



Mission-oriented Parishes

Diocese of London: Being a mission-oriented Church that forms disciples of Jesus

Diocese of London

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I dream of a “missionary option”, that is, a missionary impulse capable of transforming everything, so that the Church’s customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, language and structures can be suitably channeled for the evangelization of today’s world rather than for her self-preservation. The renewal of structures demanded by pastoral conversion can only be understood in this light: as part of an effort to make them more mission-oriented, to make ordinary pastoral activity on every level more inclusive and open, to inspire in pastoral workers a constant desire to go forth and in this way to elicit a positive response from all those whom Jesus summons to friendship with himself. As John Paul II once said to the Bishops of Oceania: “All renewal in the Church must have mission as its goal if it is not to fall prey to a kind of ecclesial introversion”. (*Evangelii Gaudium* 27)

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Introduction

During a time of prayer, renewal, research and consultation, the *Task Force on the Future of Pastoral Care in the Faith Communities of the Diocese of London* discerned that in order to become mission-oriented parishes a new parish model was needed. In the end, the Family of Parishes model was chosen to help us reach this goal. This model is meant to create the stability needed that will allow our parishes to be service-focused, mission-oriented and form disciples of Jesus.

**Service-focused
Mission-oriented
Forming Disciples of Jesus**

As we transition to Families of Parishes, we cannot lose sight of our mission. To stay focused we need to move from maintenance to mission; from programs to people; from avoidance to accountability. We need to be willing to encounter and accompaniment where we listen to others, we serve them, and we invite them to having a personal relationship with Jesus.

This does not mean that we forfeit all programs. Instead we will focus on the needs of the people we are all called to serve – the people living within the geographical boundaries of our Family of Parishes. We will go out and meet, listen to them and accompany them. Then based on their needs and our mission we will design programs.

Pastoral ministry in a missionary key seeks to abandon the complacent attitude that says: “We have always done it this way”. I invite everyone to be bold and creative in this task of rethinking the goals, structures, style and methods of evangelization in their respective communities. A proposal of goals without an adequate communal search for the means of achieving them will inevitably prove illusory.

(Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*. 33)

This handbook is meant to assist pastoral teams as we transition to Families of Parishes. Each section is written as a stand-alone handout, but

Family of Parishes: General Principles

All relationships are grounded in general non-negotiable principles. These principles foster growth and communion between the parishes and with the greater community.

1. Promoting the *dignity* of each member and each parish, who have their own gifts, needs and, cultural identity;
2. Encouraging *mutual respect* by honouring each other's specific role and vocation;
3. Fostering *solidarity* between the members. As members in a Family of Parishes, individuals and individual parishes will be called to work together to develop and attend to the pastoral plan of the family in passing on the faith. This relationship works best when we understand that we need each other;
4. Promoting the practice of *subsidiarity* where every group/ body have the freedom and the means to do what it can best do for itself without its activity being taken over by a higher body or level of the governing body. In other words, there will be times when the individual parish may need to have a committee (e.g., financial committee) that oversees something particular to its own parish needs;
5. Furthering opportunities for *collaboration* and *healthy communication* between the parishes and the work of the parish team members should direct all our work;
6. Working for the *common good*, dedicating ourselves to the mission (our *raison d'être*) of the Church should be the foundation of all we do. Being mission-orientated ensures all decisions, how we do things, and what we do is grounded and oriented towards our Mission;
7. Caring for all, especially for those who are most in need.

Take time, quality time. This means being ready to listen patiently and attentively to everything the other person wants to say. It requires the self-discipline of not speaking until the time is right. Instead of offering an opinion or advice, we need to be sure that we have heard everything the other person has to say. This means cultivating an interior silence that makes it possible to listen to the other person without mental or emotional distractions. Do not be rushed, put aside all of your own needs and worries, and make space.

Pope Francis *Amoris Laetitia*, *The Joy of Love*, #137

Within every family, within every community, there is, at the same time, unity and diversity. St. Paul, in his letters to the faith community in Corinth, expands on the necessity and origin of this unity and diversity:

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to

another prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses (1 Cor 12:4-11).

This is also true for our pastoral teams and staff, for our *Family of Parishes* and for our Diocese. We too need to understand and respect the need for diversity and unity – to understand how to hold this paradox of unity and diversity in balance. Respecting this unity and diversity will be necessary as we work together in forming *Families of Parishes* and as we work as a Diocese in our mission of evangelization and catechesis. To do so, it would be helpful that we all be guided by the axiom often used by Saint John XXIII:

In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, freedom; and, in all things charity.

Mission

Simply put, the mission of the Church is the Mission of Jesus Christ. Parishes are called to be “missionary” — not to foreign countries — but first of all to those immediately around them. This is the new evangelization, initiated by Blessed Paul VI, spoken to us so often by St. John Paul II, Pope Benedict XVI, and most recently, Pope Francis. This mission of evangelization, of proclaiming and living the gospel message, belongs to every baptized member of the Church: Evangelizing is in fact, the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity. She exists in order to evangelize” (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 14). In all our words and deeds we are, each of us, called to proclaim the Good News.

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- To proclaim the Good News
 - To Celebrate God’s saving presence among us,
 - To serve others with justice and charity
 - To steward the resources which you have entrusted to our care
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What is a “missionary parish”?

To begin with, a missionary parish reaches out to non-Christians by welcoming them and sharing the Good News with them. It also is a mission to other Catholics who no longer actively practice their faith, as well as to other Christians. A missionary parish is a welcoming environment for any and all who come to it, regardless of race, ethnic origin, social status or personal situation.

A missionary parish is also one that educates and forms its members in the faith so that they can live their discipleship completely. This includes preparing adults and children to celebrate the sacraments fully and fruitfully; training people for leadership roles in the community; and forming parishioners to recognize and undertake works of service and justice in the town or city or region where the parish is located.

Lastly, a missionary parish continues to spiritually strengthen parishioners to live their faith boldly and to share it through witness and outreach to others. A parish marked by a missionary spirit is one in which its presence in society is made visible and lasting through involvement in social projects, particularly those that serve our brothers and sisters who are poor and marginalized, and promote everyone’s right to life and the blessings due to every human person. A parish that is “missionary-oriented” is one where witness of word is matched by witness of life.

This missionary focus is already to be found in many ways and in many instances in our parishes. It must, however, increase and become the main characteristic of life in all our parishes if they are to be what they are really meant to be — communities engaged in the mission given to the Church by Jesus himself, to make it possible for others to experience life in the Kingdom of God in our time and in this place.

The Church's mission must be at the core of what we do. Our mission calls us to:

- Go out and preach the Good News and to baptize (Mt 28:19-20)
- Serve those in need (Mt 25:31-45)
- Work for the liberation of all people especially those most in need (Lk 4)
- Give a reason for our hope (1 Pt 3:16).

We all need to become comfortable talking about our faith. We also need to be in the habit of living our faith. The commandment to go out and make disciples (cf. Mt 28:19-20) is a commandment to go out and live the whole Gospel.

Every committee and organization is called first and foremost to live the mission of the Church. Does the mission of the Family of Parishes echo the mission of the Diocese, of the Catholic Church? Does every committee and organization (e.g., Catholic Women's League, Knights of Columbus) in your Family of Parishes know the mission of the Family of Parishes? Do your Parish Pastoral Council and Finance Committee members know the Pastoral Plan of the Family of Parishes? Do our decisions, words and actions indicate an understanding of our mission?

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- **The mission of Christ informs and forms the mission of the Church**
 - **The mission of Church informs and forms the mission of each Diocese**
 - **The mission of each Diocese informs and forms the mission of each Parish**
 - **The mission of each Parish directs the work of each member of the Pastoral Team and informs and forms the mission and work of every committee, council, group and program within the Parish.**
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A mission-oriented Parish:

- Reaches out to non-Christians and other Christians by welcoming them and sharing the Good News with them
- Reaches out to non-practicing Catholics
- Offers a welcoming and friendly environment for any and all who come to it, regardless of race, ethnic origin, social status or personal situation
- Educates and forms its members in the faith so that they can live their discipleship completely by
 - preparing adults and children to celebrate the sacraments fully and fruitfully;
 - training people for leadership roles in the community; and
 - forming parishioners to recognize and undertake works of service and justice in the town or city or region where the parish is located.
- Continues to spiritually strengthen parishioners to live their faith boldly and to share it through witness and outreach to others
- Makes its presence in society visible and lasting through involvement in social projects, particularly those that serve our brothers and sisters who are poor and marginalized, and promote everyone's right to life and the blessings due to every human person.

Intentional Disciples

What is an Intentional Disciple? What is it that we are seeking for ourselves as well as for our parishioners?

Simply put, an intentional disciple is a person who seeks to grow in relationship with Jesus who leads us into deeper union with God. To be an intentional disciple is to decide to be personally and wholly committed to live a life true to the way of Jesus. The intentional disciple listens and learns from the Master, Jesus, and takes that additional step to put old ways behind and follow the way of Jesus.

We see this intentional discipleship in the first disciples. Like Peter and his brother, Andrew, intentional disciples set aside their nets and follow Jesus. Like Matthew, they set aside their professions to follow Jesus. Like Thomas and Paul, they set aside the habits that kept them from recognizing Jesus to lovingly follow Jesus and proclaim the Good News. Like Peter, they declare their love for Jesus.

This is not just the story of the early disciples; this is the story of the saints and committed followers of Jesus through the ages. We are surrounded by a cloud of witnesses who have chosen to be intentional disciples.

This is also our story that begins at baptism; our story that continues with God's grace and is fortified in our sacramental life; our story that took on new meaning at our Confirmation when we personally chose to say "yes" to Jesus; affirming the "yes" our parents and godparents said at our Baptism. Having experienced the outpouring of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, we desire to set aside our will in order to respond fully to God's call in our life. This is what an intentional disciple does.

Forming Intentional Disciples within the Parish Community:

Most of the baptized who occupy the pews for the Eucharistic celebration are not aware of their call to discipleship; of the need to grow in relationship with Jesus and to follow Him. This is a teaching which must be re-introduced to the faithful ... perhaps for the first time. At the parish level, this begins by inviting your parishioners to a personal encounter with Jesus; an encounter where they can be assured that Jesus, and the Church, will accept them wherever they are in their personal and faith lives.

The life of the Catholic Christian desiring to become an intentional disciple, goes beyond partaking in the Eucharist and acts of personal piety. The intentional disciple seeks to actively take part in the missionary role of the Church; to invite others to know Jesus and to follow his way.

I invite all Christians, everywhere, at this very moment, to a renewed personal encounter with Jesus Christ, or at least an openness to letting him encounter them; I ask all of you to do this unfailingly each day. No one should think that this invitation is not meant for him or her, since “no one is excluded from the joy brought by the Lord”. Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 3

What does this activity in the missionary role of the Church look like? It is a life that is lived to the fullest, responding to the *call to holiness*; a life of interior joy which exudes from the individual, attracting others to desire the same. It is not a life of proselytizing or judging, but one which, like Jesus, accepts those they encounter in their day-to-day life with generosity, love, and mercy.

The intentional disciple realizes that this gift of an encounter with Jesus is not solely for those who are baptized or already living a life given to Our Lord. It is a gift for all who are seeking ... some may not know for what it is they are seeking but will come to recognize it once they have realized it in another.

This life of the intentional disciple must be reflected in the lives of our church leaders – ordained and lay.

In the end people are looking at us to be with them; they are looking at us hoping to see in the totality of our lives and ministry, a journey of growth in holiness, the reflection of Jesus Christ that emerges from us as they grasp the overall meaning of who we are (cf. *Gaudete et exsultant*, 22).

When they look at us, it is to be hoped that they will see us as *intentional disciples* who are not only committed to the mission of the Church but whose whole life *is mission*; that, in the words of Pope Francis, the entirety of our life is mission and in return, we can help them understand that they are mission; that life does not have a mission, it is a mission.

Evangelization

Evangelization originates from the Greek term meaning “good news.” Through the work of evangelization, those who hear the good news are invited to respond with a “yes” to Jesus’ gift of salvation and mercy, and in turn to be missionary disciples who will continue to spread the good news and invite others into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. (cf. Matt 28:18-20)

Saint Pope Paul VI stated that: *For the Church, evangelizing means bringing the Good News into all the strata of humanity, and through its influence transforming humanity from within and making it new....* Its purpose is to lead the listener to experience an interior change. *The best way of stating it would be to say that the Church evangelizes when she seeks to convert, [cf. Rom 1:16; 1 Cor 1:18, 2:4] solely through the divine power of the message she proclaims, both the personal and collective consciences of people, the activities in which they engage, and the lives and concrete milieu which are theirs.* (Evangelii Nuntiandi, 18)

He goes on to say that evangelization must always be directly connected to the Lord Jesus Christ. *There is no true evangelization if the name, the teaching, the life, the promises, the Kingdom, and the mystery of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God, are not proclaimed.* (Evangelii Nuntiandi, 22)

Evangelization is the mission of the Church. Mission refers to the nature of the Church while Evangelization, bringing the Good News, refers to what the Church does to live out her identity.

To whom is the work of evangelization aimed? It is aimed toward those who do not yet know God; toward those who have withdrawn from the life of the Church and/or who have turned their backs on Jesus; and toward all the faithful. The work of evangelization does not end with full communion in the Church but begins at that point.

Who, therefore, is responsible for this work of evangelization? Perhaps one of the greatest misconceptions in the Catholic Church is the response to this question, who then is responsible for this work. Evangelization belongs to the very nature of the Church, the very reason for the Church’s existence in history and in cultures is to spread the Good News of Jesus Christ. We are called to lead others and self to a renewed encounter with Jesus; Jesus waits for us, ready for us. With this encounter is the invitation to open ourselves to the presence of Christ, to respond to Jesus within our midst. It is not solely the work of the ordained, the religious, or specialists; the work of evangelization is that of every baptized Christian. Regardless of where God has called us to in our day-to-day situations, we are all called to be bearers of the Good News particularly through our actions and encounters with others.

We are tempted to respond by saying, “who me, I could never do that, I am not prepared or worthy or....” Who is worthy of this call? None of us! We are aware of our unworthiness and if we are not, there are usually a few people who are ready to point out our unworthiness.

Throughout scripture, the men and women who are called to spread God's word claim to be unworthy to speak on behalf of God. Who is worthy? None of us, save for the grace of God, and with God, all things are possible.

"The footsteps of those who bring the good news is a welcome sound" *Romans 10:15*

Pope Francis, using the image of a relay race, talks about handing on the 'baton' of faith. But one has to have the baton (the Faith) to pass it on! In his writings he offers us a model of the new method of evangelization – asking us to get out, get bruised, hurt and dirty:

1. Encounter those on the road, those who are searching, encounter them with joy;
2. Accompany them – build relationships of trust, walk with them, shed gospel light on their life questions, break bread with them... lead them to the Eucharist...bring Jesus the risen Lord to them; and,
3. Discern with them.

Evangelization loses much of its force and effectiveness if it does not take into consideration the actual people to whom it is addressed, if it does not use their language, their signs and symbols, if it does not answer the questions they ask, and if it does not have an impact on their concrete life. But on the other hand, evangelization risks losing its power and disappearing altogether if one empties or adulterates its content under the pretext of translating it.

Saint Pope Paul VI. *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 63

This all starts with a love of Jesus! To pass on the faith we need to love our faith. At the same time, we need to understand that we too need ongoing evangelization.

An evangelizing community gets involved by word and deed in people's daily lives; it bridges distances, it is willing to abase itself if necessary, and it embraces human life, touching the suffering flesh of Christ in others. Evangelizers thus take on the "smell of the sheep" and the sheep are willing to hear their voice.

***Evangelii Gaudium*, 24**

Hopes and Goals of the New Evangelization:

1. Have a personal encounter with Jesus;
2. Drop your nets... change ... become the best version of yourself by choosing to follow Jesus; and,
3. Go out... transform the world, follow Jesus

"[E]veryone should keep in mind that the vital core of the new evangelization must be a clear and unequivocal proclamation of the person of Jesus Christ, that is, the preaching of his name, his teaching, his life, his promises and the Kingdom which he has gained for us by his Paschal Mystery"

Saint John Paul. *Ecclesia in America*, #66

Collaborative Ministry

Collaborative Ministry, a term often heard today but perhaps not fully understood, is truly a gift to our Church; but what does it mean? Br. Loughlan Sofield, ST, and Sr. Carroll Juliano, SHCJ, note that “Collaboration is defined as ‘the identification, release, and union of all the *gifts* in *ministry* for the sake of *mission*.”¹

The Second Vatican Council re-presented to the Church the *role of the laity* in the missionary activity which the Church is called to fulfill. The Church evolved and grew as a result of the collaborative ministry exercised between the first apostles – those first called to priestly ministry, and those to whom they ministered – the laity. The followers of Jesus experienced the zeal to ensure that his message would not fade away but would be handed on from one generation to the next. How does this look today?

For collaborative ministry to work effectively, Father Michael Sweeney, O.P., notes that equality among the members is required and goes on to say that three fundamentals are essential. They are: equal responsibility for the end result, comparable dignity, and a recognition of the differences in competence / office and gifts / talents of each of those in ministry.²

In the Church there is diversity of ministry but unity of mission. To the apostles and their successors Christ has entrusted the office of teaching, sanctifying, and governing in his name and by his power. But the laity are made to share in the priestly, prophetic, and kingly office of Christ; they have therefore, in the Church and in the world, their own assignment in the mission of the whole People of God. ... their apostolate is exercised when they work at the evangelization and sanctification of all people. (*Decree on the Role of the Laity*, (2)

First Corinthians, 12: 4-11, speaks to us of the various gifts of the Holy Spirit; talents and strengths entrusted to all while recognizing that each of us are unique beings with our own share of talents. In order for the Church, the body of Christ, to effectively fulfill its missionary call, the talents and strengths of all must be utilized. A parish cannot evolve into a vibrant community of faith without each member fulfilling their role.

¹ Loughlan Sofield and Carroll Juliano, *Collaboration: Uniting Our Gifts in Ministry*, (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 2000), 17.

² Michael Sweeney, *Lay Collaboration in the Mission of the Church*, <https://www.dspt.edu/lay-collaboration-in-the-mission-of-the-church> (accessed October 2017).

Appreciating the Gifts of Each Parish, the Parishioners and the Community

Making decisions that are best for the community is rooted in knowing the needs and interests, concerns and hopes of all. This takes time and begins with encountering, accompanying, listening and discerning in light of faith and reason.

Jesus went out and encountered people. In his encounters we can discern a pattern.

- He reaches out to all, especially those in need
- Always concerned for the person
- Pays little attention to the cause of the illness or tragic situation
- Never lost sight of his mission and so these encounters focused on *healing, praying and teaching*.

When we encounter others, we, too, are invited to reach out to others. We do this by respecting the dignity of each person and, through praying, healing and teaching. This is how we spread the Good News and call each person to full discipleship. This is a pattern that is based on the life of Jesus. This is a pattern that we can bring to all parish relationships.

- A. The Parish Staff
- B. The Parish Committees
- C. The Parishioners who attend Sunday Mass
- D. The Parishioners who do not attend Sunday Mass
- E. Care Facilities
- F. Schools
- G. The Greater Community

Appreciative Inquiry

Appreciative inquiry is a process of learning and decision making that encourages a spirit of gratitude as we recognize the assets, capabilities, resources and strengths of a person and/or community. This inquiry, when done in a spirit of seeking what is good, right and beautiful, provides us with a foundation upon which all can grow.

Key to making this inquiry work is the desire to listen to the other person – to lead with our ears so that we may not only listen to what they are saying but how they are saying it; and, to carefully watch what is being communicated through body language.

A complete appreciative inquiry allows us to *discover* what is presently happening, to *dream* of what more we can do (based on our knowledge, skills and attitudes), *design* next steps and move towards our *destiny* of being mission-oriented parishes.

DISCOVERY

- What do you love most about your job/ministry? What have been some of your greatest joys in this work?
- What are some of the most significant trends, events & developments in Ministry that will shape our future?
- What stands out for you as a high point in your own professional development over the recent past? What was it about this event or activity that made it a positive experience?

DREAM

Imagine a time in the future when people look to us as an exceptional example of a diocese with thriving ministry and/or support models in our Families of Parishes.

- What would be the fruits of our ministries (or support) that would make others look to us as an example?
- What would be the gifts to your own parish (or FoP) community?
- What are you most proud of having helped your parish community accomplish?

DESIGN

- What are the current trends that give you hope as we move forward?
- What are the events, activities or initiatives that we can offer or support that are likely to encourage greater ministry in our parish?

DESTINY

- What are the first steps we can take to begin supporting effective Ministry in parishes (FoP)?
- With what initiatives that you would be most interested in participating in or assisting?

Communications Priorities, Tips and Best Practices

Good communication happens on many levels and is important to the health of each member of the Family of Parishes and to our relationships with others. There is need for clear communication between the members of the parish staff, with members of the diocese, with parishioners, and with our partners. When we fail to communicate our plans and our intentions, others will create the narrative that makes sense to them.

Conversations:

For conversations to take us into a more life-giving place and discover new ways to move into a future full of hope, we need to practice several new behaviours. Here are some principles that are important to hold onto as we begin new conversations:

- We acknowledge one another as equals
- We try to stay curious about each other
- We recognize that we need each other's help to become better listeners
- We slow down so that we have time to think and reflect
- We remember that conversation is the natural way humans think together
- We expect it to be messy at times (when this happens we go back to the beginning... we acknowledge one another as equals!)

Entering all discussions with a sense of wonder, hoping to learn new things, and listening to the other person is a key part of all healthy relationships. We do our best communication when we lead with our ears.

Communicating our intentions:

We tend to judge ourselves based on our intentions and to judge others based on the impact of their words and actions. They will be evaluating and judging us based on the impact; more specifically, they will judge us based on the decision which impacted them personally. To avoid miscommunication, we will need to communicate our intentions. It is best that our intentions best reflect our mission, the common good and a preferential love for those most in need.

Tips and Best Practices:

- Communications is the use of text and images to connect with people. A good communicator emulates the example of Jesus with human-to-human connection grounded in love and service.
- In every interaction, you are a *de facto* representative the Church. A rule of thumb: would I be comfortable saying this at the pulpit on Sunday morning?
- In this age of 24/7 connectedness, there is an expectation of prompt service. If you can't respond immediately, acknowledge the enquiry and give an ETA for your response.
- Communication is meaningless without effective delivery.

- Research indicates that personal touches make an email or letter much more engaging, as long as they are short and sincere. Simply writing, “Hi Joan, thanks for your call this morning” may create a personal connection.
- Font types should be clear and at least 11-pt. size
- Avoid jargon, idioms, and other potentially unclear language. Avoid metaphors, which are pure poison.
- Write at a sixth-grade level.
- Written communication can be received in a way that is very different from the original intent. Avoid sarcasm, understatement, hyperbole, and other figures of speech that may not come across in writing.
- Adopt the use of People First language, for example referring to a “person who works seasonally on a Canadian farm” rather than reducing them simply to “a migrant worker.”
- If you run a social media account: “content is king.” There should be a steady supply of meaningful, reader-centred content. It should not be used as free self-advertising (institution-centred).
 - Content must be short and easily digested
 - Whenever possible, use images along with your text. Photos and videos enjoy high levels of engagement.
 - Share curated content (less time-consuming) from various sources
 - Offer original content (more time-consuming, may not have good return on investment)
 - Use “sponsored” or “boosted” posts for low-cost, targeted advertisement
 - “like” and comment on your own posts to build momentum, and engage with people who like/comment on your post. Not only does this foster genuine two-way communication, it triggers social media algorithms.
 - Always invite engaged readers to like your page. Offering a variety of content can attract a wider audience and therefore more people to invite.
- Don’t reinvent the wheel - work with what you’ve already created, and put what you’ve already created to work in every possible communications channel. This is to say, there are many communications tools in the proverbial tool-box, and all of the appropriate ones should be used.

The age of one single-channel communication is long gone (example, newspaper ads). The best hope for penetration is to use all the channels possible (email, social media, bulletins, newspaper, radio)

Staff and the Pastoral Team

The Pastoral Team includes the priests, deacons and lay ecclesial ministers assigned to the Family of Parishes. Under the direction of the pastor, members of the pastoral team are to divide their time and ministry between the parishes in the Family. There may be cases where the work of a member of the team will be primarily focussed in one parish but that member would still be part of the one pastoral team.

Based on the needs of the Parish, which is discerned by the pastor in consultation with the pastoral team, members of the Parish Pastoral Council and the Financial Council, the composition of the Pastoral Team could include: pastor, parochial vicar(s), deacon(s), pastoral minister and/or pastoral assistant, coordinator of youth ministry and the parish administrative staff.

Working with the Diocese of London Human Resources team, pastors should aim to select and hire members for the Pastoral Team that who demonstrate: professional and pastoral competencies, the decision to live as a disciple of Jesus, the ability to work collaboratively, the willingness to participate in on-going formation, and a commitment to being part of a mission-oriented parish who form disciples of Jesus. In the end, it is important to put the right person in the right job.

When planning to hire, it would be good to start by determining the needs of the Family of Parishes. Once we know the needs, then we can work with the Diocese of London Human Resources office to prepare a job description and posting. The applicant's curriculum vitae, the interview process and contacting the individual's references, will help to discern the competencies of the candidate. The initial and ongoing formation, reinforced by support, supervision, evaluation, and appreciation, is necessary.

“...create spaces where pastoral workers can be helped and healed, ‘places where faith itself in the crucified and risen Jesus is renewed, where the most profound questions and daily concerns are shared, where deeper discernment about our experiences and life itself is undertaken in the light of the Gospel, for the purpose of directing individual and social decisions towards the good and beautiful’(Catholic Action, Message of the XIV National Assembly to the Church and Country, 8 May 2011). At the same time, I would like to call attention to certain particular temptations which affect pastoral workers” (Evangelii Gaudium, 77).

Pope Francis, in *Evangelii Gaudium*, examined the particular temptations which affect pastoral workers and can stifle **our work** (cf. #78-86). Among these temptations he includes: individualism, a loss of sense of one's vocational identity, being unable to “...identify with their mission of evangelization” (#79), relativism and acting as God does not exist, the desire for power and attachment to financial security (#80), acedia, pessimism and a lack of hope and defeatism.

Parish Pastoral Council

The [Diocese of London Norms for Parish Pastoral Council](#) (revised March 2014), in discussing Multi-Parish Councils, advises that the parishes “...are to act as one faith community, form a single Council and develop a shared response to the diocesan pastoral plan” (3). It has been decided that there would be one parish pastoral council for the Family of Parishes with a minimum of one representative from each parish. In establishing the parish pastoral council, it is important that the pastor refer to and follow the diocesan norms mentioned above.

Particular attention should be given to Part C of the norms, the Role Description. The principal role of the Council is pastoral planning (cf. Appendix I: Pastoral Plan). Pastoral planning is meant to ensure that the mission and vision of the diocese and parish guide the community into the future. Pastoral planning involves:

- developing a working vision for the parish for the following 3 to 5 years;
- discerning the will of God for this parish community by identifying, assessing and prioritizing pastoral needs;
- setting goals and developing objectives in order to meet those needs; and,
- recommending courses of action to the pastor or pastoral team members. Council members may also be asked to evaluate ministry and programming in the parish.

In short, the parish pastoral council is formed to ensure that the mission of the parish and the mission (pastoral plan) of the diocese are addressed. It is also imperative that the parish pastoral council be seen as acting as a source of unity for the Family of Parishes. To do so, it will be important to focus on the mission of the Church and work towards the common good of the Family.

Finances and Finance Council/Committee

There will be times when a parish within the family may be solely responsible for an expense. At other times expenses will be shared. When this happens, the members of the Family of Parishes Finance Committee will need to work cooperatively as they discern the allocation of expenses. You may need to discern how the expenses will be shared but it is recommended that there be some consideration given to the revenue history (e.g. past 3-5 years) of the individual parishes. In this work, it will be important to define shared expenses and create an allocation model. They are reminded that accountability and transparency are key points found in Goal 6 of our Diocesan Pastoral Plan. Therefore, such allocation should be clearly defined and communicated. The finance committee should review the allocation decisions on an annual basis.

Working as a Family of Parishes you may be able to share on expenses as you have greater buying power. You may be able to save money when renewing new contracts for service being provided to your parishes (e.g., photocopier, snow removal).

Your bookkeepers can contact the accounting department at the diocesan offices if support is needed.

There would be one finance council for the Family of Parishes with a minimum of one representative from each parish. While each parish will still be responsible for its own financial assets and liabilities, our hope is that the Family can discern what is best for the whole Family of Parishes and take care of its members.

The finance council would be overseeing and monitoring the financial results of parishes in the Family. It is a consultative body that provides counsel to the pastor of the Family.

Business Manager will be an ex officio non-voting member. She/he will have an integral role in the meetings and will be responsible for presenting and providing information and completing tasks between meetings. The Business Manager reports directly to the pastor.

Terms of reference for the finance council can be found at www.dol.ca ; <https://dol.ca/documents/2018/11/Sample%20Finance%20Committee%20Terms%20of%20Reference-1.pdf>

Role

<https://dol.ca/documents/2018/11/Role%20of%20Parish%20Finance%20Committee%20Updated%20April%202011-1.pdf>

Offertory Collection:

Parishioners, in our very mobile culture, may choose to attend Mass and make a donation at a different parish other than the one at which they are registered. To honour the intent of the donor, when an

envelope is used, the donation is to be directed to the specific parish. When cash is donated, the parishes should have a process to determine how the cash donations will be divided among the parishes of the Family. Any envelope that is intended for a parish outside of the Family of Parishes should be handed over to the identified parish.

It is good practice to encourage alternative to cash, including pre-authorized debit and cheques.

Where are we going: Managing Change and Transition

The Catholic Church has faced many crossroads as it faces challenges posed by changing societal needs or issues within the Church. Today is one of those times as we face the realities of demographic trends and fewer priests. As we move forward in the Diocese of London, forward we will be guided by the vision of Pope Francis whose aspiration is a Church that is missionary-oriented and leverages the capacity of “the parish ... as a sanctuary where the thirsty come to drink in the midst of their journey, and the centre of a constant missionary outreach” (*Evangelii Gaudium* 28).

As we look across our Diocese it is clear that we have wonderful examples of missionary-oriented activities and outreach, and we have abundant capacities. However, we also recognize that these activities and capacities are not evenly distributed across the Diocese, and we have not established mechanisms or structures that encourage and facilitate sharing leading practices, knowledge, experience, resources, etc. In our view the Family of Parishes model builds on our past and our strengths, and will enable our Diocese to harness our capacity and enable us to efficiently and effectively respond to demographic trends and fewer priests, and to position us to advance mission-oriented parishes as envisioned by Pope Francis.

What does this mean for us? At this point we are clear that the Diocese is committed to advancing the vision of Pope Francis, and, over the next number of years, grouping parishes into ‘Families’. The change to grouping of parishes will, in many ways, happen relatively quickly; however, the transition to mission-oriented parishes supported by the Family of Parishes model, will take time.

The grouping of parishes and the shift to mission-oriented parishes change the status quo and will require strong, consistent, and compassionate leadership. The objective is to maintain momentum while supporting those who are affected by these changes and transitions. It will also necessitate dealing with behaviours that are counterproductive and detrimental to what we are trying to achieve.

How do we provide strong leadership?

Our goal is to ensure that our parish communities are known for mission-oriented work and each of us will be an intentional disciple. We need to proclaim this vision, positively and unceasingly, at every opportunity; until you hear others state it. We need to give witness to this vision.

As leaders it is important that we understand and acknowledge that change of any type can be difficult for people. We are responsible for assisting individuals and groups by implementing change in a systematic and thoughtful manner and facilitating transitions³. A useful way to think about this is reflected in the work of William Bridges who describes change as what happens to people; whereas, transitions are what happens inside people's minds when they are presented with change.

Change and transition happens over three phases: **“Letting go”; a Transitional Period; and, New Beginnings**. We need to help people let go and understand the desired outcome; the first task is to convince people to ‘leave home’. Between ‘letting go’ of old habits and practices and embracing new ways of doing things, is a transitional period. This is a time when leaders will need to be leaders, to manage transition. There are certain things we can do to assist people through the phases. A biblical narrative that helps understand change and transition is the Exodus Story. You will notice in the Exodus Story, the letting go, wandering through the wilderness, and making it to the Promised Land takes time. It is not a matter of simply flipping a switch. The Israelites had to be invited over and over again to let

³ Much of the material is based on the work of William Bridges’ [*Managing Transition: Making the Most of Change*](#).

go. They needed constant direction during their time in the wilderness. They needed to be reminded of the new possibilities in the land of milk and honey.

How do we facilitate transitions?

As people are **letting go**, they will need to know what is going to change, what will be different when the change is complete. We will need to help them comprehend what is over, what is not, and what we are moving towards. To do this, we will need to communicate, always in positive and helpful terms, why change is needed, what we will no longer be doing, and our vision/plan moving forward. If we do not communicate effectively, some will be tempted to create their own narrative. It is important that when we let go of old habits, attitudes and/or practices, we treat the past with respect. People will have different emotional responses; some will want to cling to the old ways.

The **transitional period** is that period between letting go of old ways and moving towards full actualization of the new way. We are in transition. At times temporary 'rules' or 'ways of doing things' need to be adopted until the new way is actualized. People are looking for a leader and at this time our leaders, with the vision in mind, must step forward.

Harold Levinson, in the article, *'Easing the Pain of Personal Loss'*⁴, noted that *loss is a part of organization change. "He suggested that workers experience loss and grief in response to changes, even when they are positive. He equated resistance to change to the process of mourning, promoting a more compassionate and mindful approach to change efforts. Management attention to the pain experienced by workers during change is important for identifying and addressing conscious and unconscious sabotage of organizational change. He described processes of grief and mourning that gave emotional legitimacy to the human defences and reactions of denial, anger, searching for the lost object, disorganization, and reorganization. Management from this point on was encouraged to acknowledge that changes in the workplace are not effectively implemented without processes that acknowledge participants' feelings of attachment to routines and structures and the pain of relinquishing social defences and embracing the uncertainty of the future workplace. Difficulties in mourning or inadequate attention to the emotional dynamics of loss could sabotage an otherwise systematic effort at organizational change."*

A 'transition team' that meets regularly can help monitor the change and facilitate communication. This group, which represents different voices, should have access to the leader. They are not managing the change; they are monitoring it and assisting the leader(s) who, with the vision and mission in mind, will manage the change and address the concerns brought forth. The transition is one of mind, heart and habit. It is sometimes the heart that takes the longest route to the new beginning.

New beginnings involve new understandings, new values and attitudes. At this point, people have moved past what has ended and have a sense of and an engagement in a new direction. People understand their purpose, and how they make a meaningful contribution – they are reoriented and renewed. Our role at this stage is assist people by putting in place mechanisms and processes that help sustain the changes. We also need to acknowledge and celebrate what we have gone through. It is important that we recognize and accept that not everyone will reach this point at the same time and others might slip back.

⁴ The comments on Levinson's are taken *Organizational Immersion and Diagnosis: The Work of Harry Levinson* by Michael A. Diamond. It was published *Organisational & Social Dynamics* 3(1): 1-18 (2003). It can be found at <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/62759740.pdf>

Transition Teams

A Transition Team is to be led by the designated pastor and comprised of:

- the associate(s)
- Lay Ecclesial Ministers from the Family of Parishes
- a Deacon from the Family of Parishes
- one administrative assistant
- two members from each of the Parish Pastoral Councils (PPC) in the Family (chosen by their respective PPCs) - these people would ideally end up forming a temporary PPC for the family for the first year of the new model
- a recording secretary

Responsibilities:

- Meets every couple of weeks during the six-month preparation period
- develop a comprehensive communication plan to keep parishioners of the Family of Parishes (FoP) up to date on the progress of the implementation and to regularly communicate with others in the deanery/diocese
- Select a name for the FoP (see directive)
- Develop a workable Mass time schedule using the criteria (see directive)
- Plan the integration of liturgical ministries and other parish committees, groups or organization when possible (note not all organizations will integrate)
- Develop a Pastoral Plan (for the first six months)
- Draft an outline of possible second six months
- Develop a personnel plan for their family (this might include, but is not limited to planning to hire a Business Manager). You might need to consider writing (re-writing) job descriptions, professional development needs (don't forget the ongoing formation plan that the institute will provide)
- Discern office location(s); accommodation needs (e.g., priest residence)
- develop an inventory of facilities and resources
- Develop a preliminary financial plan

Note, this cannot all happen at once and for some of these some direction may be needed by Diocesan Departments (e.g., Human Resources, Accounting) we are promoting site visits from diocesan staff.

Directive for Care of National Parishes

1. Parishes that serve people in a language other than French or English are referred to as National Parishes. National Parishes will be a part of the Family of Parishes model of the Diocese of London. All parishes, including National Parishes, should be given the opportunity to express their culture; to exclude or excuse National Parishes from the Family of Parishes model would be to the detriment of all the faithful. The gifts of National Parishes are a blessing to the rest of the members of the Family of Parishes and vice versa.
2. Throughout the Family gathering process, respect will be afforded to the unique culture (e.g., national parish, language groups, or devotional groups) that is found in each of the parishes involved. In Families there are many unique members each with unique gifts, needs, hopes, and concerns. The goal of the Family of Parishes model is not to create a “melting pot”, but rather a rich mosaic where each parish is respected and together create a unique picture of the Catholic faith in an area.
3. The goal is to balance unity in diversity. Overemphasizing diversity can be problematic to any cooperation. Pushing unity too much or too quickly can foster entrenchment and resistance. Pastoral leaders need to constantly monitor the mood of the family of parishes to know when to foster cooperation and when to let unique parish cultures express themselves. (cf. Pope Francis. *Evangelii Gaudium*. see: *Unity prevails over conflict*, 226-230)

Differences between persons and communities can sometimes prove uncomfortable, but the Holy Spirit, who is the source of that diversity, can bring forth something good from all things and turn it into an attractive means of evangelization. Diversity must always be reconciled by the help of the Holy Spirit; he alone can raise up diversity, plurality and multiplicity while at the same time bringing about unity. When we, for our part, aspire to diversity, we become self-enclosed, exclusive and divisive; similarly, whenever we attempt to create unity on the basis of our human calculations, we end up imposing a monolithic uniformity. This is not helpful for the Church’s mission.

Evangelii Gaudium, 131

4. “When properly understood, cultural diversity is not a threat to Church unity” (*Evangelii Gaudium*. 117). The temptation toward assimilation and globalization should be avoided, as this does away with local cultures, and people must be met where they are, taking into consideration local culture (e.g., linguistic groups, devotional groups). At the same time, gestures that would be received as a form of tokenism and/or cultural appropriation must be avoided.
5. Throughout the process, and as a Family of Parishes, everyone should work together to respect, protect, and promote the cultural identity of the National Parish. At the same time, national identity, while not limited to a building, includes the building (i.e., the National Church). The identity of the National Parish can be expressed in language, symbol,

celebration, and devotion. The parish building is a part of the cultural identity and should be understood in that way.

6. Entering a “Family of Parishes covenant”: A *Family of Parishes Covenant* is a written document created by the leadership of the Family of Parishes that affirms the uniqueness of each parish in the family while, at the same time, pledging to explore and develop ways to cooperate with one another in ways that are life-giving, just, and helpful to all involved. Pastors, while balancing unity and diversity, are called to be good stewards of the personnel and material gifts with which the Family of Parishes has been blessed.

The history of the Church shows that Christianity does not have simply one cultural expression, but rather, remaining completely true to itself, with unswerving fidelity to the proclamation of the Gospel and the tradition of the Church, it will also reflect the different faces of the cultures and peoples in which it is received and takes root. *Evangelii Gaudium*., 116

Directives: Number of Sunday Masses in Activated Family of Parishes

1. Grounded in our Mission:

- Go out therefore and make disciples... (Mt 28:19). Disciples are called to be people of the Sacraments and it is the Sunday Eucharist that is at the foundation of our faith:

Catechism of the Catholic Church:

2181 - The Sunday Eucharist is the foundation and confirmation of all Christian practice. For this reason the faithful are obliged to participate in the Eucharist on days of obligation, unless excused for a serious reason....

2182 – Participation in the communal celebration of the Sunday Eucharist is a testimony of belonging and of being faithful to Christ and to his Church. The faithful give witness by this to their communion in faith and charity. Together they testify to God's holiness and their hope of salvation. They strengthen one another under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

2177 – The Sunday celebration of the Lord's Day and his Eucharist is at the heart of the Church's life. "Sunday is the day on which the paschal mystery is celebrated in light of the apostolic tradition and is to be observed as the foremost holy day of obligation in the universal Church."

- Sunday Celebration of the Eucharist: Are we offering all people the opportunity to attend Mass? Are we making the celebration accessible to all so that they can fulfill this Sunday commitment?

2. A Preferential Option for those in need:

A. The needs of the people:

- What are the socio-economic concerns?
- Is it possible for people to travel to other parishes?
- Is there public transit? Can people afford public transportation?
- What nationalities are being served? (cf. *Directives on National Parishes*)
- Accessibility: Are all parish buildings barrier free/ accessible? Is paratransit available?

B. Other considerations:

- Proximity of other Parishes
- Location: Is this an urban or rural Family of Parishes
- Weather Conditions: Is weather usually a concern (e.g., road closures due to inclement weather)? How will this affect parishioners and priest?
- Seasonal component: How will Mass times need to change based on seasons?
- Travel time for clergy but also for parishioners
- Parking availability

C. Avoid the temptation of our age, assimilation and globalization which is a form of levelling that does away with local cultures; we must meet the people where they are,

and decisions should take into consideration the local culture (e.g., ethnic linguistic groups, devotional groups) (cf. Rafael Luciani, Pope Francis and the Theology of the People. 2017)

3. Practical matters:

Decisions should be made in a spirit of prayer, consultation, dialogue, and discernment. Including:

- Wide consultation: listening to the voices of those who are often marginalized (cf. point 2 above)
- Future needs of the parish community (e.g., demographics, possible growth, aging population, clergy availability, etc.)
- Major changes may need to be reviewed and there will be need for ongoing consultation
- Pew capacity
- Availability of clergy

It will be important to form and prepare people. How might we help parishioners:

- Move from the “going to Church” to “being Church”?
- Understand why we go to Church: not because of obligation but because of love. What can be done in all our parishes to form intentional disciples?
- Who feel disenfranchised and those who will leave? Do we know our parishioners well enough to recognize that they have left? Who will reach out and listen to them?

Note: what has worked in the past or in other parishes may not work for all

4. Final Considerations

As we work with the parish community they will want to know that:

- Decisions are being made after consultation and are based on good rationale. Decisions reflect our mission.
- We have considered how this will impact parishioners. Even though the rationale is sound, and our intentions are good, changes impact people in different ways. How will they be affected? There may be an emotional response and we will need to accompany people through this important journey.
- Changes are more than just a rearranging of Mass times and availability. How might we promote the changes while addressing their needs? As we announce the changes, for example, we might let people know which choir (e.g., contemporary, folk, Praise and Worship) will be at which Mass. We could let them know which Masses will include children’s church. We must let them know how their experience and participation at the liturgical celebration will be enhanced.

Protocol for Naming the Family of Parishes:

The *Plan for the Implementation of the Families of Parishes* calls for each family to select a name for itself. This name would designate the family as a whole; it would not, quite obviously, replace the canonical titles of the individual parishes or Catholic Communities within the family.

1. The name of the particular Family of Parishes should be selected early in the six-month preparatory period prior to the actual activation of the family.
2. The name cannot replicate the canonical title of any of the parishes in the family (e.g., the St. Peter Family of Parishes). Nor should it be a hyphenated name that groups the names of the parishes in the family (e.g., the St. Peter – Sacred Heart – St. Michael – Immaculate Conception Family of Parishes).
3. It is preferable that the name of the family not have a religious designation but, rather, refer to the geographic region or area where the parishes in the family are situated (e.g., the Chatham Family of Parishes, the Norfolk Family of Parishes, the West London Family of Parishes, the Bluewater Family of Parishes, etc.)
4. If there is a national community within the family, the chosen name needs to be translated into the particular language and appear alongside the name in English on all printed materials where the designation of the particular Family of Parishes appears (e.g., letterhead, signage, newsletters, Sunday Bulletin, etc.)
5. It will be for the Family of Parishes Transition Team to select possible names and to vet these with the parishioners in all the communities in the family. It may be that the Transition Team asks for feedback on a proposed name, or it may choose to have a vote on a name among the parishioners within the family. (It would be important to assure all that the canonical titles of the individual parishes and Catholic Communities will not disappear or be eliminated but maintained; that the new name is only a designation for the family as a whole.)
6. Once the particular name for the Family of Parishes is selected, it is to be forwarded to the bishop by the pastor of the family for his approval.
7. The Family of Parishes will thereafter be listed in the *Diocesan Directory* and on the diocesan website by the family name, with the names of the individual parishes and Catholic Communities listed beneath that name.

By its union with Christ, the People of the New Covenant, far from closing in upon itself, becomes a “sacrament” for humanity, (cf. *Lumen Gentium*, 1) a sign and instrument of the salvation achieved by Christ, the light of the world and the salt of the earth (cf. *Mt* 5:13-16), for the redemption of all (*ibid.*, 9) The Church's mission stands in continuity with the mission of Christ: “As the Father has sent me, even so I send you” (*Jn* 20:21). From the perpetuation of the sacrifice of the Cross and her communion with the body and blood of Christ in the Eucharist, the Church draws the spiritual power needed to carry out her mission. The Eucharist thus appears as both *the source* and *the summit* of all evangelization, since its goal is the communion of mankind with Christ and in him with the Father and the Holy Spirit (cf. *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, 5 and 6).

Saint Pope John Paul II, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* 22

Prayer for the Church's work of Evangelization

**Mary, Virgin and Mother,
you who, moved by the Holy Spirit,
welcomed the word of life
in the depths of your humble faith:
as you gave yourself completely to the Eternal One,
help us to say our own "yes"
to the urgent call, as pressing as ever,
to proclaim the good news of Jesus.**

*Filled with Christ's presence,
you brought joy to John the Baptist,
making him exult in the womb of his mother.
Brimming over with joy,
you sang of the great things done by God.
Standing at the foot of the cross
with unyielding faith,
you received the joyful comfort of the resurrection,
and joined the disciples in awaiting the Spirit
so that the evangelizing Church might be born.*

*Obtain for us now a new ardour born of the resurrection,
that we may bring to all the Gospel of life
which triumphs over death.
Give us a holy courage to seek new paths,
that the gift of unfading beauty
may reach every man and woman.*

**Virgin of listening and contemplation,
Mother of love, Bride of the eternal wedding feast,
pray for the Church, whose pure icon you are,
that she may never be closed in on herself
or lose her passion for establishing God's kingdom.**

**Star of the new evangelization,
help us to bear radiant witness to communion,
service, ardent and generous faith,
justice and love of the poor,
that the joy of the Gospel
may reach to the ends of the earth,
illuminating even the fringes of our world.**

**Mother of the living Gospel,
wellspring of happiness for God's little ones,
pray for us.**

Amen. Alleluia!

(for an abbreviated form, pray the bolded sections)

Intercessory Prayers for Mission Oriented Parishes

One form of prayer moves us particularly to take up the task of evangelization and to seek the good of others: it is the prayer of intercession. Let us peer for a moment into the heart of Saint Paul, to see what his prayer was like. It was full of people: "...I constantly pray with you in every one of my prayers for all of you... because I hold you in my heart" (Phil 1:4, 7). Here we see that intercessory prayer does not divert us from true contemplation, since authentic contemplation always has a place for others (Evangelii Gaudium 281)

That this community continue to bear witness to the mercy of God to any and all we encounter, we pray to the Lord.

For those gathered in this place praying for strength to witness to the gospel, we pray to the Lord.

That, as Holy Spirit made possible the missionary outburst at Pentecost, we too may be filled with your Spirit as we give witness to your love and mercy as we serve our brothers and sisters.

That as a mission-oriented parish we may be active in feeding those who know hunger, sheltering those who seek refuge and visiting those who are sick and imprisoned bringing to all a witness of God's love.

That the breath of the Holy Spirit engender a new missionary "spring" in the Church. (pope Francis October 2019 intention)

Prayer for our Family of Parishes

As sisters and brothers of Your son,
we offer You thanks for the love that you have poured into our hearts.

Grant strength to this new family of faith and keep us faithful in Your service.

Fortify the men and women that have been given oversight of this community.
Provide them discerning hearts and the ability to make courageous decisions.

May the same Spirit who ushered those in the Upper Room into the market,
grant to all the faithful, the ability to proclaim the gospel,
in bold and new ways.

Having come to know Your mercy and forgiveness,
transform all that we do,
so that the last and the least,
may come to know the goodness of Your Reign.

Finally, on the last day, grant to all of Your people,
the vision of Your face.

We ask this through Your son,
Jesus the Christ,
the first born from the dead,
who lives and reigns with You,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God forever and ever.

© Michael Bechard (Rev.)
This prayer is not intended for liturgical use.

Prayer of Unity

Come Holy Spirit!

Guide us through the winds of change and uncertainty.

Grant us the wisdom we need to be open to new possibilities.

Unite us as one faith community so that we may pray, worship
and serve one another in Christ's name.

May the richness, diversity and gifts of our people be treasured
and used to become one in the body of Christ.

Open our eyes to see this moment of change as invitation
to build up the Kingdom of God.

Surround us with courage and clear vision as we discern God's will
for the spiritual renewal of our family of parishes.

Help us use the gifts you have given us through baptism to become
a vibrant, refreshed community of faith,
united in the mission and dedicated to living out the Gospel of Jesus.

We pray all these things through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Appendix 1: Pastoral Plan of the Diocese of London

The purpose of our Pastoral Plan, which is entitled “Embracing a Future Full of Hope,” is to identify several key priorities which will inspire us and focus the energies of the whole diocese.

EMBRACING A FUTURE FULL OF HOPE: A Pastoral Plan for the Diocese of London

For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope. (Jeremiah 29:11)

Preamble

Called by Jesus through baptism into his passion, death and resurrection and anointed by the Spirit, we, the people of God in the Diocese of London, are to be living signs of Christ’s presence in the world today. United in Christ, the Bread of Life, we commit ourselves to carrying out the mission of proclaiming the coming of the kingdom of God in our time. We embrace the Gospel – believing what we read, preaching what we believe, and practicing what we preach.

As a people of faith, trusting in the Spirit who leads us, we dedicate ourselves to the following goals:

Goal I: As living signs of Christ’s presence, we will respond to the call to personal holiness given to all by committing ourselves to opportunities for ongoing conversion and spiritual renewal.

Goal II: Called by Christ, we will evangelize through the clear proclamation of the Gospel and the constant teaching of the Catholic faith, assuring that such proclamation and teaching is linked to the life experience of the people.

Goal III: With our sights set on the mission of Jesus, we will minister with justice and compassion to the wounded, the searching, the entrapped and those in material and spiritual need.

Goal IV: As the Body of Christ, formed by word and sacrament, we will make provision for meaningful liturgical celebrations in our parish communities to ensure full, conscious and active participation by all.

Goal V: Inviting all to co-responsible ministry, we will encourage and support the ongoing formation of laity, religious and ordained.

Goal VI: Imitating Christ the servant-leader, we will employ and model governance practices at all levels that seek to: meet the needs of God’s people, support the Church’s mission, ensure appropriate participation in decision-making by the laity, religious and ordained, uphold Gospel stewardship, and promote accountability and transparency.

Appendix II: Suggested reading for parish teams:

Mission-oriented parishes forming intentional disciples:

Pope Francis. [*The Joy of the Gospel*](#) (*Evangelii Gaudium*). Vatican. 2013. Please see below for more regarding availability, study guides and other resources.

Cardinal Ratzinger. [*New Evangelization: Building the Civilization of Love*](#). Address to Catechists and Religion Teachers Jubilee of Catechists, December 2000.

Sherry Waddell. [*Forming Intentional Disciples: The Path to Knowing and Following Jesus*](#). Huntington, Indiana: Our Sunday Visitor, 2012. (After reading this you may be interested in Sherry Waddell's [*Becoming a Parish of Intentional Disciples*](#) (2015) and [*Fruitful Discipleship: Living the Mission of Jesus*](#).)

James Mallon. [*Divine Renovation: From Maintenance to a Missional Parish*](#). Toronto: Novalis, 2014. 🍁

Michael White and Tom Corcoran. [*Rebuilt: Awakening the Faithful, Reaching the Lost and Making Church Matter*](#). Notre Dame, Indiana: Ave Marie Press, 2013.

Pat Lencioni and John Martin. *Amazing Parish*. <https://amazingparish.org>. The website offers many podcasts.

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Committee on Evangelization and Catechesis. [*Living as Missionary Disciples: A Resource for Evangelization \(Leadership Resource\)*](#). For more information: <http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/how-we-teach/catechesis/catechetical-sunday/living-disciples/index.cfm>. This resource offers a series of reflection questions that can lead to ongoing discussion. Consider this as tool for Pastoral team discernment.

Managing Transition:

Bridges, William with Bridges, Susan. [*Managing Transitions: Making the Most of Change*](#). London, England: Hodder and Stoughton, 2011.

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Appendix III: Possible Announcements

Earlier this week it was formally announced that our Family of Parishes, including x, y and z, will be activated in July. The priests who will be serving in this Family of Parishes starting on July 1st will include

[if applicable] Fr. X will be with us serving the community until the end of June. Sometime in June, we will have a time to celebrate his time in the parish, and to thank him.

([If applicable] I will continue to serve as your priest/pastor/administrator until the end of June and then I will then take on a different assignment (or retirement)).

All other staff members remain working in this new family.

The Diocese of London is its third phase of implementation of Family of Parishes model. We have been working with and learning from other dioceses that have similar models of parish organization. Our goal is to ensure that the transition over the next six months is as smooth as possible.

Families of Parishes will create the stability needed that will allow our parishes to spread the Good News of Jesus Christ and to form intentional disciples. This is our goal; this is the mission of the Church. The transition will lead us to focus on this mission.

Nothing will change until July, but you will hear about the changes that we will have to make in order to work together as a family of Parishes. We will be looking for your input on some of these changes in due course.

Like all families that grow and change, there will be bumps, bruises, and blessings on the way, but this change will open us up to new and marvelous ways of witnessing to Jesus in our world, our diocese, and our neighbourhood.

Let us pray to the Holy Spirit and to our patron saints for the success of this endeavour.

Appendix IV: Marriages in Families of Parishes

1. While the parishes are being grouped into families, each remains a juridically autonomous parishes. Certainly they are being called into collaboration with each other in carrying out the mission of the Church, but the distinct parishes remain. They are not being merged into one new parish.

2. Canon 1118, §1 directs: “A marriage between Catholics, or between a Catholic party and a baptized non-Catholic, is to be celebrated in the parish church. By permission of the local Ordinary or of the parish priest, it may be celebrated in another church or oratory.”

There is not a parish church for the family but several parish churches in the group depending on the number of distinct parishes in the family.

3. Normally, sacraments are to be celebrated in the parish to which a person canonically belongs by place of domicile or by registration. Sacraments may be celebrated in another parish other than the proper parish, but this is to be seen as an exception not as a rule.

4. As pastor/administrator you could allow Good Shepherd parishioners to celebrate their wedding in St. Anne Church, but there should be a compelling reason for doing so beyond the desire for the grand aesthetic of that building.

5. And, finally, if there are numerous weddings from Good Shepherd Parish moving to St. Anne Church, might this mean that St. Anne parishioners will not be able to use their parish church on the date they wish to marry because of another wedding from another parish? Maybe this is not a serious consideration, but I’m virtually certain that between the two committees there are a significant number of weddings each year.