

***REBUILDING TRUST AND HOPE***

**THE PASTORAL PLAN  
OF  
THE DIOCESE OF ANTIGONISH  
2013-2018**



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November 27, 2013

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Our Diocesan Renewal Congress concluded on October 9, 2013 and I continue to recognize this event as an occasion of grace for all of us in the Diocese of Antigonish. Rooted in our faith in Jesus Christ, this Congress gave us an opportunity to express our hopes for the future and made plans to move forward with a hope rooted in the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Almost three hundred delegates from all organizations, parishes and areas of the Diocese, came together in a spirit and attitude of collaboration to participate in the essential work of rebuilding God's people through the formulation of a five year Pastoral Plan. Together we came to a more profound realization of our role in the mission that Jesus Christ has given to the Church, the task of making disciples and of being involved in the challenge of sharing the Good News.

Our Diocesan Pastoral Plan is a visible way to show that we want to be attentive to the spiritual needs of those who are already gathered together in our parishes. Following the example of Jesus, the Good Shepherd, we need to be attentive as well to those who have drifted away from the faith and have become disconnected with the Church. My hope is that, as a result of our experience at the Renewal Congress, all parishes will use this plan as a way for renewal within the diocese. I believe that working together we will be able to contribute to a renewal of faith. At the same time, we need to tirelessly proclaim our faith in the midst of the circumstances of our Diocese and parishes. Following the example of Mary, we need to prayerfully listen to the Lord, and humbly do His will. Our efforts will only be fruitful if they are rooted in prayer, for "unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labour in vain" (Psalm 127:1). Thus, our Pastoral Plan, rooted in prayer, will help us nurture our community of faith and to reach out beyond it.

By this letter I want to promulgate this Diocesan Pastoral Plan. At the same time, I invite each of us to deepen our own personal commitment to Jesus Christ, and to consider how our whole Catholic community can be more effective in witnessing to our faith in this society in which we live. This plan will only be fruitful if each of us is personally attentive to our own engagement as a disciple of Jesus, and to that of our parish community.

I look forward to implementing this Diocesan Pastoral Plan, with the assistance of the Implementation Committee. May the Lord abundantly bless all of us as we move toward a renewal of our Diocese and parishes. May Saint Ninian, our diocesan patron, guide us in "Rebuilding Trust and Hope".

Sincerely in Christ,

+ Brian Joseph Dunn  
 Bishop of Antigonish

## Executive Summary

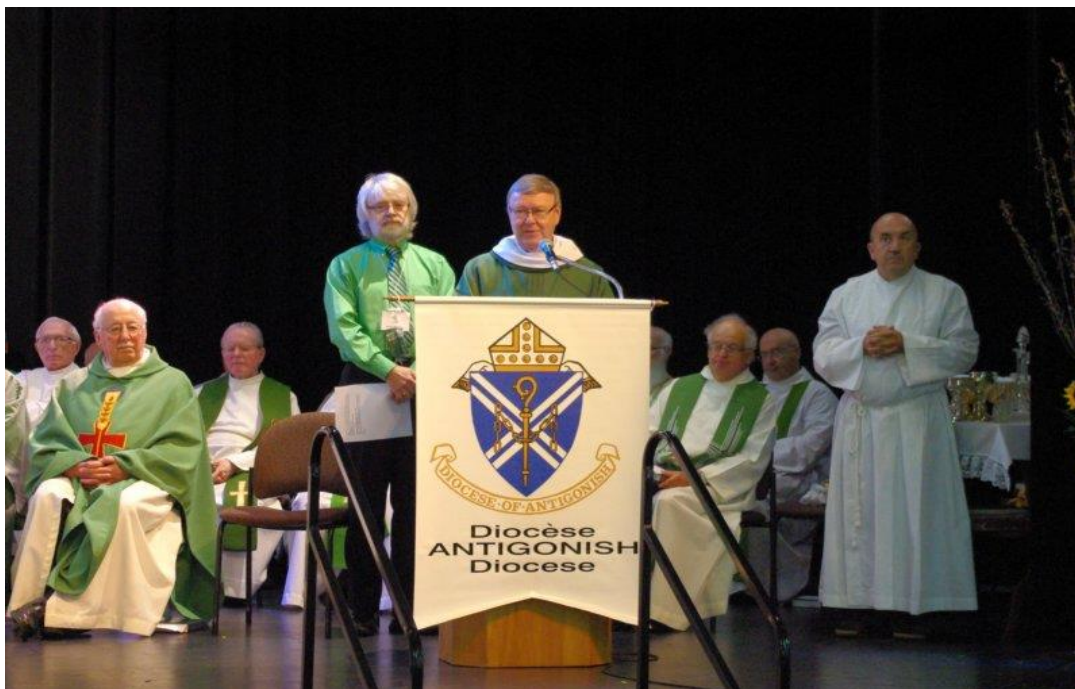
At the beginning of the new millennium, Pope John Paul II called us to express a new impetus for Christian living, making it the force which inspires our journey of faith. He asked dioceses to consider the pastoral initiatives of each community and to formulate a detailed pastoral plan. Each pastoral plan would focus on the formation and enrichment of the people involved by searching for the necessary resources to enable the proclamation of Christ to reach people, mould communities and have a deep and incisive influence in bringing Gospel values to bear on society and culture (*Nova Millenio Inuente, n. 29*).

Several issues have arisen in the Diocese of Antigonish in recent years, including:

- a decline in the number of vocations;
- a decline in the number of parishioners, especially young people attending Masses;
- outmigration;
- financial challenges experienced by some parishes;
- clergy sexual abuse and the related legal settlement; and
- parish reconfiguration and the closure of churches.

Many parishioners and clergy expressed the need to come together to plan for the future of the Diocese and its parishes. Bishop Brian Dunn heard these requests for a Diocesan process of communal discernment and in response he called for a Diocesan Congress to be held in October, 2013. The Congress was entitled: *Rebuilding My People the Church*. The Congress delegates included representatives from diverse groups within the Diocese, including ordained, religious, laity, parishes, diocesan staff and various church organizations and movements.





Bishop Dunn established a Diocesan Congress Planning Committee, co- chaired by Mr. David Nearing and Father Bedford Doucette, to oversee the preparations for the Congress. The Committee launched a lengthy and comprehensive process of consultation and data collection to provide all interested parties with multiple opportunities to voice their opinions and make suggestions for moving forward. A survey was widely distributed for completion individually or in groups, including on-line input. Approximately 3000 individual and group responses were submitted. The submissions ranged in length from a few lines to several typed pages.

Six major themes emerged from the data:

1. Revitalizing the Parishes and Diocese;
2. Strengthening Church support structures;
3. Supporting Church ministries;
4. Enhancing communication;
5. Promoting faith formation,

Church teaching and evangelization; and

## 6. Extending Church outreach.

These themes, which were repeatedly voiced by the respondents, guided the development of mission and vision statements. These statements, in turn, formed the genesis of a Proposed Pastoral Plan that was initiated by the Diocesan Congress Planning Committee and subsequently reviewed and affirmed by the Congress delegates. In this way, the input of the people was used to initiate a plan that was then given back to the Congress delegates for their consideration, especially suggestions for implementation.

At the Congress, the delegates ranked each of the proposed strategies under the six main priorities in the proposed plan. The top two strategies that the delegates identified for each priority were as follows:

### 1. Revitalizing the Parishes and Diocese:

- *Create a Diocesan Pastoral Plan*
- *Liturgical Commission to provide a wide range of supports*

### 2. Strengthening Church support structures:

- *Bishop to form a Diocesan Pastoral Council*
- *Full-time Youth Ministry Coordinator to be appointed*

### 3. Supporting Church ministries:

- *Provide workshops for all parish ministries*
- *Provide standard preparations for the Sacraments*

### 4. Enhancing communication:

- *Bishop to appoint a Communications Coordinator*  
*to develop and implement a diocesan communications strategy*
- *Diocesan Communications Coordinator to use secular and social media*

### 5. Promoting faith formation, Church teaching and evangelization:



- *Host Faith Formation sessions on a wide range of topics*
- *Emmaus Centre facilitate ongoing formation of Catechists*

6. Extending Church outreach:

- *Provide a “Welcome Back Catholics” campaign*
- *Promote and support the renewal movements*

Overall, the top six strategies that received the greatest support from the Congress delegates were:

1. Bishop to appoint a Communications Coordinator to develop and implement a diocesan communications strategy;
2. Host Faith Formation sessions on a wide range of topics;
3. Create a Diocesan Pastoral Plan;
4. Provide a “Welcome Back Catholics” campaign;
5. Provide workshops for all parish ministries; and
6. Promote and support the renewal movements.

Thus, the Congress delegates identified the issues of communications, faith formation, diocesan planning, ‘welcome back’ initiatives, training for parish ministries and support for renewal movements as their top six areas of concern. The 5-year Diocesan Pastoral Plan addresses these and other issues while working toward two overarching goals: the development of each person’s relationship with Jesus Christ, and the nurturing of vibrant, inclusive and sustainable diocesan and parish communities. It is a plan for rebuilding trust and hope in the Diocese of Antigonish.

“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” (*Romans 15:13*)



## Vision Statement

*Jesus Christ has revealed God's love for all humanity and called the church to be the witness of that love. Each person is called to be a disciple of Christ and, having experienced God's unconditional love, to bring the good news to all people. Therefore, the Diocese of Antigonish is committed to helping each person to grow in their relationship with Jesus Christ. The Diocese is also committed to vibrant, inclusive and sustainable communities that serve the faithful so that we can reach out to all people with a spirit of hope for the future.*

“The joy of the Gospel fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus. Those who accept his offer of salvation are set free from sin, sorrow, inner emptiness and loneliness. With Christ, joy is constantly born anew. ... I wish to encourage the Christian faithful to embark upon a new chapter of evangelization marked by this joy, while pointing out new paths for the Church's journey in years to come.” (Pope Francis, *Evangelii gaudium*, n.1)

## Mission Statement

*We, the people of God within the Diocese of Antigonish, embraced by the Mystery of God's love, commit ourselves to the building and the promoting of the Reign of God through the continuing renewal of community, service, worship and teaching within our parishes and Diocese. We strive to be open, honest and inclusive in all our relationships, and transparent in our material and spiritual practices, being courageous, trustworthy and full of hope for the living out of the Gospel in our daily lives.*

“Now may our God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus direct our way to you. And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, just as we abound in love for you. And may he so strengthen your hearts in holiness that you may be blameless before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.” (*1Thessalonians 3: 11-13*)



## **Data Collection and Analysis: Part One**

The first part of the data collection process centered upon a survey that was compiled by the Diocesan Congress Planning Committee and widely circulated to encourage as much input as possible. The survey asked respondents to identify what they found life-giving in their parish, Diocese and Church Universal, what they did not find life-giving in their parish, Diocese and Church Universal, and to make recommendations for improvements. The Committee launched a lengthy and comprehensive process of data collection to provide all interested parties with multiple opportunities to voice their opinions and make suggestions for moving forward. The survey was widely distributed for completion individually, through group deliberations at facilitated sessions, and via on-line access.

Approximately 3000 individual and group surveys were submitted to the Planning Committee. The Committee was very grateful to all of the respondents for their tremendous response to the call for input. The submissions ranged in length from a few lines to several typed pages. All of the submissions were reviewed, summarized and tallied by various members of the Diocesan Congress Planning Committee. Each member of the committee read and reviewed some of the submissions so that they became familiar with the main concerns and suggestions of the respondents. Following the review of the submissions, a synopsis of the data was prepared for analysis by the Committee.

Six major themes emerged from the data: 1) revitalizing the parishes and Diocese; 2) strengthening Church support structures; 3) supporting Church ministries; 4) enhancing communication; 5) promoting faith formation, Church teaching and evangelization; and 6) extending Church outreach. These themes framed the proposed 5-year Pastoral Plan that was initiated by the Diocesan Congress Planning Committee and then presented to the Congress delegates for their review and affirmation.



## Data Collection and Analysis: Part Two

In anticipation of the Diocesan Congress, the delegates attended a Day of Preparation in Louisdale on September 14, 2013. At that time, they met the Congress facilitator, Ms. Anne Walsh. She led a series of activities designed to begin the process of communal discernment that would continue at the Diocesan Congress. Following the theme of ‘The Road to Emmaus’, the delegates were encouraged to reflect upon where our Diocese has been, where it is now and where it may flourish in the future. The delegates were also introduced to the Proposed Pastoral Plan. Each delegate was provided with a copy of the Plan to review and share with others in readiness for the Diocesan Congress.



Subsequently, at the Diocesan Congress, group discernment regarding the Proposed Pastoral Plan was the main focus of the activities facilitated by Ms. Walsh. For example, the delegates voted to indicate which strategies in the Proposed Plan were of greatest importance to them. After the Congress, their votes were tallied and utilized to reorder the strategies under each priority in the Diocesan Pastoral Plan.



The delegates also participated in small group discussions regarding specific priorities and strategies in the Proposed Pastoral Plan. Their small group deliberations at each table were recorded on tally sheets, as illustrated below. All of the tally sheets were collected at the end of each table activity. At the end of the Congress, the tally sheets were compiled and typed into a comprehensive summary. This summary, containing delegate input regarding the implementation of the Diocesan Pastoral Plan, will guide the work of the Implementation Committee.

<b>PRIORITY:</b> <u>Revitalizing the Parishes and Diocese</u>		<b>TIME LINES AND ACTIVITIES FOR            IMPLEMENTING THE STRATEGY</b>				
<b>STRATEGY:</b> <b>Diocesan Pastoral Plan</b>						
<b>DIOCESAN            COMMITMENT</b>	<b>PARISH            COMMITMENT</b>	<b>YEAR 1</b>	<b>YEAR 2</b>	<b>YEAR 3</b>	<b>YEAR 4</b>	<b>YEAR 5</b>
Create Diocesan Pastoral Plan	Contribute to creation of Diocesan Pastoral Plan					





Some of the verbatim comments and suggestions put forward by the Congress delegates and recorded on the tally sheets included the following:

1. Prioritize the priorities.
2. The plan needs to be tracked periodically on a 6-month basis.
3. Everyone has a copy of the plan; it is a public document.
4. Communicate with other parishes using strengths and experience.
5. We will have good, relevant, active liturgies.
6. We should all be hospitality ministers.
7. Create accessible youth office (centrally located).
8. Technology could help us reach our youth.
9. Education - main theme for year 1.
10. Improve and reassess as we go!
11. Assess the needs/wants of parishioners.
12. Provide opportunities for enrichment.

13. Music makes a big difference in the Mass.
14. Encourage positive feedback to all ministries.
15. Initiate a strong baptismal formation program in parishes.
16. We need the parish to tend the fire started by a Challenge Weekend.
17. All job positions need to be advertised.
18. Work to uplift people, build community.
19. Determine how implementation will be financed.
20. Enhance programs we have.

As exemplified by the brief excerpts quoted above, the Implementation Committee has a rich bank of written input from Congress delegates to draw upon during all phases of the implementation process. Taken together, the two phases of data collection and analysis empowered the voices of the people to shape both the creation and implementation of the Diocesan Pastoral Plan. It is our plan.



## ***Priority 1: Revitalizing the Parishes and Diocese***

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***1 Peter 2:5*** Like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

### **Critical Issue: A Pastoral Plan**

There is a critical need in our Diocese for a Pastoral Plan to guide the processes of reconciliation, renewal and rebuilding in the context of faith. Recognizing the current lack of a Pastoral Plan and the importance of a plan to frame and synchronize diocesan and parish initiatives, the Diocese is committed to the creation of a 5-year Pastoral Plan. In addition, a Diocesan Implementation Committee will be struck to guide the implementation of the plan and a Pastoral Plan Coordinator will be appointed to oversee the implementation process. Therefore, the Diocese is committed to responding to this need in cooperation with the parishes and in accordance with the priorities identified by delegates to the October 2013, Diocesan Renewal Congress. Specifically, the Diocese will, in collaboration with the parishes:

1. Create a Diocesan Pastoral Plan with contributions from the parishes.
2. Have the Diocesan Liturgical Commission provide a wide range of supports for the parishes in cooperation with the parish Liturgy Committees and Pastoral Councils. These supports may include: formation for hospitality ministers; support for RCIA as a model for Church; creation of a list of acceptable music for parishes (including acceptable secular music); using inclusive language; encouraging family friendly spaces, words, resources, and gestures in parishes; providing guidelines for specific group liturgies; assisting the Youth Office with youth liturgies; and providing guidelines for anniversary celebrations.
3. Form an Implementation Committee to lead the implementation of the Diocesan Pastoral Plan with the participation of Priests and Parish Pastoral Councils.

4. Appoint a Pastoral Plan Coordinator to oversee the implementation process with the cooperation of the parishes.
5. Provide materials and programs to the parishes to uphold the centrality of the Sunday Eucharist and support the parishes in their engagement of parishioners in these programs.
6. Provide guidelines for a minimum of two, annual community reconciliation services with or without confessors additional to the pastor after the service. The parishes will celebrate a minimum of two, annual reconciliation services with or without additional confessors available for confessions after the service.
7. Implement a concentrated campaign by the Marriage Tribunal to assist people to have their marriages recognized by the Church. The parishes will make the information known and encourage couples to access the opportunity to have their marriages recognized by the Church.
8. Recognize in a concrete way the outstanding clergy, religious and laity of the Diocese while the parishes honor local parishioners and nominate people for diocesan recognition.





9. Promote a vocation culture through the Diocesan Priests Vocations Committee and the Diocesan Vocations Awareness Committee. Each Parish Pastoral Council will have a contact person to liaise with the Diocesan Vocations Awareness Committee.
10. Devise a common census format with each parish conducting its own census.
11. Provide the names of facilitators for parish retreats and missions. Each parish will sponsor a retreat/mission every three years.
12. Ensure that the Diocesan Liturgical Commission makes parishioners aware of the *Directory on Popular Piety and the Liturgy* so that each parish may support approved devotions.



## ***Priority 2: Strengthening Church Support Structures***

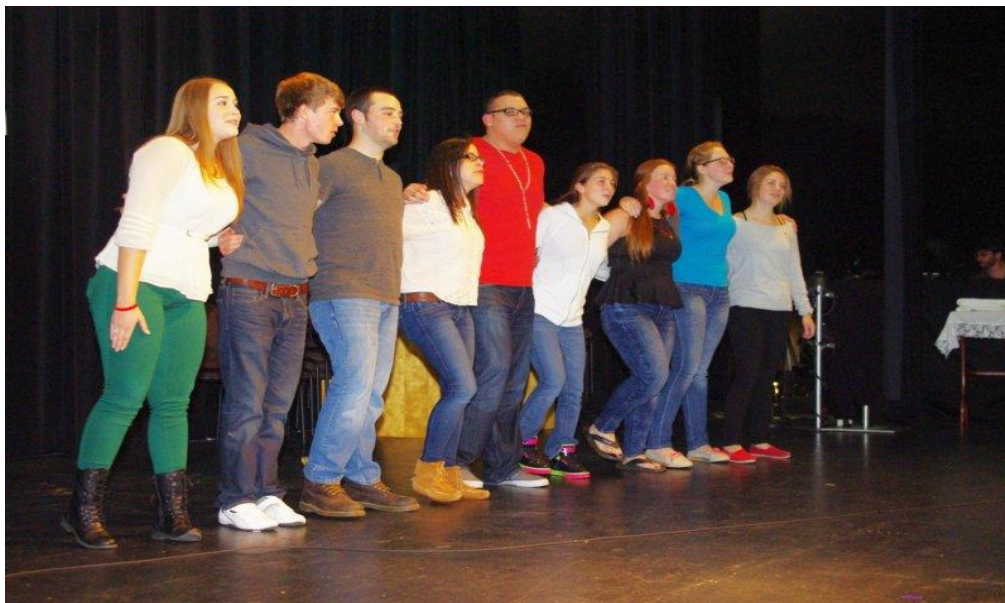
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**Acts 15:40-41** Paul chose Silas and set out, the believers commending him to the grace of the Lord. He went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.

### **Critical Issue: Strengthened Church Structures**

There is a critical need in our parishes and Diocese for clearer collaboration among various parish and diocesan structures. As well, some of the structures need to be strengthened so that parishioners may be able to utilize them more effectively. Therefore, the Diocese is committed to responding to this need in cooperation with the parishes and in accordance with the priorities identified by delegates to the October, 2013, Diocesan Congress. Specifically, the Diocese will, in collaboration with the parishes:

1. Form a Diocesan Pastoral Council under the direction of the Bishop. The parishes will enhance the role of their Parish Pastoral Councils to identify, assess and address their parish needs. The parishes will assess their specific needs related to: youth; seniors; bereaved; marginalized; family life; faith formation; sick and dying; shut-ins; newcomers; liturgy; prisoners; ecumenism; the poor; immigrants; finances; family life; and Development and Peace.
2. Appoint a full-time Youth Coordinator to animate youth ministries in the parishes/deaneries. Youth ministry initiatives will be implemented in each parish/deanery, such as a Parish Pastoral Council Youth committee and/or the selection of a full-time or part-time youth minister.
3. Enact a Professional Standards Advisory Committee to prepare for a Diocesan Reconciliation Service guided by the use of Sr. Kenny's book: *Healing the Church*. The Bishop will consult with representative victims of sexual abuse as to time and place of the Reconciliation Service. The parishes will form groups to use Sr. Kenny's book and to encourage parishioners to participate in the Reconciliation Service.



4. Ensure that the Professional Standards Advisory Committee updates protocols for Professional Standards and provides in-servicing for diocesan personnel regarding personal boundaries. The parishes will make these protocols known to parishioners and parish staff will participate in the workshops on the protocols.
5. Support the Diocesan Finance Committee in providing clear information to the parishes about finances. The parish Finance Committees will be transparent about parish finances to parishioners.
6. Appoint an Advocate for Women in leadership roles in the parish and Diocese. The parishes will work with the Advocate to recognize and enhance the leadership roles of women in the parishes.
7. Assess the specific needs of individuals and groups within the Diocese.
8. Update Diocesan policies and guidelines to be posted on-line and explained in workshops throughout the Diocese.
9. Form a Regional Pastoral Council in each deanery. The parishes will provide members to Regional Pastoral Council.
10. Create a clear format for financial reports that is used by all parishes in reporting their finances.

11. Initiate civil incorporation of parishes under the direction of the Bishop. The parishes will cooperate with the Bishop and committee in the civil incorporation of parishes.
12. Provide periodic financial audits. The parishes will provide annual financial reports to their parishioners.
13. Initiate an Office of Mediation under the direction of the Bishop whereby people can bring forward hurts and concerns and seek appropriate reconciliation. Parishes will make parishioners aware of this office and related services.
14. Consult Parish Pastoral Councils through the Bishop on the appointment of new pastors and/or teams. Parish Pastoral Councils may dialogue with the Bishop and/or Personnel Board regarding these appointments to their parishes.
15. Negotiate contracts for all hired personnel, including full job descriptions. The parishes will implement the policies regarding contracts and job descriptions.
16. Ensure that all Diocesan offices demonstrate sensitivity to seniors in ministries by including them in their programs. Parish Pastoral Councils will have a senior's member and/or committee to implement ministries to seniors in each parish.
17. Host a Diocesan Day for Diocesan offices to inform parishioners about the services of the various Diocesan offices. Parishes will send representatives to the Diocesan Day and share the information with parishioners.



### ***Priority 3: Supporting Church Ministries***

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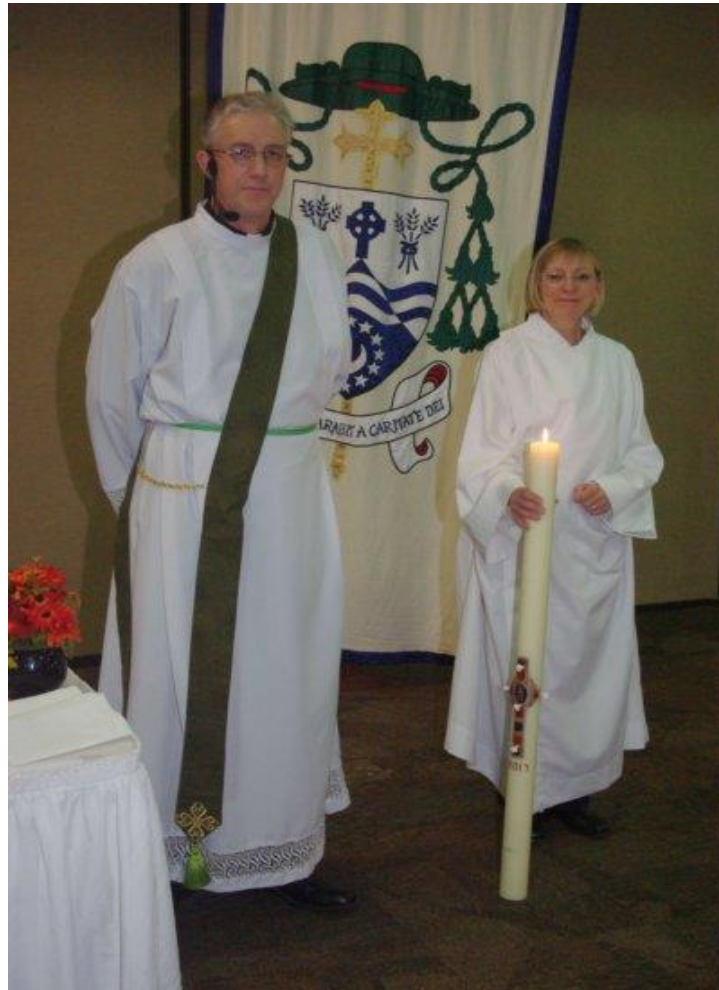
***Ephesians 4:11-12*** The gifts he [Jesus] gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ.

#### **Critical Issue: Support for Church Ministries and Ministers**

There is a critical need in our parishes and Diocese for increased support for the various ministries in our parishes in the context of faith. Recognizing the importance of vibrant ministries in all aspects of Church life, the Diocese is committed to increasing support for parish ministries and ministers. Specifically, the Diocese will, in collaboration with the parishes:

1. Provide workshops for all parish ministries which parish representatives will attend.
2. Provide standard preparations for the Sacraments. Parish teams will be created for Sacraments, such as Baptism and Marriage.
3. Provide support to parish ministries based upon identified needs. The parishes will assess their needs in the various ministries, including: youth; shut-ins; liturgy; prisoners; seniors; young families; ecumenism; bereaved; marginalized; newcomers/immigrants; family life; and sick and dying.
4. Initiate a form of the Faith Development and Ministry Program for Laity under the direction of the Office of Diocesan Ministry. The parishes will provide information, encouragement, prayer and support for parish candidates, including diaconal candidates.





5. Develop a performance review process for all ministers, including the Bishop, priests, deacons, and lay ministers. The parishes will work collaboratively with the Diocese to implement the performance review process.
6. Provide an opportunity for priests to participate in renewal programs with the option of returning to their parish. The parishes will arrange for Sunday worship and daily pastoral administration if a pastor is participating in a renewal program.
7. Update guidelines for all liturgical ministries, post the guidelines on the Diocesan web site and provide workshops for liturgical ministries. The parishes will implement the diocesan policies and educate parishioners about

- the policies through information sessions. The parishes will host workshops to demonstrate their commitment to their ministries, which may include: presiding (lay and clergy); hospitality; sacristan; server; music/cantor; reader; extraordinary minister of Holy Communion; art and environment; baptism; funeral; and marriage teams.
8. Provide assistance to priests/deacons with homiletics and ongoing formation through the Office of Diocesan Ministry. The parishes will designate a structure whereby parishioners may have input into their pastor's homilies.
  9. Host an annual Diocesan Day which parish representatives will attend.
  10. Ask the Council of Priests to advise the Bishop regarding salary options for priests interested in arranging their own accommodations aside from traditional glebe houses. The parishes will discern the changes necessary to provide for a different residence for their pastor.
  11. Initiate an Inter-Faith Commission, with parishes participating in inter-faith activities.
  12. Restart the Diocesan Ecumenical Commission under the direction of the Bishop. The parishes will participate in ecumenical activities, e. g. via a committee of Pastoral Council.



13. Seek the input of clergy and laity regarding the circumstances of the Diocese and the type of Bishop required when the See is vacant, through the office of the Diocesan Administrator. Parish Pastoral Councils will provide input to the Diocesan Administrator.
14. Investigate the appropriateness of re-starting a form of Ministry to Priests program through the Bishop and the Council of Priests.





### ***Priority 4: Enhancing Communication***

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***Proverbs 22:17-18*** Incline your ear and hear my words, and apply your mind to my teaching; for it will be pleasant if you keep them within you, if all of them are ready on your lips.

#### **Critical Issue: Open, Transparent and Inclusive Communication**

There is a critical need, in the context of our faith, for open, transparent and inclusive communication in our parishes and Diocese. Recognizing the need for enhanced communication, openness, transparency and two-way dialogue on issues of concern to parishioners in all aspects of Church life, the Diocese is committed to effective communication. Specifically, the Diocese will, in collaboration with the parishes:

1. Appoint a Communications Coordinator under the direction of the Bishop to develop and implement a diocesan communications strategy. The parish pastoral councils and secretaries will work with the Diocesan Communications Coordinator to implement the communications strategy.
2. Use both secular and social media, under the direction of the Diocesan Communications Coordinator. The parishes will select a communications person to liaise with the Diocesan Communications Coordinator, participate in workshops on communications, maintain a bulletin, and use secular and social media.
3. Update the Diocesan Webpage and make it more user-friendly, under the direction of the Diocesan Communications Coordinator. Parishes will also maintain and update their webpages.
4. Communicate regularly with the parishes via letters from the Bishop. The letters from the Bishop will be shared with all parishioners and the all of the Bishop's communications will be made readily available to parishioners.



5. Recommend reading materials for personal and parish use under the direction of the Emmaus Center and other Diocesan offices. The parishes will encourage parishioners to form and join groups such as book clubs, Lenten discussion groups and reading groups.
6. Conduct a multi-media campaign to communicate the Diocesan Pastoral Plan. Parishes will share the Diocesan Pastoral Plan with all parishioners.
7. Provide regular bulletins, under the direction of the Diocesan Communications Coordinator. The parishes will circulate the Diocesan bulletins to all parishioners.
8. Use inclusive language in all communications, as will the parishes.
9. Provide workshops for parish secretaries on communications and related technologies. The parishes will encourage secretaries and office volunteers to attend the workshops.



## ***Priority 5: Promoting Faith Formation, Church Teaching and Evangelization***

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***Psalm 25:4-5*** Make me to know your ways, O Lord; teach me your paths. Lead me in your truth and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all day long.

### **Critical Issue A: Adult Faith Formation**

There is a critical need in our Diocese for more adult faith formation opportunities. Recognizing this need, the Diocese is committed to the facilitation of expanded faith formation options in the Diocese and its parishes.

### **Critical Issue B: Consistent and Interactive Faith Formation for Children, Youth and Families**

There is a critical need in our Diocese for more consistency and the active engagement of children, youth and families in faith formation, especially in preparation for the Sacraments. Recognizing the need for more intergenerational and interactive approaches to be used consistently throughout the Diocese, we are committed to providing a more uniform and interactive model of faith formation. Specifically, the Diocese will, in collaboration with the parishes:

1. Host faith formation sessions on a range of topics, including, but not limited to: the Catholic faith, marriage, sexual orientation, the priesthood and diaconate. The parishes will participate in the adult faith formation programs.
2. Support the formation of catechists under the direction of the Emmaus Center. The parishes will appoint and form faith formation coordinators and catechists.
3. Provide workshops for pastoral unit catechists. The parish catechists will attend the workshops.
4. Work with other Diocesan offices, under the leadership of the Emmaus Centre, to provide opportunities for ongoing education regarding a variety of topics,

including, but not limited to: marriage, divorce, gender issues, priesthood, reconciliation, diaconate, new evangelization, Vatican II, religious life, single life, family life and the new Roman Missal. The parishes will take advantage of these diocesan presentations by advertising them, encouraging attendance and sending representatives, as well as possibly hosting a session.

5. Negotiate with Cape Breton and St. Francis Xavier universities to promote courses/materials and to identify speakers on relevant topics. The parishes will identify their educational and faith formation needs.
6. Provide materials for sacramental preparations. The parishes will use these materials consistently and appropriately.
7. Promote intergenerational catechesis under the leadership of the Emmaus Center. The parishes will use an intergenerational catechetical approach.
8. Provide guidelines for “Teaching Masses”. The parishes will gather young people and celebrate “Teaching Masses”.
9. Make resources available for children’s liturgies, under the leadership of the Emmaus Centre. The parishes will encourage and celebrate children’s liturgies.
10. Create a faith formation model for preparation for the Sacraments. The parishes consistently utilize the diocesan model when preparing for the Sacraments.



## ***Priority 6: Extending Church Outreach***

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***Matthew 5:14-16*** You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.

### **Critical Issue A: Reaching out to Catholics who feel Alienated from the Church**

There is a critical need in our Diocese to reach out to Catholics who are no longer participating in church life and to welcome them back in an authentic, responsive and inclusive manner. In particular, there are those who may have felt unwelcome at church due to diverse lifestyle choices, marital status, sexual orientation and/or socio-economic barriers. Recognizing the importance of welcoming and valuing all Catholics, the Diocese is committed to an outreach program for Catholics who feel alienated from the Church.

### **Critical Issue B: Expanded Social Justice and Community Outreach**

There is a critical need in our Diocese to build upon the strong Catholic traditions of Social Justice and Community Outreach through service, charity and good works that contribute to community life. In particular, there is a need to reach out to our brothers and sisters who may feel marginalized by a wide range of human challenges, such as poverty, hunger, substance abuse, disabling conditions, and/or reduced mobility. Recognizing the importance of making meaningful contributions to the lives of individuals and communities, the Diocese is committed to increased Community Outreach and Social Justice. Specifically, the Diocese will, in collaboration with the parishes:

1. Implement a “Welcome Back Catholics” campaign that will be implemented in each parish.
2. Promote and support the renewal movements and encourage priests, religious and laity to participate in these movements, including, but not limited to: Cursillo, Challenge, Marriage Preparation, Engaged Encounter, Marriage Encounter, New Beginnings and Charismatic Prayer Groups. The parishes will inform, prepare and support candidates for the various renewal programs.



3. Enact a multi-media campaign and various activities to invite Catholics to Church. The parishes will participate in the multi-media campaign and host local events to invite Catholics to Church, including hosting socials in parishes and deaneries as an expression of outreach.
4. Revitalize the Office of Social Justice. The parishes will have Pastoral Council Committees on Social Justice to support Development and Peace and local social

justice initiatives including, but not limited to: St. Vincent de Paul, Loaves and Fishes, Harvest House, soup kitchens and food banks.

5. Educate parishioners about the Social Justice teachings of the Church, including developing and delivering specific programs to parishioners.
6. Designate a Ministry of Family Life. Each Parish Pastoral Council will have a Family Life Committee or person to coordinate strategies, projects, etc.
7. Renew the Marriage Preparation Program, and the parishes will encourage couples to participate in this program.
8. Host socials in parishes and deaneries as an expression of outreach.
9. Consider a policy to clarify suitable places for weddings.
10. Work for systemic change.



## Implementation Process

Following the Diocesan Congress in October, 2013, Bishop Brian Dunn appointed an Implementation Committee to guide the implementation of the Diocesan Pastoral Plan. Just as the plan was informed by the voice of the people on the questionnaires and surveys, the ongoing implementation process will be guided by the input of Congress delegates. In particular, the variations in the culture, language, size, geography, population, staff and financial resources of parishes that were repeatedly referenced by Congress delegates will be considered in the implementation process. Respectful of this diversity, the Implementation Committee will work with the parishes to enact the components of the plan. Through teamwork at the Diocese, deanery and parish levels, the Pastoral Plan will come to fruition. Accountability, transparency and openness, which were called for often by respondents to the Congress survey, will be supported by periodic reports and updates that will be made widely available to parishioners via various media. Should adjustments to the plan be required as implementation proceeds, a common occurrence in a plan of five years duration, parishioners will be updated in a prompt and open manner. *Rebuilding Trust and Hope* is a Diocesan Pastoral Plan rooted in our personal relationship with Jesus Christ. It is about reconnecting, reestablishing and deepening relationships based on trust and hope. It is also about renewing the Church through faith and service under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. As we implement the plan, it is important to bear in mind the importance of prayer at each step in the journey of implementation.

“I pray that, according to the riches of his glory, he may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love. I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.” (*Ephesians 3: 16-20*)



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