

2024 Provincial Synod

Signs of hope for the Diocese of Montreal

We continue to be hopeful because of the resilience of the People of God in our Diocese. Congregations that are getting smaller do not necessarily decrease in energy or desire to serve. Rather, limited resources help parishes focus on what is possible to achieve. In many places, congregations are eager to extend their ministries in their local communities. In the light of the pandemic, the Diocese commissioned a series of demographic maps of the communities in which our parishes are located. This helped us to see that rather than being one single Quebec context, there are over 20 different contexts in which we live, work and minister, each with their own challenges and potential. This is helping our staff and parishes focus on finding ways to support and partner to create meaningful and sustainable new ministries.

- St Paul's Greenfield Park on the South Shore of Montreal has a lot of energy around community outreach and their Sunday School ministry. A monthly Café Church draws younger parents looking for a relaxed way to bring their families to Church.
- St George's Chateauguay is focussing on a Messy Church-style ministry to complement their regular family services on Sunday.
- In the West Island area, a ministry intern was appointed to a parish with a focus on starting fresh expressions of Church. Together with the parish, he initiated Messy Church-style events that successfully reached out to families in the community in the Fall and at Christmas. The response demonstrated that there is immense potential for ministry when we think outside the attractational model of Sunday mornings alone. The priest and congregation have been able to support him hosting the events. This has been an excellent allocation of resources and points us towards possible ministry models of combining traditional pastoral work with missional outreach.
- Our Diocesan team created an installation we called *Bible Story Walk*. This tells the Creation story in 10 beautifully produced panels that are designed to be installed on church lawns and walkways. We have rotated it around likely parishes, and it has drawn interest from people passing by. With links to both Diocesan and parish websites, it has been a new way to make connections with the community.
- We continue to address concerns of anti-racism and anti-bias, having launched a new 4-session anti-bias training for all clergy, diocesan/parish staff, wardens (and other parish leaders).
- The Diocese continues to grow and learn from our partnerships with the Diocese of Masasi and The Territory of the People. We have sponsored and worked with a priest from the Diocese of Masasi to train at McGill University and the Montreal Diocesan Theological College and our partnership committees have strengthened the bonds between our diocese and the Territory of the People as Bishop Clara Plamondon takes up leadership and ministry there.
- The Revive programme has been an important tool for helping parishes thrive. We have continued to have active groups meeting, particularly in the regions of the Diocese. Our Laurentians group which met in 2023-2024 brought together two parishes which share a priest into one group. As the programme came to its completion, the participants from both parishes felt that they had grown closer to each other as communities.

- The Diocese and parishes have been actively and intentionally working to becoming more bilingual, welcoming people in English and French and becoming more accessible and including communications in English and French.
- In addition to a number of bilingual and French parishes in the diocese, there has been intentional work done to provide for other languages and, specifically, Hispanic outreach and ministry is being done in Granby and in downtown Montreal. And where there is a concentration of multi-ethnic communities around the parish, there has been greater outreach, like that of the Church of St. Mark & St. Peter in Ville St-Laurent.
- The work of congregational development has continued to bear fruit, especially where our coordinator was able to work in concert with parish priests and congregations. The combined tool of the Natural Church Development Survey with Restorative Practice circle groups has helped parishes find new and healthy ways to communicate and better plan for ministry now. Renewing governance structures in parishes has helped parishes better have discussions, make decisions, and implement to get things done.

Year	Baptisms	Confirmations	Marriages	Funerals	Easter	Christmas (Eve and Day)	Total on Rolls
2020	46	5	29	145	11,447	6,940	6,674
2021	92	3	25	167	3,971	4,522	5,626
2022	111	29	59	240	5,179	6,445	7,017
2023	164	46	45	229	5,831	5,295	6,999

N.B. The Easter statistics for 2023 are not accurate because there was a major power outage (a result of an ice storm) which resulted in a number of churches not being able to hold Easter services in their buildings.