

# REVIVE



## GUIDE FOR THE MISSIONARY TRANSFORMATION OF PARISHES

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

In his Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii gaudium*, Pope Francis writes, "I hope that all communities will devote the necessary effort to advancing along the path of a pastoral and missionary conversion which cannot leave things as they presently are. 'Mere administration' can no longer be enough. Throughout the world, let us be 'permanently in a state of mission.'"

Pope Francis' words echo those of Our Lord before he ascended into heaven: "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, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you." (Mt 28: 19)

Since arriving in the Diocese of Pembroke, I have often spoken of the necessity for us Christians to reach out to those who do not attend our celebrations, to befriend them, and to invite them into our communities. The task of sharing our Catholic faith is not reserved to the clergy, religious, or lay theologians. As Christians, we are all called to participate in the mission that Jesus has given us.

Many people will simply offer their love, loneliness, pains, and illnesses to obtain graces from God, for both those who are evangelizing and those who are being evangelized. Others will perform various acts of mercy and charity, which testify to the presence of the Lord among us. Some will start prayer groups in their homes or surroundings. Still others will study the Bible, teach others, and eventually become leaders. There are so many ways to evangelize. No one needs to feel excluded from becoming a true missionary. Liturgical and personal prayer are themselves acts of evangelization. Prayer is an essential part of the diocese's evangelization project.

You have in your hands a document prepared by the Evangelization Team. Twelve people, clergy and lay, have met regularly and frequently to pray, reflect, and discuss ways to take our diocese on a missionary journey. The document that you have in front of you will serve as an excellent guide for our parishes. It is aimed primarily at clergy and lay leaders, as well as anyone who wishes to participate in the spiritual and missionary transformation of our communities. I ask that all Parish Pastoral Councils take this document very seriously and act accordingly.

May the Blessed Virgin Mary be particularly close to those who are offering themselves as instruments of the New Evangelization in our diocese. Let us continually invoke the Holy Spirit and collaborate with Him as we invest ourselves in spreading the joy of the Gospel to all, and as we make new and fervent disciples of Christ.

Sincerely yours in Christ the Redeemer,

+ Guy Desrochers, C.Ss.R.

Bishop of Pembroke

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# 1) What is a missionary parish?

In simple terms, a missionary parish is a Christian community dedicated to the mission of the Church to reach out to those who do not know Christ or do not follow Him and lead them to become disciples of Jesus Christ and responsible members of his Church.

## a) The Church's mission

As defined by Church documents the mission of the Church is to evangelize, “that is she must proclaim the good news of salvation to all, generate new creatures in Christ through Baptism, and train them to live knowingly as children of God.”<sup>1</sup> The mission of the Church is to make the Kingdom of God present in our world<sup>2</sup>, guiding people to friendship with Christ, to the communion of love with the Lord who is the true light in our lives<sup>3</sup>.

To evangelize, explains Pope Paul VI, "constitutes the essential mission of the Church. ... Evangelizing is in fact the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity. She exists in order to evangelize, that is to say, in order to preach and teach, to be the channel of the gift of grace, to reconcile sinners with God, and to perpetuate Christ's sacrifice in the Mass".<sup>4</sup>

Pope John Paul II says that the new evangelization "calls for the involvement of the entire People of God, and requires a new fervor, new methods and a new expression for the announcing and witnessing of the Gospel."<sup>5</sup>

Our parishes, our Christian communities and all the faithful are called to embrace this impulse of missionary transformation.

## b) Characteristics of missionary parishes

Missionary parishes exist for the purpose of evangelization and have 4 main characteristics:

1. Love and service: By loving and serving their communities and surroundings with the hands of Christ, parishioners manifest the merciful heart of God and make their parish a light to the world and a welcoming place worthy of the Gospel.

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<sup>1</sup> The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, *The Catholic School*, March 19, 1977, 7.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Evangelii Gaudium*, 176.

<sup>3</sup> Homily of Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, Commemoration Mass In Honour of the Popes Paul VI and John Paul I, Altar Of The Chair, St Peter's Basilica, Tuesday, 28 September 2004.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 14.

<sup>5</sup> *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, 18.

2. A clear awareness of their mission: Parishioners of missionary parishes realize their mission entails not only becoming holy and serving those in need, but, just as importantly, evangelizing and participating in the development of their parish.
3. A reliance on the Holy Spirit: “Without me,” says Jesus, “you can do nothing”. Missionary parishes give great importance to prayer, faith and spiritual growth.
4. A process for making disciples: One of the most overlooked, yet crucial aspects of missionary parishes is the process they establish to make disciples of Jesus Christ from unchurched people. This process is the golden thread that links the various parish ministries together to lead the evangelized to the sacraments of Christian initiation, to spiritual maturity and to mission. (See [Appendix 1](#))

In this sense, four terms summarize well the characteristics of missionary parishes: love, purpose, power, and process. Their vision is to become *evangelizing communities that proclaim Jesus Christ as God and Savior and encourage men and women to become His disciples and responsible members of his Church*. Their main goal is to connect with those who do not follow Christ, to love them, to serve them, to welcome them into the Church and to lead them to become missionary disciples.

### **c) The main goals of missionary parishes**

In order to reach out to people who are not Christians or who do not attend church, missionary parishes pursue 4 main goals:

- 1) To live intimately with the Lord and to pray for evangelization efforts.
- 2) To create a memorable church experience where to invite new people.
- 3) To lead evangelized people to spiritual maturity.
- 4) To bear fruit of charity and transform the world.

**2. Create a memorable church experience  
and invite new people to attend**



**3. Lead evangelized  
people to spiritual  
maturity**

**4. Bear fruit of charity and  
transform the world**

Various prayer activities are organized by missionary parishes for the people they wish to reach (Luke 10:2; Acts 4:29-30). Prayer precedes and accompanies pastoral activities to win men and women to Christ.

Parishioners engage in their communities and prepare spaces where people they invite can find fellowship, prayers for healing and invitations to follow Christ. These spaces may include weekend celebrations or small groups.

The weekend experience is essentially one of welcoming and following up on visitors, proclamation of the kerygma<sup>6</sup>, prayer for healing and deliverance, and inspiring and lively music. Celebrations are designed with evangelized people in mind, in order to demonstrate the Kingdom of God, his love, and his power.

#### **d) The role of pastors in missionary parishes**

Pastors play an important and crucial role in the pastoral transformation of parishes. To become missionary, parishes need their leadership. And this begins by making parishioners understand their missionary role and the importance of being present in their surrounding community.

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<sup>6</sup> The kerygma refers to the initial proclamation of the gospel message. It is the core message of the Christian faith which is an invitation to accept Jesus in our lives and in our hearts as Lord and Savior. All believers are called to live it and proclaim it.

Pastors also need to free themselves as much as possible from material administration and devote themselves to engaging the whole Christian community in making disciples. Their ministry is the celebration of the sacraments and the proclamation of the Word, but they must make it a priority to find time and resources to set up an evangelization process that involves parishioners, each according to their gifts (See [Appendix 1](#)).

They work with their Parish Pastoral Council (PPC) and will benefit from creating a leadership team whose members are chosen based on their gifts for organization and evangelization. This team meets more frequently than the PPC and is tasked with reflecting on and planning the renewal and development of the parish. It can be set up as a subcommittee of the PPC.

The priest's presence in his community is crucial to assuming his leadership and transformational role. It is best to assign him the fewest number of parishes possible. It is also not recommended that priests involved in parish missionary transformation rotate frequently.

## **2) Planning the missionary transformation of the parish**

Planning is a fundamental and essential function of any organization. “If you fail to plan, you are planning to fail” used to say Benjamin Franklin. Consequently, parishes should develop a pastoral plan if they truly want to become missionary and make disciples.

The pastoral plan must explain *how* they will achieve their missionary conversion. It should not exceed 10 to 20 pages in length and its parts can be fairly short and written in bullet points.

The steps for writing a pastoral plan are as follows:

### **a) Draw a portrait of your parish and its environment (What is our current situation?)**

A pastoral plan begins with a portrait of one's environment. Based on the Church's mission and the characteristics of missionary parishes (please refer to the above paragraphs) assess the strengths and weaknesses of the parish, as well as the opportunities and challenges it faces in its environment.

Many aspects can be considered, among which finances, building(s), governance (leadership), personnel and operating procedures, economic conditions, population shifts, technological developments, and geographic conditions.

### **b) Anticipate the future (Where are we going?)**

It is also vital to consider the future aspects of one's environment: the risks they pose or even the opportunities they present. Several questions can help: How will our field look in ten years? What is the financial situation? What is the number of priests we can expect? Which parishes are most likely to close? How will the condition of the building be? The issue is whether parishes will be able to fulfill their mission and function properly under the predicted circumstances.

### **c) Describe your process for evangelizing and making disciples (What should we be?)**

Missionary congregations make disciples through a clearly defined process. They articulate how people are led to the Church and accompanied on their journey to become committed followers of Christ. The process does not to be complicated, but it must answer the question: How is the parish reaching out to those who don't know Christ or who have left the Church to bring them into a living relationship with Him? [Appendix 1](#) of this document describes such a process.



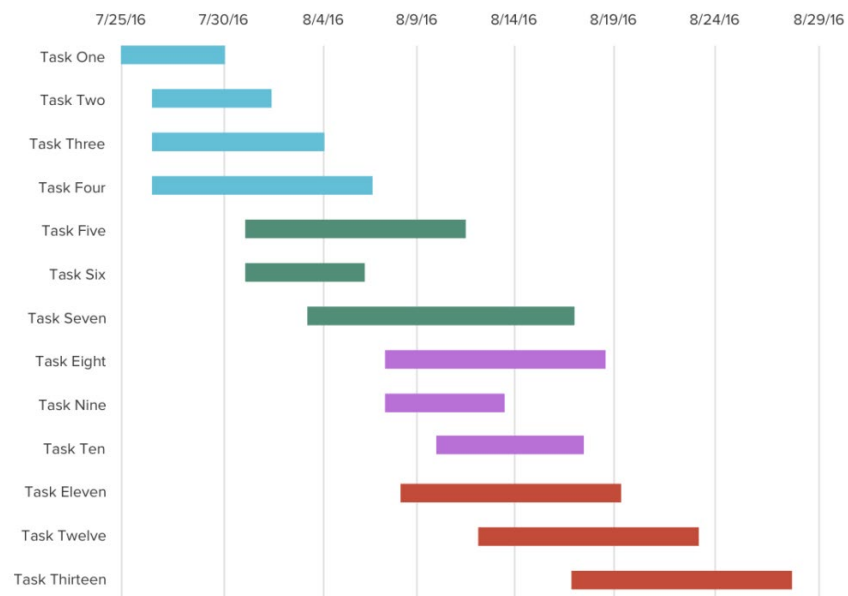
**d) Describe the path from your present situation to the desired situation (What do we need to do to reach our goals and implement our process?)**

What will it take to become mission-focused, Spirit-driven and to implement our process to evangelize and make disciples? Which choices must be made? What activities and programs are we going to put in place and in what order? This one of the most important parts of the pastoral plan. These choices include the leadership structure, the programs that will be put in place and those that are not be needed anymore and the buildings needed.

Just as a house is built or restored in stages, so too is a parish: Foundations must be laid and solid. They consist of prayer and evangelization. The early Church did this after receiving its mission to make disciples of all nations: it gathered to pray to be filled by the Holy Spirit, and evangelization began (Matthew 28:16–20, Mark 16:14–18, Luke 24:44–49, John 20:19–23, Acts 1:4–8). After that, it welcomed those interested and integrated them into the spiritual edifice through fellowship and Christian initiation.

The *Start/Stop/Continue* exercise can help parishes plan what they need to change when moving forward towards mission (See [Appendix 2](#)).

It can then be created a timeline depicting how the different phases of the missionary transformation unfolds (as shown below). One way to do this is to work backwards from the end goal to determine the succession of activities. Time estimates can be based on consultation with the people who will be involved in each step.



### **e) Establish evaluation metrics (How do we measure our progress?)**

The next step is to choose and describe measures that will be used to verify progress. These measures serve as indicators to identify which activities are useful and effective and which are not in achieving the goal of making new disciples. The effectiveness of each ministry or program is measured in terms of numbers. [Appendix 3](#) contains an example of a table to input the results of the different measures (Please note: God's grace and action are not quantifiable, but the effects of God's grace and action in people's lives are frequently observable and therefore measurable at least to some extent).

### **f) Determine the resources needed (What do we need?)**

The pastoral plan should also specify the resources needed to carry out the missionary transformation of the parish. There are at least four categories of resources:

- Human resources
- Material resources
- Financial resources
- Resources in terms of time

Resources are expressed in terms of people (paid staff and volunteers), costs, salaries, and time. Who is needed to perform the chosen activities or ministries? How long will it take to complete the activities and how much will it cost? What needs to be purchased and renovated? Identifying and explaining available and to-be acquired resources is a key part of sound analysis.

### **g) Make a summary**

The final step is to write a summary of the plan. The summary should be one to two pages in length and placed at the beginning of the plan. It is written last and contains the following information:

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of parish: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of the people involved in the development of the plan: \_\_\_\_\_

- a) The portrait of the parish and its environment (What is our current situation?)
- b) Anticipation of the future (What is the future holding?)
- c) Our process for evangelizing and making disciples (What should we become?)

d) The steps of our transformation (What and how should we change to implement our chosen process?)

## Conclusion

Missionary parishes follow the example of the Good Shepherd who does the will of God by seeking out the lost sheep (Luke 15:4-7; Matthew 18:10-14). They resemble the Father of the prodigal son, who welcomes, forgives, and rejoices at the son's return (Luke 15:11-32).

With the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4-8), they reach out those who are far from the faith, healing them (Matthew 10:7-8), inviting them to church, introducing them to a living and intimate relationship with Christ, and integrating them into the Christian community. The focus of their mission is to transform lives and save them in such a way that they bear fruit of love for themselves, for God, and for their neighbours (Matthew 5:16).

To become missionary, parishes need a transformational plan which includes a clear process to evangelize and make disciples. It is also important to realize that planning is not just a one-time activity. It is an ongoing effort to better accomplish the mission of making disciples in an ever-changing world.

The ultimate goal of this guide is to assist parishes in transforming into missionary communities. However, if you feel that the information contained in this document may not be applicable to your parish, we invite you to contact the Director of Pastoral Work to discuss how it can be adapted to your specific context. It is possible for every Christian community, regardless of size or age, to find a way towards mission.

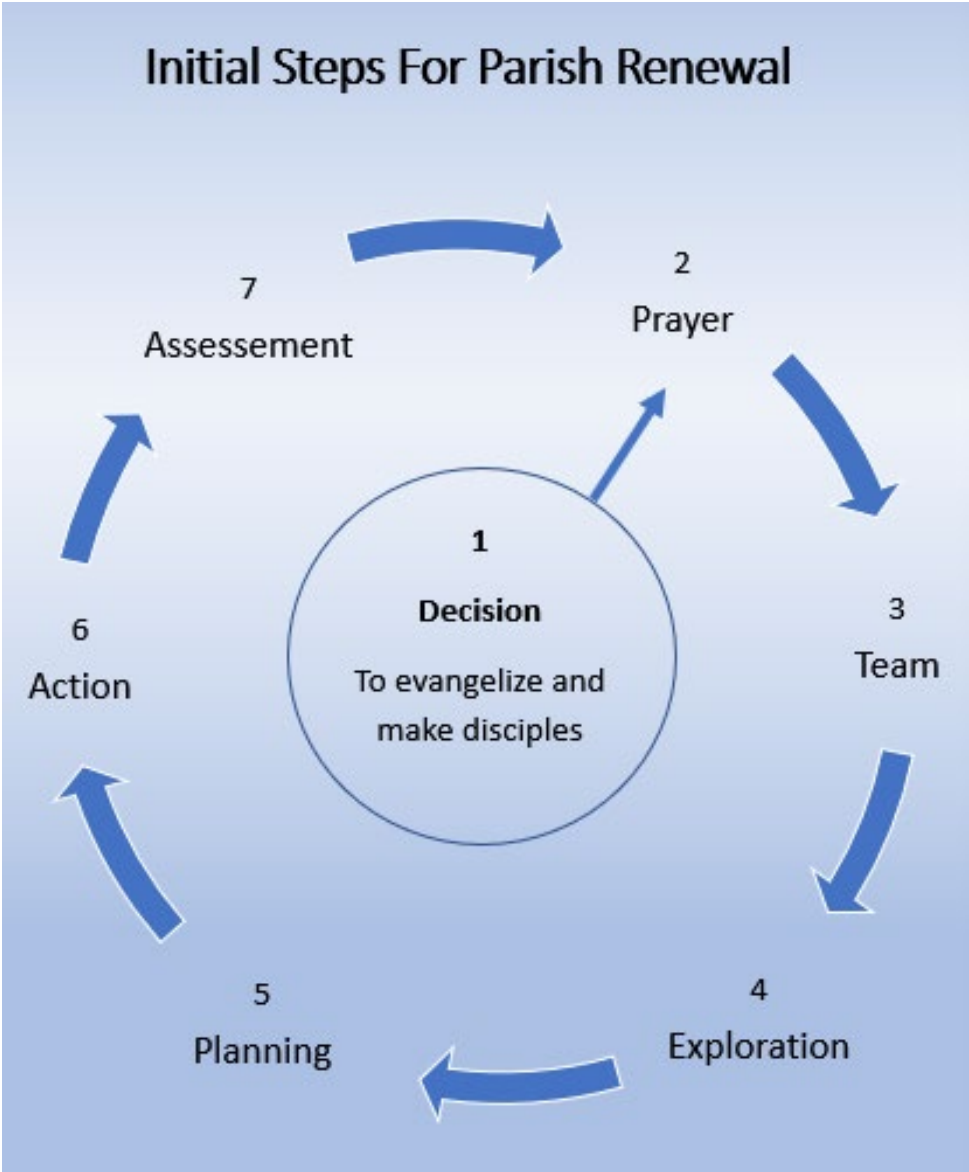
### HOW TO USE THIS DOCUMENT WITH YOUR PARISH

1. Make the decision to become entirely mission-driven.
2. Pray for the renewal of your parish with your community.
3. Invite the diocesan evangelization team for a visit and explanations.
4. Form a leadership team to plan the transformation.
5. Become familiar with this guide, read books on missionary parishes<sup>7</sup>, visit missionary parishes, and network with other parishes undergoing missionary transformation.
6. With the leadership team, begin writing the pastoral plan.
7. Take action to implement the changes.
8. Assess your progress.

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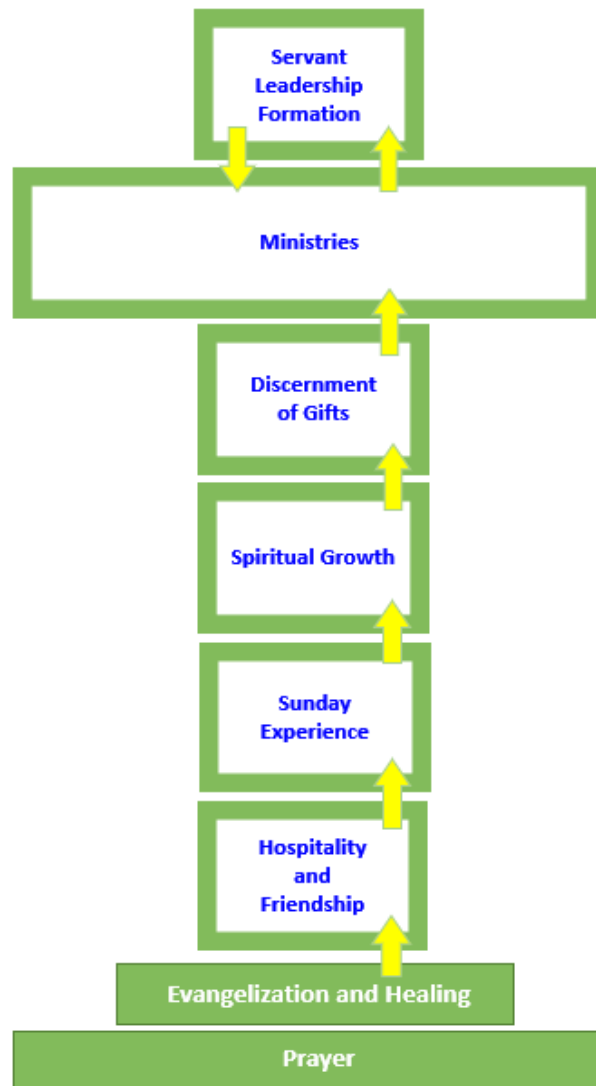
<sup>7</sup> The following books provide stories of the missionary transformation of parishes: [Rebuilt: Awakening the Faithful, Reaching the Lost, and Making Church Matter](#), [Divine Renovation: From a Maintenance to a Missional Parish](#) and [The Purpose Driven Church](#).

This diagram below illustrates the initial steps for parish missionary transformation.



## Appendix 1: A Parish Process for Evangelizing and Making Disciples

### Evangelization and Discipleship Process



Missionary parishes have a simple and clearly defined process for making disciples. They have articulated how new people will be led to the Church and accompanied to become committed disciples of Christ. This process answers the question: What is the parish doing to bring those who do not know Christ or who have left their church into a living relationship with Christ?

The process can be compared to a relay race where the batons are passed from runner to runner until the race is over. In a missionary parish, the batons are the evangelized and the

runners are the parishioners who through interconnected ministries call men and women to become Jesus disciples and responsible members of his Church.

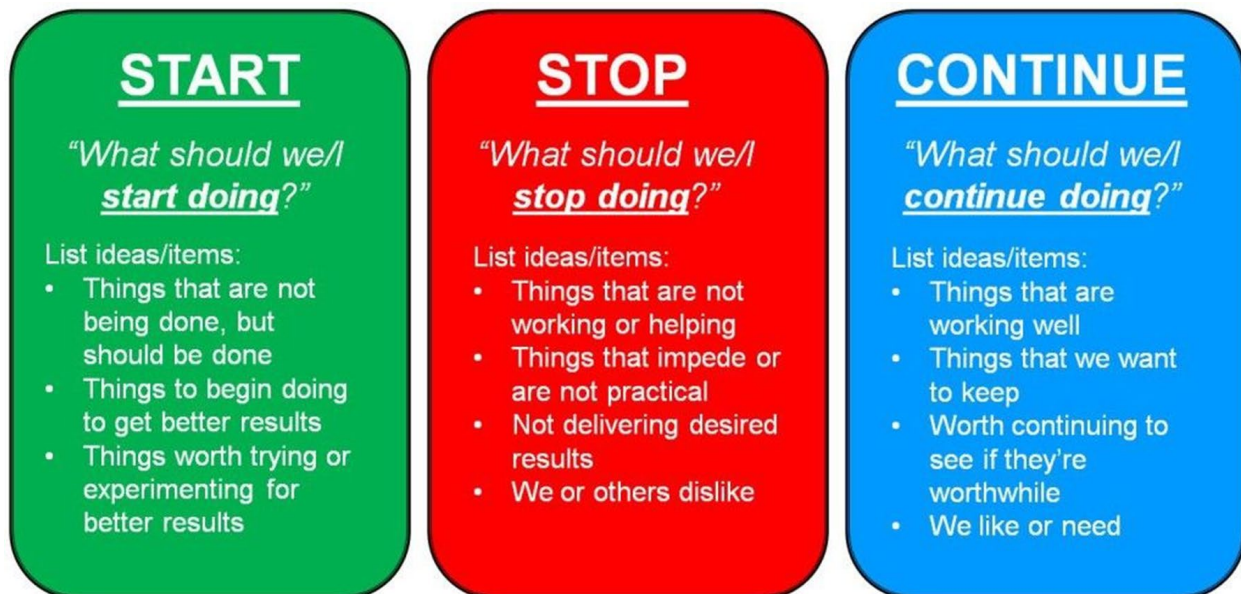
These programs are: 1) prayers for the evangelized and deeper intimacy with Christ, 2) evangelization (reaching out to and inviting those outside the Church), 3) welcome and hospitality, 4) faith initiation and integration into the Christian community, 4) faith formation, and 5) leadership formation.

As new people are invited to the church through evangelization programs, they are introduced to parishioners running the welcoming committee, who introduce them to parishioners running the faith initiation and formation programs, who then introduce them to parishioners running other ministries. Thus, newcomers are always in contact with parishioners, they are never left to themselves and progress step by step until they feel part of the catholic community and become active members.

## Appendix 2: The Start/Stop/Continue Exercise

The Start/Stop/Continue exercise can help parishes decide and plan what they need to change when moving forward. Activities and decisions are divided into three categories: things to start doing, things to stop doing, and things to continue doing. It is a simple exercise, taking less than twenty minutes, that generates three lists:

1. The Start List: Ideas or activities that you don't currently do but that would be good to start doing to accomplish your mission of making new disciples.
2. The Stop List: Things you're currently doing but should stop doing because they do not contribute to the mission.
3. The Continue List: Things that have been working well and should be continued as part of your mission of making new disciples.



### Appendix 3: Measuring Table with Indicators

Once a year the Parish Pastoral Council counts:	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
1. The number of parishioners who have committed to praying for the unchurched and the renewal of the parish.			
2. The number of parishioners participating in evangelization programs (Small evangelization groups, Alpha Courses, CCO Faith Studies, St. Paul Street Evangelization, etc.)			
3. The number of visitors or newcomers greeted by the Welcoming Committee.			
4. The number of newcomers who started coming regularly to the Sunday Mass.			
5. The number of newcomers who have participated in basic services such as welcoming, bringing the offerings, helping with coffee, etc.			
6. The number of newcomers who have made new friends with parishioners.			
7. The number of newcomers who participated in faith initiation programs (RCIA, other).			
8. The number of newcomers who received the sacraments of Christian initiation.			
9. The number of new parishioners who participated in a discernment process to discover their gifts (in order to join a parish ministry).			
10. The number of new parishioners who became involved in a parish ministry (or created a new one).			
11. The number of parishioners who received leadership training or mentorship to lead ministries or programs.			
12. The number of new leaders of parish ministries or programs.			



## **Appendix 4: Glossary**

### **Missionary parish**

A missionary parish is a parish dedicated to making disciples. Missionary parishes typically engage in outreach and evangelization in order to spread the good news of the Gospel and bring people to accept Jesus as their Lord and Saviour.

### **The mission of the Church**

Saint Therese of the Child Jesus, the patron saint of missions, wrote "In the heart of the Church, I will be Love". The mission of all Christians is above all to love: to love God and to love their neighbor. In this spirit of love and filled with the Holy Spirit, Christians are called to make known to others the source of this love, for God wants all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. (1 Tim 2:4) Jesus said: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father except through me." (John 14,16) That is why the Church proclaims the name, teaching, life, promises, reign, and mystery of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God.

### **Evangelization**

Pope Francis explains that "evangelization is first and foremost about preaching the Gospel to those who do not know Jesus Christ or who have always rejected him. Many of these are quietly seeking God, led by a yearning to see his face, even in countries of ancient Christian tradition. All of them have a right to receive the Gospel. Christians have the duty to proclaim the Gospel without excluding anyone. Instead of seeming to impose new obligations, they should appear as people who wish to share their joy, who point to a horizon of beauty and who invite others to a delicious banquet. It is not by proselytizing that the Church grows, but "by attraction". A spirit-filled evangelization is one guided by the Holy Spirit, for he is the soul of the Church called to proclaim the Gospel. Enthusiasm for evangelization is based on this conviction. We have a treasure of life and love which cannot deceive, and a message which cannot mislead or disappoint. It penetrates to the depths of our hearts, sustaining and ennobling us. It is a truth which is never out of date because it reaches that part of us which nothing else can reach. Our infinite sadness can only be cured by an infinite love". (Evangelii Gaudium)

### **Fellowship (communion)**

Fellowship, or communion, is an essential element of the Christian life. It is the manifestation of the love that springs from the heart of the Father to be poured into our hearts by the Spirit that Jesus has given us. Communion with each other is the sign of profound union with God. By calling us to communion, God calls us to participate in his life that he circulates among us.

### **Kingdom of God**

The Kingdom of God is mentioned many times in the Gospels and elsewhere in the New Testament. In a broad sense, the Kingdom of God is the reign of God, sovereign over all his creation. In a narrower sense, the Kingdom of God is a spiritual reign over the hearts and lives of those who voluntarily submit to the divine will. Repentance and the new birth through baptism is the way to enter the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom that is near and coming is God himself present and acting through his Spirit in our lives. God is not distant; he longs to be united with us and be intimately close to us.

### **Process to make disciples**

The Oxford dictionary defines a process as a series of actions or steps taken in order to achieve a particular end. A missionary process is a set of activities that succeed each other and interact to make new disciples.