

THE ARCHDIOCESE OF SAINT BONIFACE

GUIDE FOR THE RENEWAL AND GROWTH OF PARISHES

The numbers of men and women
who came to believe in the Lord increased steadily (Acts 5:14).



This document is for the use of Pastors, Parish Moderators, Parish Administrators,
Parish Life Directors, Deacons, Parish Pastoral Councils, Deans,
Regional Pastoral Councils and the Diocesan Pastoral Council.

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INTRODUCTION

MESSAGE FROM ARCHBISHOP ALBERT LEGATT

Dear Friends, Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ,

The mission of the Church is the reason for our existence. It is part of the legacy of Jesus! He calls us to love God, to love our neighbour and to go make disciples (Mathew 22:37-40; 28:19).

In order to live this mission, the Archdiocese henceforth has an action plan that invites us *to live and to celebrate* our call to holiness, *to celebrate our call to holiness, to evangelize, and to build a community in the likeness of Christ founded on love, justice, peace and reconciliation.*

The Diocesan Action Plan contains important pastoral guidelines covering the next 5 years:

1. Call upon the gifts and charisma of all the baptized
2. Broaden the outreach of the Gospel and the faith of the Church
3. Assert Catholic identity
4. Give visibility to the Church
5. Develop the spirituality of stewardship

It is my deep conviction that parishes are today the main drivers of the renewal and growth of the Church and that it is in large part through parishes that our diocesan plan of action can be fulfilled. This document is above all meant for priests, parish life directors, and members of the Parish Pastoral Councils.

Through “missionary activity,” a parish community reaches out to those who do not know Christ by welcoming them and sharing the Good News with them (CCCB: The Missionary Dynamic of the Parish Today, p. 5).

It describes the archdiocese’s vision for its parishes: Churches that go forth where priests and laity work together for the development of the parish and the spiritual growth of its members.¹ Several of the document’s guidelines especially stand out: a strong dependence on the Holy Spirit thanks to a renewed community prayer; the accent on creating new disciples who will be engaged in the world and in the Church; strong Parish Pastoral Councils (PPCs) whose members assume pastoral responsibilities and are constantly engaged in planning. Several tools are offered to help in this work of planning.

I am calling upon priests, parish life directors, Parish Pastoral Councils and the laity to commit themselves resolutely to the work of the mission² and to the pastoral conversion of their parish in order to make disciples. May the Lord guide and enlighten us so that we may collaborate with the Holy Spirit to make him known and welcomed by all those he wishes to touch and save through his mercy and love, unceasingly renewed.

Archbishop Albert LeGatt

¹ From “The Upper Room” to “the Ends of the Earth,” p. 4.

² Through “missionary activity,” a parish community reaches out to those who do not know Christ by welcoming them and sharing the Good News with them. (CCCB: The Missionary Dynamic of the Parish Today, p. 5).

PART ONE: MISSIONARY PARISHES

Spreading faith in Christ, Redeemer of humanity, is the Church's fundamental and primary mission (CCBC: The Missionary Dynamic of the Parish Today).

A call: The parishes of the Archdiocese of Saint Boniface are called to become “Churches that go forth,”³ that is, missionary parishes that aim at reaching and welcoming those who do not know Christ or who do not follow him⁴ and growing them into disciples.

1. THE VISION OF A MISSIONARY PARISH

The vision of a missionary parish is one of a Christian community that cares for those who are not in the Church by:

- organizing itself and training its members to reach out to them and welcome them,
- making their Church experience positive and memorable,
- leading all parishioners toward spiritual maturity,
- discerning their gifts,
- involving them in the Church’s mission, and finally
- training them to become leaders in the Church and in the world.

(See the diagram in Appendix 1)

A missionary parish is characterized by several elements:

- Prayer is organized in an ongoing way to sustain the renewal and activities of the parish (John 15:5).
- The main objectives of the parish—with the help of its members—are to witness to Christ, to welcome new members, to help all parishioners attain spiritual maturity and to involve them in the mission of the Church.⁵
- Parishioners are trained to bear witness to Christ.
- With the help of parishioners, those in charge strive to make the passage in the parish a memorable experience, especially for visitors and guests.

I am the vine, you are the branches. He who lives in me and I in him, will produce abundantly, for apart from me you can do nothing (John 15:5).

³ This expression is used in the *The Joy of the Gospel*, Apostolic Exhortation by Pope Francis.

⁴ From “*The Upper Room*” to the “*Ends of the Earth*,” p. 4.

⁵ The mission can be lived within the Church or in the world.

- The different aspects of mission are deployed:
 - evangelization and prayers for healing,⁶
 - liturgy, Sunday celebrations, adoration and other forms of prayer and praise,
 - hospitality and fellowship (unity),
 - faith formation and spiritual growth (catechesis of adults, adolescents and children), and
 - charity and justice.
- Leadership is exercised in co-responsibility between ordained members and the laity.⁷ Lay persons are called to become leaders who participate in planning as well as overseeing the life of the parish. A leadership team is formed in which parishioners are individually responsible for one of the aspects of the mission.
- Finally, the parish strives to realize the vision of a missionary parish in a culture of love, of efficiency (in theological terms, “efficient” means the capacity to communicate God’s grace) and of excellence.⁸

2. STAGES OF IMPLEMENTATION

How does a parish become a missionary parish? There are a number of stages.

1. The missionary transformation of a parish begins with a **decision** from the person in charge of the parish and from the Parish Pastoral Council (PPC). This decision is to become a missionary parish as described in the section above. It includes taking the necessary time to work for the development of the parish,⁹ using books, speakers, and other means to learn about evangelization and Church development and avoiding being engulfed by routine administrative work.

Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations. Baptize them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Teach them to carry out everything I have commanded you. And know that I am with you always, until the end of the world! (Mt. 28: 19-20)

⁶ Jesus sent his disciples on missions not only to proclaim the Good News but also to heal the sick. Prayer for healing can be done in at least two ways: a sacramental prayer (the sacrament of the sick) and the laying on of hands by lay persons. Healing can take place at different levels: physical, emotional, psychological, etc.

⁷ The structure that allows for this co-responsibility is explained in chapter 3B of this document: *The Structure of Parish Pastoral Councils*.

⁸ Aiming at excellence means to do one’s best, to give one’s best, as the Father did when he gave us what was most precious to him: His Son.

⁹ Charles Buxton used to say: *You will never ‘find’ time for anything. If you want time you must make it.*

2. Prayers for the renewal and growth of the parish are offered in many different ways (Luke 10:2¹⁰; Acts 4:29-30¹¹). This means prayer should precede and accompany all pastoral activities so that men and women may be won over to Christ.
3. Write a parish mission statement that reflects the vision of a missionary parish as explained in the first paragraph of Section One. The parish mission statement should stress the objective of making disciples (See Appendix 3, “Preparing a Mission Statement”). If a parish mission statement already exists, it should be reviewed and revised as needed to communicate the missionary aims of the parish (i.e., the mission to evangelize and make disciples).
4. Find means to transform the parish culture so that parishioners feel responsible for bringing others to Christ. Motivate church members by regularly communicating the parish mission.
5. Set up a parish leadership team¹² that:
 - aims to grow the parish according to the vision of a missionary parish (paragraph 1 of Section 1);
 - plans the realization of the vision;
 - coordinates the different aspects of the mission;
 - helps parishioners move from one stage to the next (see Appendix 1), that is, to journey towards spiritual maturity and pastoral involvement; and
 - finds leaders for the different ministries.
6. With the parish leadership team, choose and start programs for the evangelization of non-Christians or those who have left the Church.¹³ Find out who the people in the local area are who seem to be most receptive to the Good News (see Appendix 7 in the Glossary: Receptive Persons) and concentrate efforts on them, as much as possible proclaiming the Gospel according through homogeneous groups (i.e. people who share the same age, socio-cultural position, culture etc.).
7. With the parish leadership team, pursue excellence in hospitality, fellowship, homilies, music and songs.
8. Offer memorable children’s programs at the same time as the Sunday celebrations.
9. Train parishioners to evangelize by inviting them to share their faith by witnessing to those close to them, especially friends and members of their families, choosing someone who seems receptive and might become interested in following Christ. Encourage parishioners to pray for these persons in a special way, inviting them to church and sharing with them what Christ can do for them.¹⁴
10. Organize small groups of parishioners and receptive persons who meet in homes. This will enhance intimacy in the Christian community and help it grow without the need of building costly structures.

¹⁰ Luke 10:2 – *He said to them: “The harvest is rich but the workers are few; therefore ask the harvest-master to send workers to his harvest.”*

¹¹ Acts 4:29-31 – *But now, O Lord, look at the threats they are leveling against us. Grant to your servants, even as they speak your words, complete assurance by stretching forth your hand in cures and signs and wonders to be worked in the name of Jesus, your holy servant. The place where they were gathered shook as they prayed. They were filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak God’s word with confidence.*

¹² This team is explained in chapter 3B: *The Structure of Parish Pastoral Councils.*

¹³ The Alpha Courses is an example of such a program.

¹⁴ This kind of evangelization is called “befriending.”

11. Adapt the parish and its pastoral activities to the culture of the surrounding area so that services and liturgy meet the tastes and needs of those we seek to attract.
12. As much as possible, choose converts coming from the local culture to be leaders in the Church.

To become a missionary parish, the right foundation must be laid: prayer and evangelization. This is the way it began with the early Church: the disciples gathered to pray, they received the Holy Spirit, and evangelization began. As a consequence, entire families joined the Church and the community grew spiritually through fellowship, Christian initiation, celebrations, deepening of the faith, involvement in the Church and in the world, and the formation of leaders (See Appendix 2: Building the Church on Prayer and Evangelization). Appendix 4 can be used to help parishes visualize some stages of implementation.

3. THE ROLE AND STRUCTURE OF PARISH PASTORAL COUNCILS (PPC) IN A MISSIONARY PERSPECTIVE

The missionary transformation of the parish is the responsibility of the Parish Pastoral Council. This chapter describes the role and structure of Parish Pastoral Councils in the framework of this responsibility.

A. The Role of Parish Pastoral Councils

According to the diocesan document for Parish Pastoral Councils, *From 'the Upper Room to 'the Ends of the Earth'*, Parish Pastoral Councils are called to journey from simple administration of the parish to leading the parish in its missionary role.¹⁵ The Council's primary role is to facilitate the vitality and growth of the parish.

Prayer and planning are necessary to achieve this growth. The first step for the Council is to evaluate the parish to verify the presence or absence of areas of growth factors in the parish. A questionnaire is included in this document to help the Council do this evaluation (Part 2, Section 1). A survey can also be developed and given to people inside and outside the parish to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the parish and to find out why some people don't come to Church. Once the evaluation has been completed, the Parish Pastoral Council can establish priorities and outline a plan of action for the next two or three years in order to realize the vision (Planning sheets for the different aspects of the mission are offered in Appendix 5 and can be used by the members of the parish leadership team).

¹⁵ From *'The Upper Room to 'The Ends of the Earth,'* p.5.

B. The Structure of Parish Pastoral Councils

The parish [...] can assume quite different contours depending on the openness and missionary creativity of the pastor and the community (Pope Francis, The Joy of the Gospel).

Working in co-responsibility with the priest or the parish life director, the Parish Pastoral Council ensures that various members of the parish are given pastoral responsibility for the different aspects of the mission:

- evangelization and healing ministry;
- liturgy, Sunday celebrations, adoration and other forms of prayer and praise;
- welcome and hospitality;
- faith formation and spiritual development (catechesis of adults, youth and children); and
- charity and justice

The parishioners who accept these pastoral responsibilities become part of a **parish leadership team**. The priest (or the parish life director), the chair of the Parish Pastoral Council and the chair of the finance committee are also part of this team. The priest is an ex-officio member because he is responsible for the parish and participates in team meetings whenever this is suitable or as he sees fit.

Community is built when people are given responsibility, and take that responsibility upon themselves (CCCB: The Missionary Dynamic of the Parish Today, p. 8).

The parish leadership team is formed gradually. It can function even if all its members have not been appointed. The first priority of the Parish Pastoral Council should be to appoint someone capable of organizing prayer activities for the renewal of the parish as well as someone responsible for evangelization. Prayer and evangelization will begin a growth dynamic as new members will join the parish and potential leaders suitable for the other functions of the team will gradually be revealed.

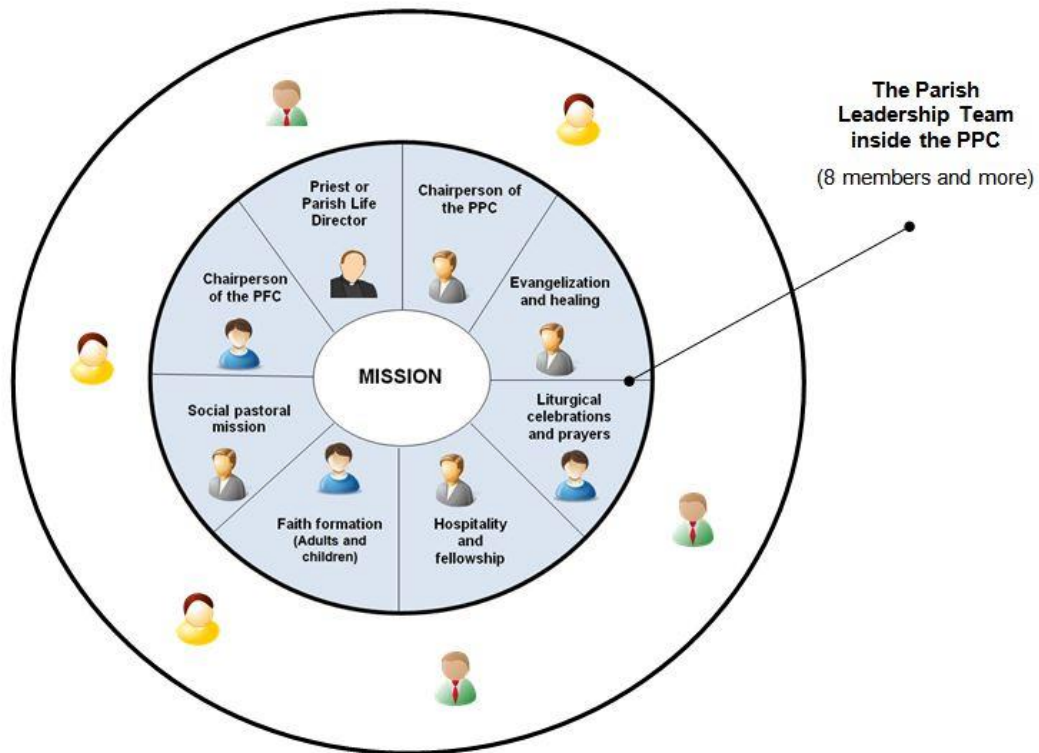
The parish leadership team can also be made up of members other than those mentioned above if they can make a significant contribution to the team because of their talents and experience. For example, these might be people competent in the fields of communication, planning, youth ministry, recruitment of volunteers, marriage and family, leadership training, etc. (cf. planning sheets for these other members of the team can be found in Appendix 5, Part 2). Members of the parish leadership team should create sub-committees and invite volunteers to help develop pastoral activities related to their fields.

If the parish does not have a Parish Pastoral Council, one way to proceed is to set up a provisional team whose purpose is to set up prayers for the renewal of the parish and to identify members suitable for serving on the parish leadership team.

From a perspective of co-responsibility, a Parish Pastoral Council looks like this:

THE PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL (PPC)

12 members and more, including the members of the Parish Leadership Team



(The Parish leadership Team is part of the PPC but assumes a different role when meeting outside the PPC)

Some members of the Parish Pastoral Council have a special function and are more active than others. They are responsible for one or the other aspects of the mission and form **the parish leadership team**.

The composition of the parish leadership team will depend on the persons in the parish available to serve. In smaller parishes, one member can be responsible for several aspects of the mission.

In areas where communities are very small, one parish leadership team might serve several places of worship.

The members of the Parish Pastoral Council who are not part of the parish leadership team help analyze the parish's needs, explain the vision, and advise the parish leadership team towards realizing the vision.

The parish leadership team meets more often (once or more a month) than the entire Parish Pastoral Council (around two or three times a year). When the entire Parish Pastoral Council meets, it helps the parish leadership team keep in mind its purpose. It acts like a compass helping the community stay on course regarding the mission. One of the main challenges for the Parish Pastoral Council is to advise on the mission and then let the members of the parish leadership team do their work.

PART TWO: PARISHES THAT PLAN

The faithful of the parish community should, as much as possible, be involved in creating a missionary plan for their parish. This could be done by the pastoral council or by other means (CCCB: [The Missionary Dynamic of the Parish Today](#)).

Planning is indispensable to any organization wanting to fulfill its mission. The priest (or the parish life director) and Parish Pastoral Council will undertake this work keeping in mind the goal of becoming a missionary parish and implementing Church growth factors¹⁶. The first steps will involve evaluating the presence or absence of growth factors in the parish (Section 1, below), evaluating the parishioners' journey to date, (Section 2) and planning to implement programs and growth factors using the planning sheets provided (Section 3). The process of evaluation and planning is ongoing and should be done annually. Evaluation helps the parish set priorities for the years ahead.

1. EVALUATING THE PRESENCE OR ABSENCE OF CHURCH GROWTH FACTORS

Table 1. Evaluation of the Presence of Church growth factors

The following assessment grid can be used to help evaluate the presence or absence of growth in the parish. For each item, 0 means a total absence of the growth factors; 5 means the highest presence of church growth factors.

	0	1	2	3	4	5
1. The vision of the parish is to be an evangelizing Church and to form missionary disciples.						
2. Prayer activities have been organized for evangelization and the missionary renewal of the parish.						
3. The parish has a mission statement that is easy to memorize and reflects its priority to make disciples, to encourage their spiritual growth, and to engage them in the mission of the Church. (cf. Appendix 3)						
4. The Financial Council understands the importance of the parish mission and works with the Parish Pastoral Council to finance both evangelization and the realization of the vision.						

¹⁶ Church growth factors (or principles) are pastoral orientations that characterize growing churches. They are presented in the assessment grid below.

5. The Archdiocesan vision to become a Church that evangelizes and makes disciples with the help of the whole parish is regularly set before parishioners with every means available (e.g., homilies, parish bulletins, announcements, Web site).						
6. The leaders in the parish are continually learning about Church growth ¹⁷						
7. The leaders in the parish have visited a growing Church to see what could be helpful for their parish.						
8. Evangelization programs have been set up to reach out to the people of the neighbourhood.						
9. Small groups have been set up for the spiritual growth of parishioners and the discernment of their gifts.						
10. Parishioners are invited to grow spiritually by frequent participation in the Eucharist, the sacrament of Reconciliation, daily bible reading, prayer activities, fasting, involvement with the poor, and evangelization.						
11. Members of the Parish Pastoral Council (PPC) are individually responsible for different aspects of the mission and work in collaboration with the pastor.						
12. The Parish Pastoral Council (PPC) has a written plan of action to encourage parish growth.						
13. Parishioners are trained to evangelize.						
14. New converts are quickly involved in witnessing and evangelization.						
15. Celebrations are dynamic and appealing, especially for the young adults and the newly evangelized. The music ministry uses contemporary music and instruments.						
16. Special faith formation activities for children and youth take place at the same time as Sunday celebrations.						
17. Prayers for healing and deliverance are offered for parishioners and for persons being evangelized.						
18. Homilies are well prepared and delivered, addressing the day-to-day challenges of parishioners; they are also meaningful to non-believers and to those new to the message of the Gospel. They offer the way of salvation and regularly invite listeners to an act of faith in						

¹⁷ This learning can be done through reading books such as *Rebuilt* (Fr. Michael White), *Divine Renovation* (James Mallon), *The Purpose of the Driven Church* (Rick Warren), *La croissance de l'Église* (Pierre-Alain Giffard), as well as by visits to growing churches and participation in Church growth conferences.

Jesus, the Saviour.						
19. The parish has a welcoming committee and follows up with visitors and newcomers.						
20. Visitors and evangelized people are invited to a special meeting to get to know the parish and receive Jesus as their Lord and Saviour.						
21. Prayer meetings are offered to parishioners to help them practice their spiritual gifts ¹⁸ .						
22. Newcomers who have not received all the sacraments of initiation are systematically invited to join the RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults).						
23. The newly baptized as well as parishioners are invited to a series of gatherings designed to help them grow towards greater spiritual maturity and missionary involvement.						
24. One of the steps in these gatherings is an opportunity for participants to receive the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.						
25. One of the steps in these gatherings is to allow participants to discern their gifts and to identify the opportunities the parish offers for their involvement in the parish mission.						
26. Training is provided to those who become involved in one or another pastoral strategy of the parish.						
27. Leadership training is offered those called to a leadership role.						
28. The parish reaches out to its own poor and suffering members as well to those in the broader community.						
29. The parish has developed strategies for welcoming newcomers and inviting them to enjoy fellowship with other parishioners.						
30. Sessions and programs are offered to foster spiritual growth at all ages.						
31. Different types of prayer activities exist in the parish.						
32. Parish leaders help members embrace the changes happening in the parish.						
33. A high quality website has been created to promote the parish and its activities.						

¹⁸ This does not mean identifying oneself with the charismatic movement, but simply offering the possibility of receiving the Holy Spirit as was done within the context of the early Church. The gifts of the Holy Spirit can be exercised in small groups without individuals having to belong to a particular movement.

34. The activities of the parish have been adapted to the surrounding culture in order to use the richness of the culture to better communicate the Gospel. ¹⁹						
35. Parish leaders call upon parishioners to be actively involved and to give financially to fulfill the mission.						
36. A culture of quality, love, and efficiency exists at every level of the parish organization.						
37. The laity is involved and shoulders responsibility in the parish.						
38. The laity is involved according to their talents and interests.						

This evaluation allows the Parish Pastoral Council to see how many Church growth factors are present in the parish and to establish priorities for the next 2 or 3 years. The Council should pay particular attention to the evaluation items with the lowest scores. It will also need to evaluate whether the activities and programs that already exist effectively help accomplish the vision. There may be programs or activities that need to be replaced, changed, or let go if they absorb too much energy and/or are no longer relevant to achieve the vision. It will then be the responsibility of the parish leadership team to work on these priorities.

Advice concerning priorities

As the PPC evaluates the parish using the items in Table 1 above, it should first establish:

- 1) a team or committee in charge of setting up prayer activities for the renewal and growth of the parish, and
- 2) a team or committee in charge of choosing and implementing at least one evangelization program, then
- 3) a welcoming and fellowship committee,
- 4) a committee for fellowship and the integration of new members,
- 5) a committee to oversee the quality of music and hymns,
- 6) a committee to monitor the quality of homilies,
- 7) a committee to establish programs of Christian initiation and the spiritual growth of adults and children that includes the discernment of the gifts of parishioners with the intention of involving them in pastoral activities,
- 8) a committee concerned with the poor and issues of justice, and
- 9) a leadership training committee.

The work of these committees will permit the parish to realize the vision of an evangelizing parish that creates mature disciples involved in the local Church (see Appendix 1). The chairs of these committees can be part of the parish leadership team.

¹⁹ The multi-media culture comes to mind. It offers many possibilities for creating social networks, for offering better celebrations, and for communicating the Good News.

If the scores are low, pastoral activities that should be given priority are:

1. Prayers for the renewal and growth of the parish.
2. Evangelization programs (missionary proclamation).
3. Spiritual growth of parishioners.
4. Welcoming new people and helping them to easily integrate into the Christian community and to develop friendships with established parishioners.
5. The quality of homilies and music.
6. Contemporary music.
7. Joyful celebrations.
8. Lay leaders working in co-responsibility with the priest.
9. Planning for Church growth.
10. All parishioners working to evangelize and grow the Church.
11. Prayer for healing and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.
12. A structure of small groups for evangelization, fellowship, and spiritual growth.

2. EVALUATING THE GROWTH AND INVOLVEMENT OF PARISHIONERS

The second part of the evaluation can help the Parish Pastoral Council to see if the parish is really growing. The parish is growing if the numbers in the following table increase year after year. This table needs to be completed each year.

Table 2. Evaluation of Growth and Involvement of Parishioners

Once a year the Parish Pastoral Council counts:	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
1. How many parishioners are involved in witnessing and evangelization efforts?			
2. How many visitors or newcomers did the Welcoming Committee receive?			
3. How many of these newcomers were integrated into faith initiation or spiritual growth sessions (for Catholics)?			
4. How many of these newcomers received the sacraments of Christian initiation?			
5. How many parishioners participated in a discernment process to discover their gifts in order to use them in a parish ministry?			
6. How many parishioners have become involved in a parish ministry?			
7. How many parishioners have received training to become leaders in the Church and in the world?			
8. How many parishioners have served as leaders in parish ministries?			

3. PLANNING SHEETS FOR THE PARISH LEADERSHIP TEAM

Once the Pastoral Parish Council has assessed the parish and established priorities, members of the parish leadership team can use the sheets in Appendix 5 to plan their own activities and align them with the priorities.

Each sheet:

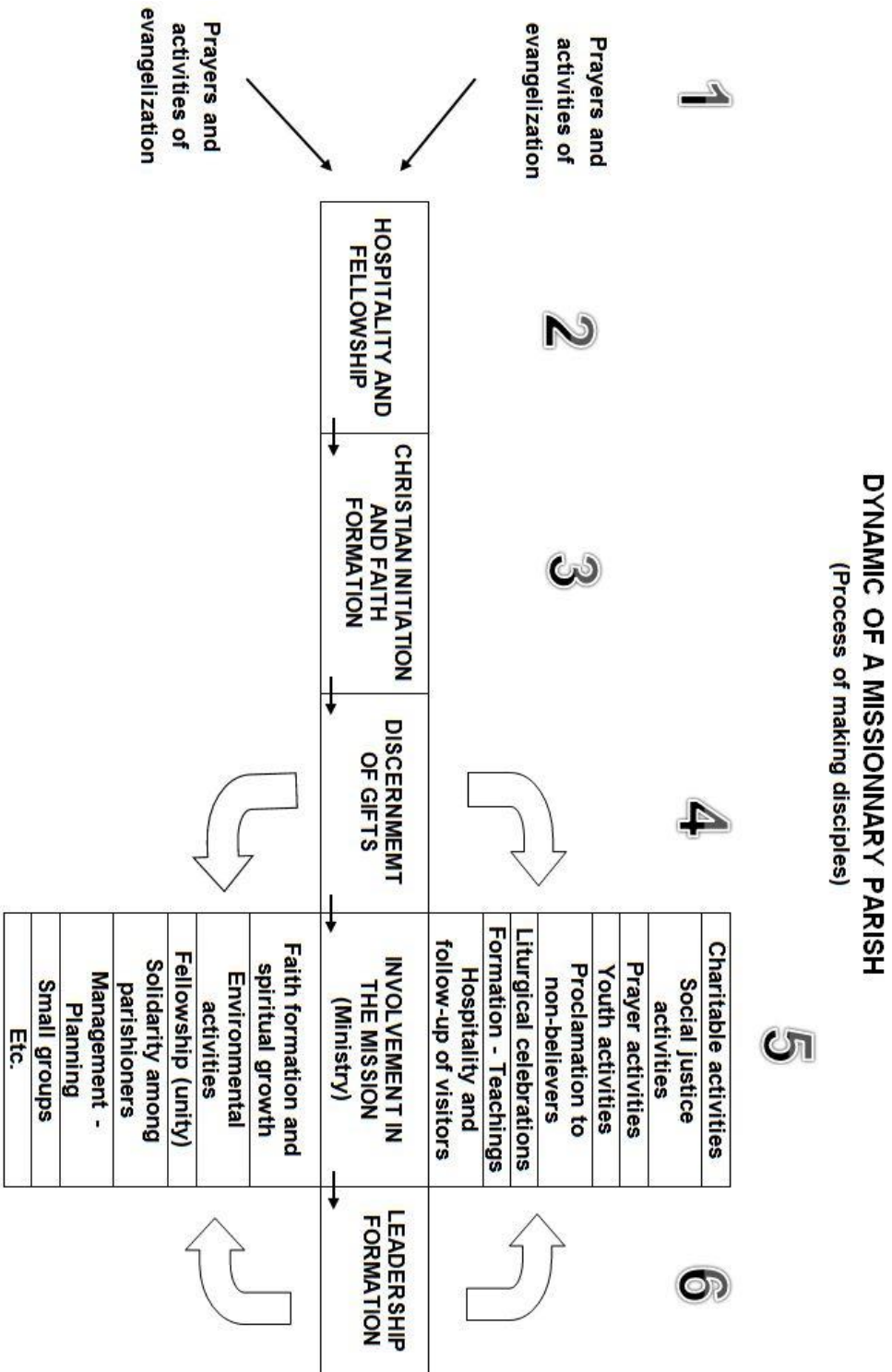
- describes one pastoral activity or service,
- gives the name of the person in charge,
- gives suggestions of activities to the leader of this ministry,
- provides a place to list existing activities in the parish for this particular pastoral strategy, and
- provides a place to list the new projects the parish has chosen to develop within the next two or three years.

These sheets are filled out individually by the leader of the pastoral strategy in question but are discussed with the whole parish leadership team and reviewed by the whole Parish Pastoral Council. This process results in an action plan that includes most of the activities of the parish; it will be accompanied by an estimate of the cost to be approved by the Parish Finance Council.

CONCLUSION

The priest (or the parish life director) and the Parish Pastoral Council are called to make their parish a missionary Church. A missionary parish is one that evangelizes, dedicates itself to making disciples who love God and their neighbor, and who are involved in the Church's mission. This document is here to help understand how this mission can be realized in their parish and plan for its realization.

APPENDIX 1: THE GROWTH DYNAMIC IN A PARISH



APPENDIX 1 (cont.)

Explanation of the diagram

1. A missionary parish is first of all a praying parish that invites newcomers into the Christian community, especially those persons who have removed themselves from the Church and those who do not know Christ.
2. A missionary parish is also a community that welcomes people into small groups or to parish activities.
3. People who have been invited are then introduced to and initiated into the Christian faith and journey towards baptism and confirmation. Those who have received the sacraments of Christian initiation are offered ways and teachings to deepen their faith.
4. The gifts and interests of those who are and those who have become members of the Christian community are then discerned in order to involve them in the mission of the parish.
5. Individuals are then involved in the mission.
6. Those who have the necessary skills can then be trained to assume leadership positions.

Note: This diagram presents a description of evangelization and formation for discipleship, but it could happen that some people become more quickly involved in the mission. Reality is not always so linear and organized. The important thing is for the parish to extend invitations, welcome newcomers into the community, form them into mature disciples and involve them in the mission, thus generating continual growth through this missionary effort.

APPENDIX 2: BUILDING THE CHURCH ON PRAYER AND EVANGELIZATION



Explanation of the diagram

Building the Church first of all involves laying the foundation of prayer and evangelization. This is where growth begins, just as in the early Church did, especially at Pentecost: The disciples gathered to pray, they received the Holy Spirit, and evangelization began. Then they welcomed new members into the Christian community and the rest of the spiritual edifice was built-up: fellowship, Christian initiation, celebrations, growth in the faith, involvement in the Church and in the world, and the formation of leaders.

APPENDIX 3: WRITING UP A PARISH MISSION STATEMENT

A parish mission statement is a text that presents the main objectives of the parish. It clarifies the direction in which the leaders of the Church have chosen to lead the parish thus making it clear to all members what they are called to do. It should be written in one or two sentences (short and specific). Ideally, a mission statement can be easily memorized and answers the question, “What is the parish called to do”? It should include two facets: the evangelization of non-Christians and those who have lapsed in their Catholicism, and the deepening of the faith of parishioners to lead them towards spiritual maturity and involvement.

Examples:

- **The mission statement of the Church of the Nativity (Pastor Michael White):**

Love God, Love Others, Make Disciples.

- **The mission statement of Saddleback (Pastor Rick Warren):**

*To bring people to believe in Jesus and **become members** of his family, to lead them towards **spiritual maturity** and equip them to **do ministry** within the community and in the world in order to magnify God's name.*

Note: Pastor Warren wanted a mission statement short enough to be memorized by the members of his community. He wrote some words in bold type to stress certain dimensions of mission: that of aiming to unite not only non-practicing unbelievers to Jesus through faith, but also to integrate them into the Christian community, to lead them to spiritual growth and to give them missionary responsibility.

- **The mission statement of the Parish of Saint Benedict (Pastor James Mallon):**

Gather disciples who are joyfully committed to the mission.

- **The mission statement of the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada:**

To glorify God by making disciples everywhere through by proclaiming and practicing the gospel of Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit.

- **The mission statement of the Community Church of Joy (Pastor Walt Kallestad)**

So that all may know Jesus Christ and become his disciples, we share his love in the joy and inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

APPENDIX 4: 9 STAGES FOR RENEWING AND GROWING A PARISH



APPENDIX 4 (Cont.): Explanation of the Diagram

To renew and grow the parish, the priest (or the parish life director) and the Parish Pastoral Council move through the following steps. Activities and programs related to these steps are organized by the members of the parish leadership team and their subcommittees.

1. **DECISION.** A decision, a firm commitment, is taken by the priest, the PPC and the finance committee to prioritize evangelization and find time to grow the Church.
2. **TEAM.** A team is formed to work in co-responsibility towards this goal. Together, team members learn how to evangelize and grow the Church; they envision and plan how missionary activity is going to take place in their parish.
3. **PRAYER.** Different kinds of prayers and a network of intercessors are set up to pray for the renewal and growth of the parish. These prayers ask for a new outpouring of the Holy Spirit, like at Pentecost. A parishioner is given the responsibility of leading and organizing this effort with others.
4. **EVANGELIZATION.** Different kinds of activities and methods of evangelization are implemented in the parish. A parishioner is given the responsibility of leading and organizing this effort with others.
5. **RENEWAL AND FORMATION OF PARISHIONERS.** Programs are implemented to help parishioners renew and share their faith with others. These programs include discernment of gifts and lead towards the involvement of lay people in the different parish activities. People who have been brought to the church through the efforts of evangelization and who are not baptized are formed through the RCIA program. A parishioner is given the responsibility of leading and organizing this effort with others.
6. **HOSPITALITY AND FELLOWSHIP.** A team is trained and set up to welcome visitors and newcomers in the church. First-time visits need to be unforgettable experiences; follow-ups should be made to re-invite the visitors. Different activities are also set up for parishioners to socialize and get to know each other. A parishioner is given the responsibility of leading and organizing this effort with others.
7. **PREACHING, MUSIC AND SUNDAY EXPERIENCE.** A team is trained and set up to give visitors and parishioners an unforgettable Sunday experience through worship, preaching, fellowship with the Holy Spirit, etc. A parishioner is given the responsibility of leading and organizing this effort with others.
8. **CHARITY, JUSTICE AND SOLIDARITY.** Special care is given to those in the most need, both those inside and outside the church. This social pastoral mission will be led and organized by a parishioner with the efforts of others.
9. **TRAINING OF LEADERS.** Some parishioners are offered special formation in leadership to help them take responsibility for lay ministries in the parish. A parishioner is given the responsibility of leading and organizing this effort with others.

APPENDIX 5: PLANNING SHEETS

A. Communication of the Vision

Description

The missionary vision is one of the most important elements to bring about parish renewal and growth. The vision should be continually presented to parishioners so that everyone desires to get involved and feels motivated and called to realize it.

Person in charge: The priest or parish life director.

Proposed Projects

1. Explain the vision to parish leaders.
2. With the help of the PPC and parish leadership team, write a parish mission statement that reflects the missionary vision of reaching out to people who do not know Christ and/or do not follow him.
3. Steadily present and promote the parish mission and objectives to parishioners using the different means of communication available in the parish.
4. Use homilies, personal contacts, and articles in the parish bulletin to communicate the vision.
5. Create a culture of evangelization and involvement in the parish by which all baptized members feel responsible for evangelization and the transmission of the faith.
6. Create a culture of quality in the parish which strives for excellence at all levels of the Church.
7. Find ways of helping parishioners understand and accept changes.
8. Regularly congratulate and encourage everyone involved in helping to achieve the vision.

Ongoing Projects

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

New Projects and Target Dates for Completion

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

B. Evangelization and Healing Ministry

Description of the Ministry

Evangelization is an invitation to become a disciple of Christ to those who have not yet made this choice. Its aim is to bring non-Christians to believe, to freely choose the Lord, and to loyally attach themselves to Him. It also reaches out to the baptized who have lapsed in their faith.

Pope John Paul II wrote that evangelization *“is the primary service which the Church can render to every individual and to all humanity in the modern world”* (John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, part 2, Dec. 7, 1990). He urged that missionary proclamation be our first priority and believed that every person who has the grace to be baptized ought to be involved in this proclamation.

Not only did Jesus send forth his disciples to proclaim the Good News, he also sent them to heal the sick (Luke 10:9). As we evangelize, we need to find ways that allow evangelized persons (and parishioners) to receive the grace of healing at the physical, psychological, emotional, or any other level.

Person in charge: _____

Proposed Projects

1. Appoint a person to be in charge of evangelization and healing activities.
2. Train parishioners to witness to their faith.
3. Set up small groups for evangelization and faith sharing.
4. Invite the coordinator for Evangelization and Faith formation from the Archdiocese's Pastoral Centre to come to your parish.
5. Hire a lay director for evangelization.
6. Find and use evangelization programs such as Alpha.
7. Increase the frequency of offering the sacrament of the sick and ensure it is accessible.
8. Offer evangelized individuals and visitors a warm welcome and opportunities for fellowship.
9. Plan evenings for prayer and healing.
10. Provide opportunities for visitors and new members of the parish to make an act of faith.

Ongoing Projects

- _____
- _____
- _____

New Projects and Target Dates for Completion

- _____
- _____
- _____

C. Prayers and Liturgical Celebrations

Description of the Ministry

The goal of this ministry is, with the help of a committee, to set up prayer activities for the renewal and growth of the parish. Committee members try to create lively celebrations intended for the entire parish while at the same time adapting them to those targeted for evangelization. Another goal of the committee is to enable parishioners to pray and grow in faith through liturgy. If a Liturgical Committee already exists, it contributes to the preparation and execution of parish liturgies.

Person in charge: _____

Proposed Projects

1. Name someone in charge of prayer and liturgical celebrations.
2. Set up a Prayer and Liturgy Committee (if not already done).
3. Plan activities to pray for the renewal and growth of the parish.
4. Create joyful and lively celebrations enhanced with contemporary music that is appealing to youth and young adults.
5. Create celebrations that attract seekers, visitors, or invited guests and give them the opportunity to make an act of faith in Jesus the Saviour.
6. Be open to the charismatic aspect of spiritual life and offer sessions to prepare for outpourings of the Holy Spirit and the exercise of charisms.²⁰
7. Include opportunities in homilies for visitors and invited guests to make an act of faith in Jesus the Saviour.

Ongoing Projects

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

New Projects and Target Dates for Completion

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

²⁰ This is not a question of identifying oneself with, or associating with, a specific movement in the Church (e.g., the Charismatic Movement), but simply of offering parishioners the opportunity to renew the outpouring of the Holy Spirit they received at Confirmation and to practice the charisms.

D. Hospitality and Fellowship

Description of the Ministry

The most important purpose of this ministry is to welcome evangelized persons and visitors in a memorable way and to help these individuals and families find friends in the parish. The quality of the welcome offered reveals a parish that is open and friendly. To visitors, hospitality and friendship are signs of God's presence in a community. It is also important to follow up on initial visits and to plan opportunities for creating bonds of friendship in the Christian community between the newly evangelized and parishioners.

Person in charge: _____

Proposed Projects

1. Name someone to be in charge of hospitality and fellowship.
2. Set up a committee to work with this person.
3. Form a team to warmly welcome newcomers and invited guests.
4. Find ways to support and accompany new priests.
5. On a table at the entrance to the church, set out information about the parish, a place to write down contact information, and invitations to a later information session.
6. Train parishioners to engage in conversation with visitors and introduce visitors to the pastor.
7. With the overseer of the parish buildings, see to a welcoming environment: good lighting, no unpleasant odors or fragrances, **cleanliness and safety** (especially the bathrooms), attractive interiors, and exterior bulletin boards and signs.
8. Usher newcomers to places reserved for visitors.
9. Invite visitors and newcomers to an information session about the parish and its mission during which they are given an opportunity to make an act of faith in Jesus the Saviour.
10. Raise awareness among parishioners of the importance of being open, nonjudgmental, and welcoming towards visitors and newcomers.
11. Plan activities that foster bonds of friendship between newcomers and parishioners.
12. Organize activities that deepen communion among parishioners.

Ongoing Projects

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

New Projects and Target Dates for Completion

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

E. Faith Formation and Spiritual Growth (adults, youth and children)

Description of the Ministry

Faith formation and spiritual growth are part of the Christian initiation of adults, teenagers, and children and are achieved through different kinds of Christian life formation sessions for parishioners of all ages.

Person in charge: _____

Proposed Projects

1. Name someone responsible for faith formation.
2. Form a team to work with this person.
3. Organize activities and small faith groups to deepen the faith and spiritual fervor of the Christian community.
4. Create a family life committee to address marriage, family, and respect for life issues.
5. Organize a youth ministry.
6. Organize a children's liturgy and formation concurrent with Sunday Mass.
7. In teachings and sessions, stress the fact that each Christian is called to be a missionary and cannot remain passive.
8. Develop formation sessions about Christian stewardship.
9. Where schools no longer offer religious education, organize an ongoing catechesis that includes the initial proclamation for parents.
10. When preparing children for the sacraments, provide parents who do not go to Church with the essentials of the Christian faith (kerygma).
11. Take advantage of a request for the baptism of a child to present the essentials of the Christian faith (kerygma) to parents who do not go to church.
12. Offer spiritual formation opportunities that meet the needs of senior parishioners.
13. Provide opportunities for faith formation at every entry level into the Church, including marriage preparation, funerals, and grief support.

Ongoing Projects

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

New Projects and Target Dates for Completion

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

F. Social Pastoral Mission (Charity, Justice, and Solidarity)

Description of the Ministry

This ministry is based upon the Church’s preferential option for the poor. It targets those most in need and promotes social justice, human rights and dignity, as well as transformative social change that create a society increasingly in tune with the Gospel.

Person in charge _____

Proposed Projects

1. Name someone responsible for the social pastoral mission.
2. Form a team to work with this person.
3. Identify and meet the needs of the impoverished members of the parish and the surrounding area.
4. Get to know and fill the needs of the area (e.g., ministry to those who are dying, visits to those who are sick or confined to their homes, grief support, visits to prisoners, support groups for people with addictions, etc.)
5. Help an individual or family seeking refugee status in Canada.
6. Welcome and help new immigrants.
7. Twin the parish with a parish in the Global South or a First Nations parish.

Ongoing Projects

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

New Projects and Target Dates for Completion

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

G. Economic Affairs (Material Aspects of the Mission)

Description

This member of the parish leadership team sees to it that sufficient resources are allocated to cover the costs of the parish action plans. As the parish leadership team's link with the Parish Finance Committee, this person helps the other members of the parish leadership team to prepare a budget for their projects. This person considers what, in terms of financial and other resources, can best contribute to the realization of the parish mission.

Person in charge: The Chairperson of the Parish Finance Council

Proposed Projects (over and above the usual tasks of the PFC)

1. Ensure access for persons with disabilities.
2. Appoint someone to oversee communications.
3. Oversee the cleanliness of the building (bathrooms, entrance, etc.) at all times, especially for special events.
4. Make sure signs pointing to the different parts of the church are visible and clear.
5. Work closely with the other members of the parish finance committee in preparing a budget.
6. Ensure adequate parking for visitors.
7. Invest in good audiovisual and multi mediaequipment.
8. Invest in good musical instruments.

Ongoing Projects

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

New Projects and Target Dates for Completion

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

H. The Parish Leadership Team

Those who are chosen to be leaders for any one of the parish ministries form the parish leadership team. Members work as a team (not in isolation or simply with the pastor or parish life director). The parish leadership team meets regularly and decisions are made by consensus. Members plan for their own ministry and write an action plan but work in collaboration as a team. Together with the complete Parish Pastoral Council, they regularly review the parish pastoral and missionary situation in order to make whatever adjustments are necessary.

Team Members:

1. Communication of the vision The priest or the parish life director: _____
2. Evangelization and Healing _____
3. Prayers and Liturgical Celebrations _____
4. Hospitality and Fellowship _____
5. Catechesis _____
6. Social Ministry _____
7. Economic Affairs Chair of the Parish Finance Council: _____
8. Other _____

SUPPLEMENTARY SHEETS
(For other members of the parish leadership team)

A. Communications

Description of the Ministry

The goal of this ministry is to promote and facilitate communication with parishioners, newcomers, and people in the local community, including non-Catholics. This involves announcing activities, events, and initiatives happening in the parish and ways to become involved in these opportunities.

The Communications ministry also serves the renewal and growth of the parish. It supports the priest or the parish life director in communicating the parish vision to parishioners. By choosing media appropriate to the audience they wish to reach, the communications ministry can also help proclaim the Good News in the neighbourhood and invite new people to the parish.

Person in charge: _____

Proposed Projects

- Name someone to be responsible for this ministry.
- Gather a team to work with this person.
- Provide the priest with resources to enrich his homilies.
- Publish opportunities for volunteering in the parish bulletin.
- Build a good parish website site.

Ongoing Projects

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

New Projects and Target Dates for Completion

- _____
- _____
- _____

B. Ministry to Youth and Young Adults

Description of the Ministry

This ministry serves youth and young adults. It aims at facilitating their encounter with Christ in the Church, either as individuals or within the parish. They are invited to place their faith at the service of others, to live diversity in communion with one another, and to become missionaries towards young non-Christians and youths who have lapsed from the Church in order to invite them to follow Christ.

Person in charge: _____

Proposed Projects

1. Name someone to be responsible for ministering to youth and young adults.
2. Form a team to work with this person.
3. Form a parish youth group.
4. Form a parish group for young adults.
5. Oversee the participation in the parish of youth and young adults.
6. Develop an evangelization program where young adults evangelize young adults.
7. Organize youth rallies with an evangelization connotation.
8. Organize activities for fellowship among youth.

Ongoing Projects

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

New Projects and Target Dates for Completion

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

C. Marriage, Family and Life

Description of the Ministry

This ministry sustains and enriches couples and families by offering programs and services that promote the Catholic vision and doctrine on marriage, family, and life. It also aims to empower Catholic couples to become missionaries towards non-Christian couples (or those who have lapsed) in order to help them come to know and follow Christ.

Person in charge: _____

Proposed Projects

1. Appoint a person responsible to be for this ministry.
2. Form a team to work with this person.
3. Develop a marriage preparation course.
4. Invite in the parish the diocesan coordinator for Marriage, Family and Life.
5. Set up a support program for married couples.
6. Develop programs for couples to evangelize other couples.

Ongoing Projects

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

New Projects and Target Dates for Completion

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

D. Recruitment of Volunteers and Involvement in the Mission

Description of the Ministry

As its name suggests, this service aims at recruiting volunteers for the various activities and responsibilities in the parish and involving parishioners in the life of the parish. The goal is to involve people according to their gifts and interests, rather than according to the immediate needs of the parish.

Person in charge: _____

Proposed Projects

1. Name someone to be responsible for recruiting volunteers and involving parishioners in the different parish ministries.
2. Offer sessions for the discernment of gifts.
3. Find ways to help parishioners participate in discernment of gifts sessions in which they will also discover how they can get involved in parish activities.
4. Give appropriate training to those who become involved in the mission.
5. Provide leadership training to those who accept leadership positions.
6. Contact the Archdiocesan Pastoral Centre to learn what training is offered for parishioners who get involved in parish ministries.
7. Plan an “open door” day when parishioners are invited to discover the different ways they can get involved in the parish.

Ongoing Projects

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

New Projects and Target Dates for Completion

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

APPENDIX 6: THE PLACE OF THE LAITY, PRIEST AND DEACON IN THE PROPOSED VISION

A. The Laity

The right and duty of the laity to the apostolate arise from their union with Christ through baptism and confirmation, and they are assigned to the apostolate by the Lord himself. (AA 3).

Thanks to their baptism and confirmation, lay persons, too, are called to be heralds of the faith in order to bring new disciples to Christ. The Lord Jesus himself calls them to build up the Church (cf. Mt 28, 19²¹)²². Because they have an essential role to play in the life of their Christian community, they can and should be encouraged to collaborate, according to their charisms, talents and experience in both the pastoral and missionary activities of the parish as well as in leadership.

B. The Priest

The priest's concern should be the growth of the Christian community. He is called to be a reflection and example of Christ himself who said "I will build my church" (Matthew 16:18). As Christ the Head, he communicates a missionary vision and strives to unify the parish. He is neither a civil servant, nor an employee, but rather incarnates the presence of the Christ who gathers and serves. His leadership aims at bringing the whole community to participate in the mission of making disciples.

His role is to ensure that parishioners:

- Be witnesses of Christ,
- Are growing spiritually (through, for example, personal prayer, bible reading and the frequent use of the sacraments),
- Welcome and befriend those who have been evangelized,
- Become involved in the works of charity and justice,
- Support one another, being especially attentive to those in need,
- Discern their spiritual gifts and become involved in the different parish ministries, and
- Accept leadership positions in the parish and are trained to assume them.

He will achieve this, with the help of the Parish Pastoral Council, by adopting and communicating a missionary vision for his parish and by encouraging involvement of parishioners in the mission (see Part One, Section 1: Vision of a Missionary Parish and Part One, Section 3: The Role and Structure of Parish Pastoral Councils).

²¹ Matthew 28:19. *Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.*

Motivated by pastoral charity, he exercises those functions that he alone can accomplish, giving his life to the Church through his service.

Like Jesus, he proclaims the Word and prays for those who are sick. Like a shepherd, he pays particular attention to the wounded and suffering sheep in his flock.

Through his readings, formation, and visits to growing parishes, he acquires more understanding about church growth principles.

He pays special attention to his homilies, which should be delivered in simple language that is readily grasped even by those who have little or no knowledge of the Christian faith. His homilies should also meet both the spiritual hungers and the felt needs of his listeners.

C. The Deacon

Traditionally, deacons are ordained to have “a preferential love for the poor, the sick, and the needy” and to serve in liturgical ministries, proclaim the Word, and perform other parish duties. They are also ordained to assist the bishop and priests in the celebration of the divine mysteries, especially the Eucharist, to preside at weddings and to bless them, to preach, and to preside at funerals.

In the Archdiocese of Saint Boniface, permanent deacons are given specific mandates connected with the social pastoral mission of the Church,²² and these are identified by the diocese and the parishes. Usually, deacons are not involved in the leadership of the Christian community, but rather are called to use their influence for the pastoral and missionary conversion of the parish.²³ They strive to make the parish more “diakonal”, that is, more centered on love and the parish obligation to the poor.

The deacon’s role is not limited to social ministry. Within his specific ministry, he should also be an apostle concerned that the faith be transmitted and communicated to those who do not know or follow Christ. Evangelization is a service, a “diakonia”, explains Pope John Paul II, and the first service the Church can render humanity.²⁴

²² These ministries include work for social justice and solidarity.

²⁴ Cf. Pope Francis, *EVANGELII GAUDIUM (The Joy of the Gospel)* § 25.

²⁵ John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio (The Mission of the Redeemer)* §2.

APPENDIX 7: GLOSSARY

Growth: In this document when we speak of growing a parish, we are talking about integral growth: spiritual growth, involvement in the parish mission, collaboration between priests and laity, and finally growth in numbers. Integral growth involves the development of the different parish ministries in harmony:

- Evangelization and the ministry of healing,
- Liturgy, Sunday celebrations, adoration, and other forms of prayer and praise,
- Hospitality and fellowship (unity),
- Faith formation and spiritual development (catechesis of adults, youth, and children), and
- Charity and justice.

Growth happens first of all through God's grace (prayer), then through evangelization and the welcoming of newcomers, the quality of celebrations and homilies, the quality of spiritual growth programs, and the impact of the Church in the world through the Church's unity and good works, all of this carefully organized through planning.

Evangelization: Evangelization is the Church's primary mission. This does not necessarily mean going door-to-door, but rather daring to witness in word and deed in order to make Christ known and loved. For a parishioner, evangelization may simply mean reaching out in love to make new friends, rendering them service, praying for them, and, at the appropriate time, inviting them to church or to a small faith-sharing group.

Mission: Briefly stated, the Church's mission is to love God, to love our neighbour, and to make disciples.

Catechumen: A catechumen is an adult who requests baptism and receives formation to prepare for it. This initiation lasts several months. It usually ends at the Easter Vigil when the catechumen receives the three sacraments of Christian initiation: baptism, confirmation, and Eucharist.

Receptive people: Receptive people are those most receptive to the Gospel. They are those on whom we have a certain influence, such as family and friends. Receptive people can also include those who have just moved to a new country or area, those who visit a church for the second time, those seeking to free themselves from an addiction (e.g., alcohol, drugs, gambling), and new parents. Receptive people can be those going through the following trials: a) divorce, b) job loss, c) financial problems, d) marital or family difficulties, e) loneliness, f) resentment, g) guilt, or h) mourning.

The homogeneity or homogeneous unit principle: This principle leads to proclaiming the Gospel to homogeneous groups; that is, to persons connected by a specific factor: geographical, ethnic, linguistic, social, educational, vocational, or economic, or a combination of several of these and other factors.

RCIA: The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults involves sessions for adults seeking to discover the Christian faith. Its principal goal is to provide an experience of communion and intimacy with Jesus Christ and to guide people in their journey towards receiving the sacraments of Christian initiation.

Vision of a missionary parish for the Archdiocese of Saint Boniface:

A Christian community that ...

- cares for those who are not in the Church;
- organizes itself and trains its members to reach out to them and welcome them;
- makes their Church experience positive and memorable;
- leads them toward spiritual maturity;
- discerns their gifts;
- involves them in the Church's mission and, finally;
- trains them to become leaders in the Church and in the world.