



# ASCENSION PARISH

## **Disciples in Mission Pastoral Plan**

**Submitted: July 20, 2021**

# Vision

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**To become a growing community of faith where everyone feels at home.**

*“For I know well the plans I have in mind for you, plans for your welfare and not for woe, so as to give you a future of hope.”*

*-Jeremiah 29:11*



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# Mission

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**We help people along the path to a better life through Jesus Christ.**

*“I came so that they might have life and have it more abundantly.”*

*-John 10:10*

We understand that each faith journey is unique, and we seek to meet and support people wherever they are.

Everyone has a next step on their discipleship path.



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# Values

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- Our **reliance on God** is central to our vision. We surrender to His Will knowing in Him all things are possible.
- Our focus is on **growth**, welcoming the unchurched or the lost or those new to church again for putting discipleship in action and building our community.
- Our **joyful optimism** fuels our relationships, our ministries and our sense of belonging to a community of believers.
- Our drive for **excellence** ensures that our work is meaningful, mission-focused with ministry at our core.
- Our **innovative approach** seeks new methods in the expression of our Catholic faith.

*“I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.”*

*-Philippians 4:13*

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# Pastoral Plan Considerations

- Achieve community growth (as part of our vision) during a time of steady Church decline\*
  - Christianity in decline 65% 2019 versus 77% 2009
  - Church membership is correlated with age, as 66% traditionalists (born before 1946), 58% baby boomers/50% Generation X/36% of millennials
  - Rise in “nones”; people with no religious affiliation inc 26% 2019 versus 17% 2009
- Appeal to Generation X and Millennial parents through the lens of family connection
- Address parish concerns around faith formation structure, discovered during 2018 listening sessions
- Fulfill the call of the New Evangelization and help all parishioners to grow in their discipleship

\*PEW and Gallup studies



# Pastoral Priority

The towns of Sudbury and Maynard are quiet bedroom communities that attract a high percentage of families. With calendars full of school events and extra-curricular activities, we see huge demands on family life and significant focus and investment in child development. Faith formation and spiritual growth are critical to their lifelong wellbeing. Over the next 12-36 months, the pastor, lay staff, and parishioners of Ascension Parish will focus our efforts on building a strong family ministry, knowing that catechizing and evangelizing both children and parents will energize and impact the entire parish community.

## Priority #1: Family Ministry

“Train children in the way they should go; when they grow old, they won’t depart from it” — Proverbs 22:6.

Faith and family are inextricably intertwined. We see the symbolism in God our Father, in us as His children, and in the Church as bride of Christ. The future of our Church relies on the seeds we plant today. While Family Ministry targets a key growth segment within our community, we believe there’s an opportunity to connect this initiative to our larger parish family.

Ascension Parish recognizes that parents are ultimately responsible for the spiritual guidance and growth of their children, but the Church plays a critical role in supporting them in that effort. However, in our best estimation only 1 out of 3 children registered in faith formation attend weekly Mass. The task of the Family Ministry initiative is twofold: invest in these families on the periphery of our community and deepen the engagement of those families in our pews.



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# Pastoral Priority #1: Family Ministry

**Goal: Create 4 opportunities for families to engage more fully in parish life by June 2024**

- 1. Recruit an Advisory Team** to advise, ideate and execute meaningful experiences for community families.
  - Recruit team volunteers (Milestone: Summer 2021)
  - Establish team process (Milestone: Fall 2021)
- 2. Expand family worship opportunities** to increase weekend engagement
  - Reintroduce Children's Liturgy of the Word to Sunday Masses (Milestone 2021)
  - Introduce monthly family sessions tied to faith formation curriculum (Milestone: Fall 2021)

Measurement:

- Establish year 1 quantitative benchmarks by which growth can be measured in year 2
- Distribute survey to measure attitudinal qualifiers and sentiment



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3. **Continue quarterly events** to draw families to campus
  - Create plan tied to seasonal and/or liturgical themes (Milestone: January 2022)
  - Each event should promote a bounce-back opportunity
  - Identify opportunities specifically for Maynard (2022)
  - Capture newcomers, non-parishioners
  - Complete 4 by the end of 2022 (December 2022)

**Measurement:**

- Track attendance by event; identify trending patterns
- Distribute survey to measure attitudinal qualifiers and sentiment



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4. **Implement new programs** that support parents in various stages of family life
  - Recruitment, training, and planning (Milestone: Spring 2023)
  - Mother's Spiritual Support Group (Milestone: Summer 2023)
  - Baptism (Milestone: Fall 2023)
  - Marriage Enrichment (Milestone: Spring 2024)

**Measurement:**

- Track participation; cross-reference opportunities
- Distribute survey to measure attitudinal qualifiers



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# Pastoral Priority #2: Vocations

**Goal: Foster a parish culture that promotes Vocations to the Archdiocesan priesthood**

1. Prayer
  - Holy Hour and Rosary dedicated to Vocations (Milestone: Summer 2021)
  - Mass Intentions at key intervals (Milestone: Fall 2021)
2. Incorporate Vocational teachings and opportunities for discernment to young men in the Confirmation program.
3. Invitation
  - Saint Andrew's Dinner
  - Discernment Retreats
  - Quo Vadis

Measurement:

- Track attendance by event; identify trending patterns



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