Hello to my fellow parishioners.

My name is Ron Desnoyers and I’m here today to make you aware of a Parish service initiative that I have approached Fr Stephen with, and which he has expressed some enthusiasm for – that is, a parish support person to provide professional, specialized assistance to individual Parish families in need.

Before I go into specific details, let me first tell you a bit about myself.

My wife, Joanie, our daughter, Monique, and I, have been parishioners here at St. Joseph, for the past 25 years.

During the course of those years I have found myself becoming increasingly spiritualized as a result of the Churches Ministry, Jesus’ teachings in the New Testament, and my own desire to become closer to Jesus and the Father. I especially have felt his calling to be active in response to Jesus’ teachings love one another, as he has loved us.

At the time of my retirement in 2018, I made a conscious decision to have my day to day routine, more centered around living in the spirit of Jesus’ teachings. Since then I’ve been involved in several Parish charitable activities and these have left me fulfilled in the way I was hoping it would

In October of last year, I attended the Men’s ACTS retreat. I had considered this in the past, and this goes back to when Fr. Bob was Pastor, and he had suggested I would benefit by going. But I was employed and less available at that time. Also, I had mixed feelings about diving into that level of spiritual involvement.

Anyway, I attended, and was quite moved and a bit overwhelmed by the experience, and I came home with a sense of wanting to get closer, and do more in the spirit of giving which Jesus asks from of all of us.

Prior to my retirement, and even to this time, I am licensed by the state of Massachusetts and the Federal Government under Medicare guidelines to practice professional Social Work Services, either as part of an organization, but also, as an individual, providing care in a way defined by my own care interests

This license authorizes my involvement with individuals and families struggling to cope with the effects of stress in their lives from major crises or even, during times normal difficulties of individual or family life circumstances. This is accomplished through a process of assessment, support and guidance, and oftentimes with the assistance of other community care providers.

I have most recently been employed providing Social Work Services at Southcoast Behavioral Health hospital in Dartmouth, providing care to adult, adolescent, and geriatric patients requiring intensive care in a safe setting. Prior to that time, I worked at The VA Medical Center in Brockton providing services to Vets and their families, coping with alcohol, drug and mental health crises.

I was particularly assigned to the drug and alcohol detoxification unit, and in this role, I was required educating Vet’s and their spouses or families around the managing the problems associated with substance abuse. Along with the support and guidance I also helped arrange follow on care once they left the hospital.

In my early career, I was employed for many years at St. Luke’s Hospital here in New Bedford, both in their psychiatric and medical care units. The need for hospitalization on a medical unit can be quite traumatic for everyone trying to cope with the crisis that often occurs as result of a difficult diagnosis or treatment requirements.

It was while working at St. Luke’s Hospital that I first came to meet Deacon Bob and the wonderful person that he is. It has been a great pleasure of mine to have developed a relationship with such a nice, kind man.

During those years at St. Luke’s I had the opportunity to coordinate aftercare with visiting nurses, hospice programs, or other outpatient t treatment services, for many patients returning home.

So, having explained as to how I got to where I am now, let me share the idea that I have approached Fr. Stephen with and hope you will agree with the potential value of the plans we have developed

Fr. Stephen and I have talked about my becoming a resource person to other members of the St. Joseph’s Parish. Though I am retired from my career as a full-time social worker, I remain quite interested in the practice itself and the notion of helping people and families within the framework of a Parish Ministry.

In our discussion over the value this ministry could provide, we agreed that oftentimes people, or families, suffer significant problems that they struggle to manage by themselves, either because they overwhelmed by them and in crisis and not able to sort things out, or are not aware of community services that might be able to address the problem they are struggling with. Or because they are hesitant to reach out to these community programs, which might require them to reveal sensitive issues to impersonal strangers.

We feel that having a fellow parishioner available, who has the professional knowledge and skills to help people better explore and understand the nature of the problem, and identify possible solutions to assist, and importantly, who belongs to the same church family, can make it easier to take that initial step.

I would anticipate my engagement with families or individuals would be for up to several visits. Initially to complete an assessment and help everyone better understand the problems that are causing the distress, followed by recommendations for actions they could take to address it, and perhaps identifying and arranging for further care in the community.

This could include help with accessing programs like fuel assistance, homemaker services, or other in-home help services. Helping people explore disability services if circumstances require it. There are multiple services available through Catholic Social Services that could be accessed on behalf of Parishioners

I have the benefit of having carried out care plans such as these, hundreds of times in my career, and it would be as fulfilling to me to do it as it would be to you to benefit from it.

All matters discussed would be held in strict confidence. It is understood that information relating to a person or family’s lives is quite personal, and this right to privacy is a value held dearly. There would be very limited exceptions to this right of confidentiality which involves revelations of imminent risk of serious injury or death, and which laws require official notification

There will be no cost for these services. We want to reach out to fellow parishioners in the hope that in doing so will improve the well-being of another one us.

In doing this we look to Jesus’ one law – “to love one another as you would love me”