

PASTORAL PLAN YEARS 2024-2026

Progress Update May 2024

The following document is the Divine Mercy Parish Pastoral Plan for years 2024-2026.

This document includes a progress update that gives detail of the Pastoral Plan's Priority Goals through May 2024.

Faith Formation

Priority Goals

To provide faith formation opportunities that educate parishioners of all age groups on the importance of continuing to grow in the knowledge of our Catholic faith and deepen our relationship with Christ.

Action Steps

- 1. Continue to grow our Family Faith Formation program and Youth Group.

Group	2024	2025	2026
Family Faith Formation	42 Families 57 Children		
Reconciliation	8		
First Communion	9		
Confirmation	14		
Youth Group	12-18		

The next two years Catechesis will focus on the Word of God and Lectio Divina for Levels 1-6 through Augustine Institute and implementing intergenerational approach.

- 2. Develop a Faith Formation Group aimed at parishioners aged 18-30 and 30+ to give young adults and young couples the opportunity to grow in faith between their confirmation and when their children begin faith formation.
 - a. Launch is scheduled spring/summer 2024. We will host 3 events in the first 4 months. Two events are social and one missionary.
 - b. Goal is to attract 25-30 members in the first year, with representatives from all three churches.
 - c. The following steps will happen to launch the group.
 - i. Identify and engage with young adults and families within the Divine Mercy Parish that would be interested in joining.
 - ii. Include a schedule of social meetings and events for the first year of implementation.
 - iii. Develop a curriculum of faith-based topics that will inspire young adults and families at their stage of life.
 - iv. Develop leadership within the group to help grow and advance the group.
- 3. Promote adult faith through ALPHA, Catholic Christian Outreach (CCO), Bible Study, and Sycamore, speakers, FORMED online programs and relevant books.
 - a. The Archbishop’s Pastoral Priority for 2024 is catechesis with an emphasis on Adult Faith Formation.
 - b. In Fall 2024 there will be a focus on the Doctrine of the Sacrament of the Eucharist leading up to the Eucharistic Congress in October 2024, Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament and Adoration, and Bible Study on the Jewish roots of the Eucharist, the Real Presence.

4. Promote small groups to grow in understanding of our faith, such as Monday night men's group, Padre Pio Group, Friday Morning Men's Prayer group (FM645), Called and Gifted Group, along with other small prayer groups.
 - a. Re-introduce Gallup Strengths and Called and Gifted.
 - b. Utilize FORMED programs to create discussion groups.
 - c. Utilize social media or form a group to discuss recommended books.

Compassionate Outreach & Service

Priority Goals

To nurture parishioners on the various outreach ministries that are currently active or needed in the Parish. To encourage parishioners to participate by letting them know of the needs and opportunities are available from different ministries.

Action Steps

1. To promote, educate and encourage parishioners to support and participate in the following programs:
 - a. Emergency Shelter Project
 - b. Margaret's House Meal Preparation (F.O.O.D)
 - c. Advent Backpack Program
 - d. CareFREE Giveaway
 - e. Grab & Go School Snack Program
 - f. Saint Vincent de Paul Organization
 - g. Chalice Collection
 - h. Santa's Breakfast
 - i. Bereavement Counselling
 - j. Pastoral Outreach Group
 - k. Other community outreach programs
 - l. Catholic Women's League
 - m. Knights of Columbus
2. The parish will institute a Refugee Committee
 - a. Review focus and goals for the Parish Refugee Committee
 - b. Volunteers from all three churches to serve on the committee.
3. The parish will institute a support program for single mothers.
 - a. Continue support of Open Door Healthy Life Choices Centre with our annual baby bottle fundraising drive takes place between Mother's Day and Father's Day.
 - b. Explore other needed programs to implement in 2024-2026 or how can we as a parish be of more assistance with Open Door and the work they are doing.

4. The parish will explore how they can help to provide Counselling Services and Counselling Education to the community.
 - a. There is currently a bereavement support group offered within the parish. Increase communication to the Parish about the program available.
 - b. Explore forming a team to keep in touch with the family who is dealing with the loss of a loved one.

Liturgy & Worship

Priority Goals

Offer a friendly and welcoming place of worship reflective of our diverse parish community that encourages growth and strengthening of our relationship with the Lord. Encourage parishioners to use their gifts and talents to participate in Liturgical Celebrations and /or involvement of fellowship and outreach.

Action Steps

1. Form a Welcoming Committee and events for new parishioners.
2. Enhance parish hospitality by holding Nametag Sunday Masses and further define expectations and roles of greeters at all churches.
3. Provide missions for our parishioners
4. Host a ministry fair to encourage parishioner participation.
5. Explore adding a Sunday evening Mass to accommodate those who work or have traveled on the weekend.
6. Promote Sunday Mass livestreams to senior facilities within our parish boundaries.
7. Implement Children's Liturgy of the Word in all three churches.

Communication

Priority Goals

To communicate clear and consistent messages across different mediums/ forms to all members of the parish in a timely manner. To spread the Good News not only to active parishioners but to people who live within our parish boundaries.

Action Steps

1. Our parish will endeavor to enhance our methods of communication to parishioners and those within our community by re-organizing the parish bulletin, enhance parish website content, look at other methods of social media, Fast Read Emails and other forms of communications available.
2. Form a communications committee in the spring/summer of 2024
3. Update the parish database for registered members.
 - a) Verify who should receive communications and their preferred method of communication.
 - b) This will be an annual process.
4. Explore other methods/forms of communications to get our message to the younger or more technologically inclined members of the parish.
5. Research ways to promote the church both internal and external. Including locations of our churches and Mass times for those visiting our communities.
6. Evaluate and recommend replacement of outdoor signs in 2025.

Faith Formation Progress

1. Family Faith Formation

We had our First Catechetical Sunday in six years in October with 57 children. For the 2024 Liturgical year we gathered at St. John XXIII seven times. The formation is a multimedia experience for both gathered and non-gathered catechesis utilizing resources from Loyola Press and Formed.

a. Sacramental Preparation

Sacrament of First Eucharist- was received for the first time by three children of an older age. Both parents and children were prepared using *God's Gift: Reconciliation and Eucharist* from Loyola Press.

Sacrament of Confirmation – Archbishop Dunn will confirm 14 candidates on June 11th (7pm at Saint John XXIII). The confirmandi with their sponsor and parents discern a two- year commitment in our parish community in the following three categories: *Evangelization, Liturgy and Worship, and Justice and Charity*.

b. Youth Group

We gather one day a week using *The Search Begins* for teens. The group prays together, break into small groups to discuss questions on faith and have a social aspect with games of catechetical themes and service.

Steubenville Atlantic Conference

Will take place this summer July 5th-7th with the theme Illuminate. We anticipate 5-7 youths to attend. Rick Thibault is the coordinator for our parish and the youth that will participate.

World Youth Day 2027

Explore interest and feasibility for youth between the ages of 18-35 years to attend World Youth Day 2027 in Seoul, South Korea, with youth from around the world with the Pope.

2. Adult Faith Formation Committee

Our parish was informed about six brief videos from Augustine Institute: *Parish Revive program* to help train on forming and leading small groups. We submitted our report to the archdiocese at the end of April on small group formation.

A fall session on Lectio Eucharist by Dr Brandt Petrie from the Augustine Institute on FORMED will consist of four (4) sessions on Tuesdays in September before the **Eucharistic Congress in October** in Halifax. There will be six sessions following the Congress.

OCIA

This year, three members of our Adult Faith Formation committee joined our OCIA group to walk with two women in the catechumenal way for catechesis utilizing Symbolon and meeting together once a month with their sponsors. Following this, they will be fully initiated at the Easter Vigil.

3. Baptismal Preparation

Using the REBORN series from Augustine Institute, baptismal preparation was oriented towards catechesis for parents, for God parents forming Catholic families. We hope to have more prayer partners for families at all three churches to strengthen our faith community.

4. Young Adult Program

Anthony Henman, under the consultation of Brother Grant, provides leadership for the development of the Young Adult and Young Family Faith and Social group. This is a group designed to engage with both Young Adults and Young Families in the Catholic Faith.

Generally, the Catholic Faith sees an exodus of young Catholics from the Church as they grow into their adolescence. This is usually just after they receive their Sacrament of Confirmation. The reasons for this exodus are varied but one thing is common, these young adults enter a phase of their life where they start taking on greater commitments. These commitments could be moving away to go to university, starting a relationship, or beginning a career to name a few. The bond that connected these young adults to the church and ultimately their faith, whether it be family obligation or tradition, begins to weaken and becomes broken.

As their lives continue to take on higher work commitments such as management duties, and as they begin and grow their families, and take on all their children's commitments, the bond with their faith isn't only broken, but in most cases, it is forgotten.

The aims of the Young Adult Group are.

1. Engage and inspire young adults about their Catholic faith and to make God a meaningful part of their lives.
2. Help young adults become better engaged Catholics by providing opportunities to access faith-based education, including leadership, along with volunteer and missionary opportunities.
3. Provide support and guidance to young adults as they advance through adolescence and life.
4. Provide social activities for Catholic young adults to meet each other and to enjoy the fellowship of each other.

Compassionate Outreach & Service Progress

Divine Mercy Parish continues to operate many outreach programs which serve our communities. Many of these programs are well established within our different church groups and are well supported by our parishioners.

The following is information on the various outreach groups, programs &/or events. We have also included any goals or projects in a summarized form. Additional information is available or will be available in the near future on the parish website.

1. **Emergency Shelter Project**- In association with the archdiocese, our parish hosts one (1) Tiny Shelter located at Saint Clements. The original goal was to provide a temporary shelter with heat and a bed for those living in tents to get them out of the cold. It has changed and in 2024 it is year-round a temporary transitional housing option. The program will continue to evolve to help people who are experiencing housing insecurity find safe and stable permanent housing.
2. **Margaret's House Meals (Feeding Others of Dartmouth)** mission is to provide free home cooked meals to adults in need within Halifax Municipality. We provide 160 meals twice a month. Supplies for the meals are donated and meals are prepared by parish members, their families and friends at St Clément's on one Friday and St John XXIII Church Hall on a second Friday.
 - a. By 2026 increase the number of volunteers on each meal preparation day to include Families and young adults.
 - b. Add another meal prep on a different day of the month for another 80-160 meals.
3. **Advent Backpack Program** a parish wide initiative to provide backpacks filled with essential items (socks, hats, gloves, toothbrush, chocolates and gift cards) as Christmas gifts to patrons of Margaret's House and other local charities.
 - a. A community gathering opportunity for volunteers of all ages to help sort and fill backpacks.
 - b. Goal each year is to fill 1000 backpacks and additional bags.
4. **CareFREE Giveaway** - Is a community outreach program where all are welcome. The founding principle of this program is to give freely, with no judgement, expectation, or stipulations. Through the generosity of parishioners and the surrounding communities, items are displayed and all shop for free.
 - a. Will host three giveaways in 2024. A goal of four giveaways by 2027.
 - b. In 2025 would like to add two (1 day) pop-up events per year.
5. **Grab n'Go** - The first Thursday and Friday each month Norm O'Leary as the coordinator and Brother Grant gather food items for the Grab n' Go School Program which currently supports two schools, Dartmouth South Academy and Ross Road Junior High, with a total enrollment of approximately 1100 students. This food program augments the provincially supported breakfast program by providing additional nourishment to hungry students throughout the day. We deliver once per month and 95% of public schools in Nova Scotia use this provincial program.
6. **Society of Saint Vincent de Paul (S.S.V.P)** provides material support to families in need in the form of food, heat and power, and assistance in rent. See the website for more information on this outreach program.

7. **Chalice** works in impoverished communities to help struggling families overcome the cycle of poverty. The parish does an annual fundraising drive. Each of the churches also sponsors a child or family with year-round collection vessels.
8. **Santa's Breakfast** a yearly event supported by the KOC Council 7302 to give parishioners an opportunity to socialize over breakfast, visit Santa and explore Christian Christmas traditions.
9. **Pastoral Outreach Group** visit parishioners who are confined to home, hospital or nursing care due to illness or other issues. They assist the presiding priest in Mass celebration at the various Continuing Care Centre's within our parish community. They conduct Communion Service, Prayer Service and hymn sing at other times of the month.
 - a. Increase the number of volunteers.
 - b. Set up care facilities and homebound parishioners to receive Sunday Mass by live streaming.
10. **Other Outreach Programs.**
 - a. **Stewardship Committee**
 - i. The committee collects items for Daily Bread at St. Mary's Seniors Outreach.
 - ii. Organizes the Parish Pilgrimage; parishioners meet, share lunch pray together, and encourage each other along the path to the other churches.
 - b. **Eastern Passage Food Bank** an independent food bank that accepts food, hygiene and household items, gift cards and cash donations. Donations received at St. Andrew church are delivered to them every couple of weeks.
11. **Knights of Columbus, Council 7302 (St. John XXIII)** continues to organize the following activities.
 - a) Annual Novena for Life
 - b) Prayers for Persecuted Christians
 - c) Keep Christ in Christmas Poster Competition
 - d) Consecration of the Holy Family
 - e) Hope Cottage
 - f) Monthly Brunches and Fundraising events.
12. **Knights of Columbus, Council 10486 (St. Andrew's)** continues to organize and support the following activities.
 - a. Conducts a monthly Community breakfast.
 - b. Supports the annual Christmas Hamper Program
 - c. Aids homeless and families needing heating assistance.
 - d. Provides bursaries for eligible High School students.
 - e. Cemetery Cleanup
 - f. Aids the CWL in the Oceanview Manor Christmas party.
13. **Knights of Columbus, Council 8831 (St Clements)** continues to organize and support the following activities.
 - a. Organizes parish breakfasts.
 - b. Supports parish social events and hall setup.
 - c. Parish novenas and rosary prayer time.
 - d. Community bingos
 - e. Aids in the parish Advent Backpack Program.
 - f. Provides bursaries and scholarships for eligible High School Students
 - g. Provides Hats and Mitts along with supporting Grab & Go Program.

14. **Catholic Women's League, Saint Andrew's** provides the following outreach and service.
 - a. Meals for Hope Cottage
 - b. Pastoral outreach for Shut-ins
 - c. Catering funeral receptions
 - d. Assisting residents of nursing homes
 - e. Organizes a Christmas Party for residents of Oceanview Manor.

15. **Catholic Women's League, Saint John XXIII** provides the following outreach and services.
 - a. Provides meals for Hope Cottage and Margaret's House.
 - b. Stocks and maintains two palliative care sharing carts at Dartmouth General Hospital.
 - c. Supports Advent backpack program, Youth Group and Chalice.
 - d. Supports Phoenix House and Society of Saint Vincent de Paul.
 - e. Supports Mass for Shut ins.
 - f. Supports five national charities.
 - g. Makes monetary donations to Catholic Near East Welfare association and to a Children's orphanage in Poland.

16. **Catholic Women's League, Saint Clements** provides the following outreach and services.
 - a. Supports Catholic Near East Welfare Association.
 - b. Supports Catholic Missions in Canada
 - c. Supports Pro-life endeavors.
 - d. Supports IWK Health Centre, Dartmouth South Academy, local food banks, Grab n go and Advent Backpack Program.

Liturgy & Worship Progress

Welcoming committee was formed and a welcome reception was held at each of three churches in early 2024. We had a good turn-out over the three events. All parishioners were invited to attend to get to know their fellow parishioners.

The Stewardship Committee conducted Ministry Fairs at all three church locations after each Mass in the spring of 2024. They averaged nineteen different ministries, organizations or outreach groups. Parishioners were able to sign up to volunteer or just learn more about the different organizations and groups active in the parish.

Divine Mercy Liturgy Committee in consultation with the parish pastor plan the liturgical celebrations. They are the avenue for communication between the different liturgical ministry groups in the churches across the parish.

1. They discern parish worship by staying informed about liturgical church guidelines and documents (General Instruction of the Roman Missal, Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops and the Archdiocese of Halifax-Yarmouth) and the ministry needs of the three parish church communities.
2. Provide opportunities for spiritual and practical formation for liturgical ministers across the parish.
3. Evaluate the parish liturgical celebrations.

The Children's Liturgy of the Word was started at Saint Andrew and available for the 9:00 am Mass at Saint John XXIII. It is planned to be implemented at Saint Clements for the Sunday morning Mass in the fall of 2024.

Communications Progress

The Pastoral Council determined a need to create a parish communication committee. A term of reference was created and recruited several interested members at this year's Ministry Fair and through advertising in the bulletin.