

Our Pastoral Strategy

Pastor's Message

So often when I meet former parishioners and they ask which parish I'm at, and I say Annunciation, they usually say something about it being an active parish. I always say that it is a wonderful parish with many good things happening.

We are truly blessed!

However, we can also state the obvious that growing an engaged parish in these times is a challenge. The Tsunami of Secularism is upon us, and in order to grow as a parish every parishioner must take on the exhortation of Pope Francis to become a 'Missionary Disciple'.

This is our baptismal identity!

As missionary disciples we do well to practise Stewardship as a way of life giving thanks to God for his gifts, and sharing them generously. In our desire to share generously of our Time, Talent and Treasure our giving back to God and to others needs to be planned, intentional and proportionate.

The Parish Pastoral and Stewardship Councils have attempted to do this by engaging in a Pastoral Strategic Planning Process. This document — Our Pastoral Strategy — is the first fruit of that process, one which we hope will guide and focus all our efforts on our continuing goal of becoming an engaged parish.

This Pastoral Strategy is but the beginning. We invite you as Disciples into this Process.

In Christ,

Father Yves Marchildon,

Pastor, Annunciation of the Lord Parish

April 27, 2014

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Introduction

A Changing World

In a 2013 report on Canada's Changing Religious Landscape¹, Pew Research points out that

"The percentage of Canadians who identify as Catholic has dropped from 47% to 39% over the last four decades, while the share that identifies as Protestant has fallen even more steeply, from 41% to 27%. In contrast in the United States, the Catholic share of the population has held fairly steady in recent decades at around 25% while the Protestant share has been declining from more than two-thirds in the 1960s to about 50% today.

"Concurrently, the number of Canadians who belong to other religions – including Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism, Buddhism, Judaism and Eastern Orthodox Christianity – is growing and now account for 11% of Canadians as of 2011, up from 4% in 1981.

"In addition, the number of Canadians who do not identify with any religion has been rising rapidly in recent decades, going from 4% in 1971 to 24% in 2011. The religiously unaffiliated Canadians — also referred to as 'independent Christianity'² — increased by 8% in the 10 year period of 2001 to 2011."

Getting closer to home, the member erosion noted above is taking a severe toll: nearly 50% of Ottawa parishes are not able to support themselves; reports are that some 150 churches are available for sale in the Archdiocese of Montreal.

How Are We Doing?

While the picture in our bigger world is not particularly good, at Annunciation we can take pride as a vibrant, joyful, and economically stable parish — one of the best in the Diocese by all accounts.

¹ [PewResearch Religious & Public Life Project](#)

² [Catherine of Siena Institute](#)

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Achievements mentioned frequently touch on the fact that we have a Cursillista alumni of around 300, 60 plus active Ministries, a robust fellowship program, and a health financial position. Pretty good indeed.

The Annunciation catchment area of Beacon Hill plus our reputation as a 'destination parish' gives us a certain sense of comfort. Beacon Hill, while essentially a built-up community, continues to enjoy an influx of younger families attracted by the availability of quality schools for growing children. No doubt this is a stimulus to our Parish vibrancy and can be a future source of member stability.

Digging a little deeper however, quickly uncovers threatening signs: we have a decidedly ageing population; families are smaller and there are fewer young people in the pews; marriages are down significantly as are sacramental preparation candidates; our volunteers are getting older and are asking for help and relief and it's getting more difficult to recruit replacements. That's the stark reality.

Why We Need a New Pastoral Strategy

Against the above backdrop, the Parish Pastoral and the Stewardship Councils felt that a careful assessment of Annunciation of the Lord Parish was necessary. Why? While, the situation current may be quite good, it's really not excellent. Currently, we do not have the means to: receive visitors and the general public as Archbishop Pendergast has requested, "in the manner Jesus would receive them"; to provide the necessary training, support and planned renewal of our volunteers; to effectively communicate the spiritual and civic value of a dynamic Catholic faith to an increasing competitive world; and, to reach out as missionary disciples to the dechurched and unchurched in our community. Reviewing this draft Pastoral Strategy quickly provides a complete picture of the the task ahead of us.

Our Draft Pastoral Strategy

Preparing this draft strategy began as a preliminary discussion in the fall of 2013. It soon became apparent that a broad consideration of the parishes situation required more research and an intentional consideration of our future direction by the Parish Pastoral and Stewardship Councils. A wide range of other stakeholders have also provided input to the deliberations.

Once background research was prepared and shared, a Strategy Retreat of over 20 parishioners was held on March 22nd. The Retreat proposed about 15 strategic initiatives to address the critical

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needs of the Parish. Subsequent analysis and consolidation reduced that to the Strategic Initiatives proposed in this report.