

4. STRATEGY FOR STRENGTHENING OF ALL MINISTRIES¹

Assumptions & Values

As Catholics, our call to social justice requires the application of practical precepts of Christianity, which flow directly from our understanding of the teachings of Jesus Christ. In our own times, the spirit of a redeeming Christian life and the role of the Church in its propagation are perhaps best summed up in the words of Pope Francis:

“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.”

When we practice this call to the “joy of the gospel”, one’s concern for “social justice” in our AoLP world is no longer an abstraction or a harmless wish or ideal not strong enough to lead to action. It becomes real and impactful.

We also acknowledge that, even in a great Parish like AoLP, our achievements have fallen short and a more intentional, focused effort is required. Once again, the Apostolic Exhortation summarizes the situation succinctly:

“The parish is not an outdated institution; precisely because it possesses great flexibility, it can assume quite different contours depending on the openness and missionary creativity of the pastor and the community.”²

A careful reading of the various strategic issues identified in virtually every Ministry theme, clearly places the importance of the 60 plus Ministries at the very core of the our role as missionary disciples. The strategy review also clearly establishes the need to strengthen all our ministries — possibly doubling or tripling the number of parishioners involved in all ministries in order to effectively

¹ The Parish and Community breakout team was instrumental in preparing this Strategy

² Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, December, 2013, paragraph 28, and 23

meet the challenges faced by all volunteers involved in Liturgy, Social Action, Parish and Community, and Christian Education ministries.

STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT

Taken collectively, the various strategic initiatives identified for Liturgy, Social Action, Christian Education, and Parish and Community represent major increases in the levels of activities for ministries volunteers. In short, we will need more people given the growing needs of the Parish. Also, a common theme encountered throughout this strategic planning process was the realization that we need to form our people better, we need better planning, and we need better co-ordination.

In examining AoLP's achievements, we note more specifically several major deficiencies:

- There's a need for a broad appeal for an increase in volunteers to expand the scope of ministries. This can be described as the need for accurate descriptions of the task a volunteer is asked to do coupled with a transparent recruitment process — essentially, a 'job posting' process.
- There is a need to align the goals and activities of the various ministries to the mission of the church as expressed in the Apostolic Exhortation, "The Joy of the Gospel" and AoLP's Pastoral strategy: to retain that which meets the test, to change what needs changing, and to invent new gaps are visible. This calls parish ministries to intentionally examine what, why, and how current activities measure up to the Apostolic Exhortation.

An important overriding goal is the need for greater cohesiveness across parish ministries. Cohesiveness speaks to the process whereby all ministry leaders would work together as a parish-wide team.

To address these needs, two broad Strategic Initiatives are proposed:

1. A Discipleship Formation Program; and,
2. Enhanced Organization and Delivery through: Volunteer 'Job' postings (for commitment and recruiting); Succession planning in all ministries; An Annual Ministry Planning Workshop; and, a Full Time Coordinator of Volunteers and Ministries.

The desired outcome of these initiatives is to leverage Annunciation's vibrant 60 plus Ministries through a process of recruitment, formation, empowerment, and intentional planning; doubling or more the number of parishioners involved in all ministries; and, to deepen the leadership in each area with people who "get" the vision for the best possible execution of ministry goals.

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE 1: DISCIPLESHIP FORMATION PROGRAM

Most Catholics receive formation in how to grow in holiness personally (Mass, prayer, reconciliation, etc...). Most know how to love their neighbour (corporal and spiritual works of mercy). However, not many know how to share the Gospel. This is new territory; we need an adult formation process to help ministries, especially new recruits, know how to do this, in our daily lives, and in ministry.

It is important not to understate the value and generosity of what is done by our Ministries; what is done is wonderful. At the same time it is important to recognize that we fall short, and perhaps the most critical area where we fall short is the formation support of volunteers. We have encountered numerous tales of volunteers who have worked tirelessly for many years, who need assistance, training, and plans for their replacement. Additionally, we now need to dramatically expand the level of effort in several areas requiring formation in the missionary discipleship process in terms of what it is, why it's needed and how to do it. In brief, if we want to exceed our past achievements, we need to improve our processes and offer better formation and support to the people who do it so as to empower and equip them. To do so, it is necessary to undertake the following two action projects:

1. Discipleship Formation Program

- Conduct an inventory of current initiatives / practices;
- Determine success/failures including experience of participants;
- Identify performance requirements given the needs of our surrounding community;
- Examine best practices in other jurisdictions;
- Select appropriate solutions and integrate into a practical / doable program;
- Implement missionary disciple training as necessary;
- Implement a systematic formation program ; and,
- Implement Missionary Disciple projects according to needs, capacity and resources of the various Ministries.

Time Line: Year 1: a) complete design phase; and, b) recruit and equip the first cohort participants.

Project Scope: A two-day formation format for 2 representatives from each of AoLP's 60 ministries

Estimate Cost: One time cost of approximately \$13,000

Visible signs of successful implementation will be evident by increased involvement in the life of the parish, increased desire by parishioners to share their faith and to pass on the gift received, and increased interest to serve and give to the parish and/or community.

Details for of this initiative are outlined in Strategic Initiative 4-1.

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE 2: ORGANIZATION AND DELIVERY

This initiative aims to empower the AoLP volunteer base, enabling them to undertake the challenges outlined in the important Ministry Strategic Initiatives described in this plan. In essence, it is a response to the need for enhanced volunteer capabilities recognition and identification in all areas of AoLP's activities.

Those involved in ministries “get” the bigger picture and how it important it is to excel in delivering the “joy of the gospel” throughout AoLP's 60 plus Ministries. Our goal is for anyone who is touched by AoLP to feel welcomed, that they belong, and that they have a spiritual encounter with Jesus by being at any AoLP event — that they feel supported by the community and touched by God.

This is only possible by creating great experiences with the “new” person in mind. Our goal is to simply grow the faith, and by extension, the salvation of our members and the people within the broader community through an enhanced ‘AoLP experience’.

An enhanced customer experience, both for current parishioners and our broader community, requires an ability to deliver outstanding fellowship, learning, and worship events including Christian education, adult faith studies, and liturgies flawlessly! Doing so requires a significant engagement and empowerment of our people involved in all various ministries and leads us to propose four enabling projects:

1. Volunteer ‘Job’ postings (for commitment and recruiting);
2. Succession planning in all ministries;
3. An Annual Ministry Planning Workshop; and,
4. Full Time Coordinator of Volunteers and Ministries.

The first two of the above projects are fairly straight forward; a description of the what is intended is outline in the Strategy for Liturgy - Strategic Initiative 3: Organization and Delivery elsewhere in this report. The Annual Ministry Planning Workshop and the Full Time Coordinator of Volunteers and Ministries have significant budgetary implications and warrant more explanation at this juncture.

3. Annual Ministry Planning Workshop

The desired outcome of an annual ministry planning workshop is to provide an opportunity for ministry leaders to reflect on the challenge of living the “Joy of the Gospel” through an intentional examination of Ministry plans, challenges, resources requirements, and delivery coordination. The expected benefits are:

- Clearer plans;
- Better communication amongst ministries;
- Better focus in planning;
- Greater understanding amongst all leaders of other ministries;
- Greater sense of community amongst the ministries;
- Better programs/activities; and,
- Greater effectiveness.

Time Line: Year 1: Fall of each year;

Project Scope: A 1 day planning retreat format for 2 representatives from each of AoLP’s 60 ministries

Estimate Cost: Cost of the event would be marginal

4. Full Time Coordinator of Volunteers and Ministries

Volunteer coordination is a lot of work, and our Pastors can’t do it all. Ideally, we need to have a paid staffer to do this work; essentially a mini-HR function that approaches the managing of our volunteers as the vital resource that they truly are. This would leave our Pastors to do the work they are called to do: preach, teach, do the Sacraments, and pastor the people of God.

Some of the more specific coordination and leadership tasks that a full time resource would do and which largely go unmet currently include:

- Volunteer “Job” postings – with clear expectations, guidelines, time commitments, so people know what the needs are and what the commitment would mean to them;
- Succession planning in all ministries – Standard operation procedure manuals for training of volunteers and pass-off are required so that policies are clear and a seamless process is assured;
- Provide potential volunteers advice on how they would / could be suited to particular ministries (LYS) — generally people don’t realize what needs there are exactly;
- Coordinate the formation and training needs for all ministry volunteers and leadership team; and,
- Increase the number of new volunteers and ensure fit – avoid the same people doing everything where new ideas or projects generally means the same people just do MORE things.

It is anticipated that the role of this resource will be more fully described and informed following the learnings of the Strategic Initiative 1: Discipleship Formation Program outlined above.

Time Line: Year 1: Within six months; to be staffed initially on a volunteer bases for an interim period of time.

Project Scope: Full time resource is critical to bring professional management to the volunteer core of AoLP’s 60 plus ministries

Estimate Cost: Approximately \$50,000 on an annualized bases.

Details for of this initiative are outlined in Strategic Initiative 4-2.