

## ***Open House at the New Archdiocesan Offices: A Visitor's Reflection***

*Wednesday, December 6, 2017*

by Nancy Wood, Chemin Neuf Community

What a gift to receive an invitation to the recent open house at the newly renovated Archdiocesan offices. My husband Ted and I used to work in the Archdiocese of St. Boniface so we knew well the old offices. After leaving to join the Chemin Neuf Community in Europe, we returned to Winnipeg at the invitation of former Archbishop Emilius Goulet, but ended up in the Winnipeg Archdiocese because of the generous gift of the St. Charles Retreat Centre by the Missionary Oblate Sisters. But like these Sisters, we have felt like we have a foot in each Archdiocese.

We were especially happy to bring to the open house a new family, Kevin & Anne-Lise Bhaga, with Elie and Mila, members of our community who recently arrived from France (originally from the island of Mauritius).



My first impression was of warmth and light. With its beautiful exterior, the inside of the Archbishop's Residence had always struck me as somewhat dated and dingy on the inside. Now, the flooring had changed, the lighting had changed, and every corner seemed to be filled with purpose and life. One had the impression, "this is a happening place." The Archdiocesan staff used to be scattered across the two buildings - the Residence and the old Pastoral Centre (itself a rather cavernous affair) - with little sense of a whole. Now we could see the administrative and pastoral services staff as one unit under their shepherd, Archbishop Albert, and I sensed, "people work together here." The

staff did a beautiful job of greeting people, organizing tours, and adding little touches that made everyone feel welcome (wine and cheese, activities for children, information about the Archdiocesan services and the 200th anniversary celebrations, etc.).

Kevin & Anne-Lise, themselves from a bilingual country, were happy to hear French and get a better feeling for the “two-Archdioceses-reality” of our city. They were excited to recognize the portrait of Bishop Goulet whom they had met last summer in Montreal (in retirement, he is still very supportive of our community). Three-year old Elie loved the treats in Koreen Hrizai’s office of Catechetics and the toys and chocolates in the basement, but the most amazing thing of all for him was the grandfather clock with its swinging pendulum in the Archbishop’s reception room!

Congratulations to the Archdiocese of St. Boniface staff for creating such a lovely, peaceful environment from which to serve its people.