



# 2024 Pastoral Plan St. André Bessette Parish

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St. André Bessette Parish  
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## Evangelization

We have made considerable progress in the overall understanding of evangelization and how we are all called to share our faith and to evangelize others both within and outside our Church and Faith Community. We consistently talk about evangelization, share ideas and actively look for and find opportunities to evangelize those in our midst. We have initiated programs as Alpha, The Search, The Wild Goose and Metanoia as well as Diocesan faith programs both in person and over Zoom. We have developed a pool of leaders who will guide small groups in prayer and discernment within programs. We currently have three graduates of the Equip the Saints program, two Diplomas in the New Evangelization program, with another two people enrolled in the Equip the Saints program this year. Ministers of Hospitality welcome all coming into our Masses.

### Evangelization Goals

#### 1 YEAR

***Major Goal: Build capacity among parishioners to become evangelizers within Church community and in larger community.***

- Encourage all parishioners to actively welcome all who come to our churches.
- Continue Faith Formation and Development Programs, Praying and Praising Services.
- Map out a Discipleship pathway for those who have completed existing programs of Faith Formation like Alpha, The Wild Goose and Metanoia.
- Support our young parents through testimony and witness at parent sessions and catechism. Actively reach out to parents and young families as they join us at Mass.
- Outreach to community Catholics, especially those who have not returned post Covid or for other reasons.
- Actively advertise and recruit participation from all parts of the parish in any initiatives that relate to evangelization or faith formation of adults or youth. Communication Plan.

#### 3 YEARS

***Major Goal: Ensure our parishioners are comfortable and prepared to evangelize in any circumstance.***

- Overcome resistance to active participation throughout parish.
- Obtain resources: financial, meeting spaces, more volunteers for ministries and initiatives.
- Increase desire, commitment and courage to attend and lead programs and to put evangelization into practice.
- Create one parish-wide strategy for evangelization, incorporating initiatives and activities of our CWL & KOC as well as Parish Leadership and other organizations.
- Build desire and leadership capacity in all areas of parish to organize and run faith formation programs and activities for people of all ages.

## 5 YEARS

***Major Goal:*** *Have in place good marketing tools and effective communication for all areas of Parish life.*

- Have families and youth actively engaged in Parish life.
- Obtain appropriate meeting space for Parish activities throughout the Parish.

### **Obstacles to overcome:**

- Although we are experiencing steady progress, we must take time to consider some special circumstances we need to overcome at St. André Bessette Parish, including creating an acceptance of being one parish with three diverse communities. Finding common ground is hampered by being in different counties, with over an hour's drive from one end to the other of the Parish, governed by different municipalities, different school boards and sports leagues as well as coming from vastly different cultures and economic backgrounds. There is a need to build trust among the diverse parts of our new Parish, and to create a sense of ownership and belonging to the larger community of St. André Bessette. The first step is to identify the obstacles and then to develop a plan to minimize or circumvent them.
- We are also in need of meeting spaces outside of worship space in the larger communities of our Parish, so we can gather as one community for youth, evangelization in many forms, to run programs, for community engagement and social and fundraising initiatives. Community public gathering spaces are becoming difficult or impossible to rent so we are left to rely on our worship spaces alone, which is not ideal, and in many circumstances, not possible.
- We need to increase awareness and commitment of our parishioners to financially support our Parish through regular giving, and supporting fundraising initiatives so we can bring our buildings into good repair and maintain our structures. Additionally, we need to create funds to support liturgies and evangelize our current parishioners and our larger communities.

### **Skills and resources required to meet these ideals:**

- Communication means and tools to reach all corners of this large geographical Parish.
- Identify, empower and train individuals from all corners of Parish in goals and objectives of Parish Pastoral Plan.
- Financial resources to enable meeting established goals of Parish.
- Human resources needed in all areas of Parish to lead and support initiatives identified.
- Physical meeting spaces for Parish liturgical, faith formation, fund raising and social events.

### **One thing the Diocese can do to assist us:**

- Help us to find ways to motivate Parishioners to want to learn more about their faith.
- Continue with practical, hands-on programs like the 2023 Assembly of the People of God.

## Social Justice

There are many activities which fall under Social Justice that are being undertaken and are ongoing in our Parish. KOC, CWL, SVDP all have a focus on aspects of Social Justice locally, provincially, nationally or internationally. Additionally, all three churches support and volunteer at local food banks in their respective communities and assist individuals in need. One of our communities has partnered with other Christian community churches to assist and support refugee families with time, physical assistance, goods, housing and finances. Parishioners serve “Our Daily Bread” and other Diocesan homeless initiatives by volunteering time and preparing meals. We have an active St. Vincent de Paul Society, recently expanded to better serve a wider geographical area of our Parish. Any food left over from funeral receptions or other events is taken to homeless shelters in Sackville or Halifax up to 50 km away.

### Social Justice Goals

#### 1 YEAR

***Major Goal: Complete an inventory of Social Justice activities of all groups/organizations within the three main communities of the Parish. This will help to identify the extent of needs in our communities and to fully understand the extent of our parish response to these needs.***

- Deepen understanding across the parish of Catholic Social Justice teachings.
- Begin to identify current gaps and special need individuals and groups.
- Establish a central communication vehicle to address unmet needs and identify overlaps.
- Work with Finance Council to identify a budget category for Social Justice in our Parish.
- Where applicable, expand existing local church programs to become Parish programs active in all three faith communities.

#### 3 YEARS

***Major Goal: Develop an interactive communication vehicle to coordinate all Social Justice initiatives by all individuals and groups within the communities of the Parish and to help identify gaps, needs and overlaps. Consider a Parish Social Justice strategy which incorporates all those in the Parish who are involved in Social Justice activities.***

- Extend awareness of Social Justice beyond the pews through our live-streamed Mass, website and bulletin.
- Develop a plan to raise awareness of Social Justice issues and needs with our youth as well as our adult parishioners.
- Actively involve newcomers into all aspects of our Church.
- Continue initiatives to ensure all are welcome and feel comfortable in our Churches.

#### 5 YEARS

***Major Goal: Have in place an active, coordinated and comprehensive Social Justice Program that is Parish centered.***

**Obstacles to overcome:**

- Over half of our Parish could be classified as rural. As such, often the homeless and marginalized are invisible and very difficult to identify. It also means that those in need are often not comfortable being identified and not wishing to be seen as needing help. Serving these individuals requires sensitivity and respect. In addition, referral to other agencies is not always an option.
- With our sprawling Parish boundaries, it is difficult to adequately and significantly support three food banks, three jurisdictions of social services, school boards, municipalities, etc. to appropriately help children and families in need.

**Skills and resources required to meet these ideals:**

- Communication and transportation means and tools to reach all corners of this large geographical Parish.
- Financial Resources to enable meeting established Social Justice goals of Parish.
- Human resources needed in all areas of Parish to lead and support initiatives identified.
- Physical meeting spaces for Parish gathering, fundraising and social events.

**One thing the Diocese could do to assist us:**

- Create a vehicle to share ideas, activities and successes across the Diocese.

## Parish Identity

As a Parish, we are moving slowly but intentionally toward identifying as the St. André Bessette Parish rather than the three entities from which we have evolved. In the past year, we have gone through a branding exercise resulting in a new logo, letterhead and signage, as well as an identity statement which will lead us to formal vision/mission statements in the coming year. We have completed a workshop with our three main Leadership groups (Leadership Team, Parish Pastoral Council and Finance Council) to better understand the role of each and establish a strong foundation and process for moving forward effectively and efficiently. We are currently creating our first St. André Bessette Pastoral Plan, beginning with a workshop of Leadership groups of the Parish. We now have one Parish Bulletin, one Parish Office and one Website. More are identifying as being St. André Bessette parishioners under the guidance, encouragement and strong support of our new Parish Priest, Father Gerald David.

### Parish Identity Goals

#### 1 YEAR

**Major Goal: Complete Parish Vision and Mission statements for St. André Bessette Parish.**

- Identify immediate priorities as established in Pastoral Plan and develop a strategy for each.
- Ensure all Parish groups are aware of our Pastoral Plan and encourage all to incorporate the goals into their annual plans.
- Communicate priorities, successes and updates to Parish and Parish groups regularly.
- Develop two-way communication strategies between and among Parish groups and Parish Leadership Councils.
- Begin an engagement process in all areas of the Parish to better understand needs, concerns and obstacles to becoming a united Parish.
- Identify needs of each faith community and develop responses which bring us all closer to being one Parish.
- Work on creating an effective and user-friendly Parish Calendar and encourage all groups within Parish to utilize this tool as a way to schedule and share information and events.
- Develop strategies to educate parishioners on identity and purpose of groups and ministries as a way to also revitalize these.
- Support and encourage KOC and CWL groups in the Parish to work with their counterparts in other areas of our Parish on Parish projects.

#### 3 YEARS

**Major Goal: Have an active succession and recruitment plan for all groups and ministries in parish.**

- Develop strategies to recruit leaders for Parish Leadership, groups and ministries within the Parish.
- Continue to reinforce strategies toward the concept of one Parish in all our plans and activities. Ensure recognition of the value and contributions of each area of Parish.
- Become more inclusive and unified within the three church communities.
- Plans for increasing meeting space in areas where needed.

- Encourage St. Rose of Lima and St. Bernard CWL and KOC to work toward becoming one CWL and KOC St. André Bessette Parish organizations.

## **5 YEARS**

### ***Major Goal: Have three Churches in good repair and a successful financial plan to address costs.***

- All events within the Parish are seen and accepted as St. André Bessette events, not locally-owned initiatives.
- Have meeting and gathering space outside of worship space in all communities of Parish.

### **Obstacles to overcome:**

- Find ways to use our unique differences to become stronger together.
- Create solutions to lack of meeting spaces throughout the Parish boundaries.
- Raise funds to repair and update our church buildings in need.
- Overcome resistance to change and merge our local strengths for the good of the whole Parish.
- Move well-established local church independence and self-reliance to a Parish focus.

### **Skills and resources required to meet these ideals:**

- Communication strategies and tools to reach all areas - even those without reliable Internet.
- Continue and increase our focus on all events, needs and resources, as Parish not local church.
- More events and activities that are Parish events rather than local church events.
- Engaged volunteers willing to share their strengths and energies with whole Parish.

### **One thing the diocese could do to assist us:**

- Create a resource of ideas that have worked in other Parishes to overcome what must be common obstacles for many Parishes. Share that resource with other Parishes. Some of these successes may come to you from annual Parish Pastoral Plans submitted to the Diocese.

## Catechesis

The Catechesis program at St. André Bessette is moving forward using a family-based model, under the leadership of a Coordinator serving the whole Parish. As Covid restrictions ended and our three Churches merged into one Parish, we had three different models of youth catechesis depending on which area of the parish and which church community you attended. In one community, families individually taught their children, mainly in preparation for the Sacraments. A second community had an active program supported by a committed volunteer coordinator and parents. A third community employed a coordinator for many years pre-Covid to organize and support parent volunteers in a structured classroom-based model. With one year in place, our paid Youth Faith Formation Coordinator has implemented a family-based model now in place throughout the Parish.

### Catechesis Goals

#### 1 YEAR

***Major Goal: Involve and educate parents of young children in the faith and encourage St. André Bessette parishioners to accompany these children and parents throughout all geographic areas of the Parish.***

- Continue offering family meetings and classes at two sites while the new program becomes better known and while parents grow in their faith with their children in smaller groups.
- Involve parishioners through education and involvement in the development of our children in their faith, and encourage support for families in their faith journey.
- Encourage parishioners to pray for our children and their families on their journey of faith formation.

#### 3 YEARS

***Major Goal: Have a Family Faith Formation program that is well developed and actively supported by all parents and parishioners throughout the three faith communities of our Parish.***

- Continue to walk with parents as they teach their children about our faith and prepare for sacraments; evangelize our families.
- Have an organized prayer ministry of parishioners to pray for and accompany our children and their parents in their faith formation.
- Have a team of experienced parents/parishioners to guide our children on their faith journey.
- Promote intentional accompaniment for all parishioners and by all parishioners as part of their faith journey.

#### 5 YEAR

***Major Goal: Accompany our Catechumen as they evangelize in our Parish.***

- Actively encourage our young adults to become integrated members of the Parish serving in ministries, continuing to grow their faith and become leaders.

**Obstacles to overcome:**

- The reluctance and hesitation of parents who have never been evangelized and who have had little religious education themselves to become active in the religious education of their children.
- Parishioners who have not been evangelized, are not familiar with the term intentional accompaniment, or have not continued their own faith formation as adults.
- The difficulties of offering youth programs, classes and groups across an area of 80 km where children are in different schools, school and municipal districts and where church gathering space is very limited.

**Skills and resources needed to meet these ideals:**

- Individuals from all corners of the Parish who are willing to be a part of Catechesis program as teachers, supports, prayer partners and leaders.
- A variety of delivery methods for Parish adult faith formation and evangelization programs to address those in rural areas without reliable internet or other services.

**One thing the Diocese could do to assist us:**

- Support for Faith Formation Coordinators themselves with meetings to share successes and challenges.
- Resources and practical ideas to help motivate and excite parishioners to want to become more involved in their own faith formation as adults.