be a senior whose family isn't able to call or visit as often as the senior would like.

The idea is to bring parishioners together, to create relationships where both the “adopting” family (or individual) and the “adoptee” benefit. It's not about what we can do physically to help someone else; it's about listening and caring and allowing our hearts to reach out with the love of Christ.

An initiative of St. Joseph Parish, Becoming Family is an opportunity to build a long-term, one-on-one relationship with an elderly or socially-isolated parishioner. Anyone can take part: Families with children, couples and individual adults.

Becoming Family will help adoptees by giving them another family (or a person) to care about, to visit, to chat with, and to share stories. This is not meant to replace family interaction. Rather, it's another layer of support.

This program grew out of St. Joseph's telephone ministry in the spring of 2020 when the callers experienced the delight and gratitude expressed by so many parishioners just to receive a call from the parish. We heard smiles in those simple phone calls, some very lonely voices and plenty of invitations to “call again.” Rather than random phone calls from

strangers, we want to build long-term relationships that will help build emotional support.

BECOMING FAMILY IS DESIGNED SIMPLY TO PROVIDE A SET OF LISTENING EARS — SOMEONE TO ASK OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS, TO PAY ATTENTION, TO EMPATHIZE AND TO LISTEN AS CONVERSATIONS UNFOLD NATURALLY.

As the pandemic continues, initially the contact will be through letters, drawings, phone calls and possibly video chats. The aim is that an adult from the adopting family would contact the senior for a check-in at least once a week. This might be a simple “How are you?” chat that will take 10 or 15 minutes. The caller's primary role is to guide the conversation and to listen, eventually introducing spouse, children, family pets or wherever the conversations might lead. This is meant to be a natural transition and to evolve as any relationship does; it may be different for everyone involved.

Post-pandemic, we see the connection becoming even stronger once in-person visits can happen for chats, games, sharing stories or other activities. Again, it depends on how the relationship develops; it won't be the same for everyone. It may remain as simple as weekly phone calls.

Building this connection will be good for everyone. It will help not just the adoptees, but the “adopting” families as they learn how little it can take to improve someone's day.