



## Renewed Mission and Vision 2015



This year presents new opportunities to our parish as we are challenged to renew our vision. In 2002 the diocese launched its initiative called “Growing Tomorrow’s Church Today”. This was a strategic plan intended to respond to the rapid growth in Southern Alberta. As a result of that our parish raised a substantial amount of money to purchase the, then, St Mary’s Roman Catholic Church which has been the home for our church community since 2007. This was a remarkable success.

We are once again faced with rapid growth in our town and surrounding area and once again challenged to respond just as we did a decade ago.

From 2002 until now, we met the first challenge, which is to grow beyond a family sized church ( up to 50 people) into the next stage. The Very Rev Kevin Martin (an authority on church growth brought in by our bishop) notes that the next size of parish is between 50-150 people (“pastoral size church”). We have been here for some time. Churches our size need to grow to the next level (150+ the “program size church”) in order to thrive, especially in a town like ours. Churches will fluctuate in attendance at our current stage, and usually a parish will have to make a couple of concerted efforts to cross the barrier into that next stage, because it is such a challenging transition. Once that crucial barrier is crossed, churches like ours tend to grow rapidly.



Because we have entered another stage of rapid growth in Cochrane it is time to make another concerted effort to meet the challenges Christ has place before us. We have set the target of growing to 300 average Sunday attendance in the next three years.

It is time to once again cross the threshold so that we can be the Church that Christ is calling us to be and grow past the barriers.



**We believe we will grow by focusing on a few core areas:**

**Spiritual growth, Hospitality,  
Small Groups, Children and Youth,  
Mission and Service.**

**Growing Spiritually:** *“There’s never been a change in a parish that has not started with a change in me”*. People want to encounter God and be changed by him. Spiritual growth and change needs to begin with and be modeled by the leadership in our parish. We need to make a serious commitment to knowing and following Jesus more closely. This year we are planning leadership retreats in order to encourage spiritual growth, so that our leaders hear Christ more clearly and lead more effectively. We have planned a parish wide “quiet day”, so that all of us can gather to also set aside time for spiritual refreshment and develop a rule of life. We want this to be a year of spiritual growth for all of us.



**Inviting and Welcoming:** If we want people to become part of our parish community, and think Christ is calling people to our parish, then hospitality is essential. This involves everything from raising our profile in the community (letting people know who we are), making a habit of inviting others to church, making our building friendly to newcomers, and making sure that each of us knows that the “stranger in our midst” has been sent by Christ and welcome them accordingly. We have set aside money for advertising, for support and training for hospitality ministry, for better signage and making the foyer more welcoming.



**Small Groups:** In order to grow spiritually and in order to get past the visitor stage, people need to get to know a group of other Christians with whom they can learn and grow. We already have some small groups in existence. At the same time it has been difficult for us to develop a strong foundation in small group ministry, despite having qualified and skilled leaders. However, this is absolutely essential; we won’t grow without it. We would like to bring in an expert in small groups for about 3 months to set up a strong plan, and then to keep that person as a coach for a year.

**Children and Youth Ministry:** In a town like Cochrane where there is a baby boom and the schools are full it is absolutely essential to have strong ministry for children and youth. We have excellent programs. We need to plan and provide resources to grow them. For example, we want to double our Sunday School in the next year and perhaps do two weeks of VBS instead of one. We want to make changes in the Family Centre to make it more usable and youth friendly. We also have provided for training for youth leaders and special events for youth to attend where they can meet other Christian youth and feel encouraged and inspired.



**Mission and Service:** Every parish must serve beyond itself: in its local community and in the world. We have a significant presence in the community through our ministry at Bethany Care Centre and visiting shut-ins. We would also like to reach out to teenagers who walk past our church every day from the schools a few blocks away. We would like to consider donating a percentage of our income to those in need – be it a local charity such as the Food Bank, the PWRDF, or even St George’s Anglican Church in Baghdad (this parish directly cares for the food and medical needs of people in the “red zone” of Baghdad and also is involved helping victims of the ISIS genocide of Christians and other minorities).

These are our simple core ministries. Our intention is to focus on these and then grow as we believe God intends for us. We believe that God does not want us to remain in the 50-150 category when our town is growing so rapidly. We must first of all allow God change and grow us spiritually, to invite and welcome those whom Christ will send us, to help them to become part of the parish and to grow spiritually themselves, to be aware that many (even most of them) will have children, and to visibly serve Christ in the community and the world.