

SPECIAL REPORT ON THE DIOCESAN PASTORAL PLAN



The Diocesan Messenger

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Diocesan Pastoral Plan

by Bishop Richard Gagnon

You will notice that this issue of the Messenger includes a visual display of our Diocesan Pastoral Plan from the Diocesan perspective. The Pastoral Planning Report and the Pastoral Letter inaugurating the Plan serve as the framework for the outline of our Diocesan Goals and our Diocesan Actions, and identify what has been achieved to date.

As our Diocesan Pastoral Plan unfolds, many parishes are working on their goals and actions. In large parishes there may be many initiatives and in smaller communities, perhaps only a few. Whether small or large, these pastoral efforts are indeed valuable within the context of the local Church, our Diocese. Some parishes may find the visual layout of the Diocesan Plan helpful for planning purposes. The outline of the Diocesan Plan will be repeated and renewed on a periodic basis in future issues of the *Diocesan Messenger*.

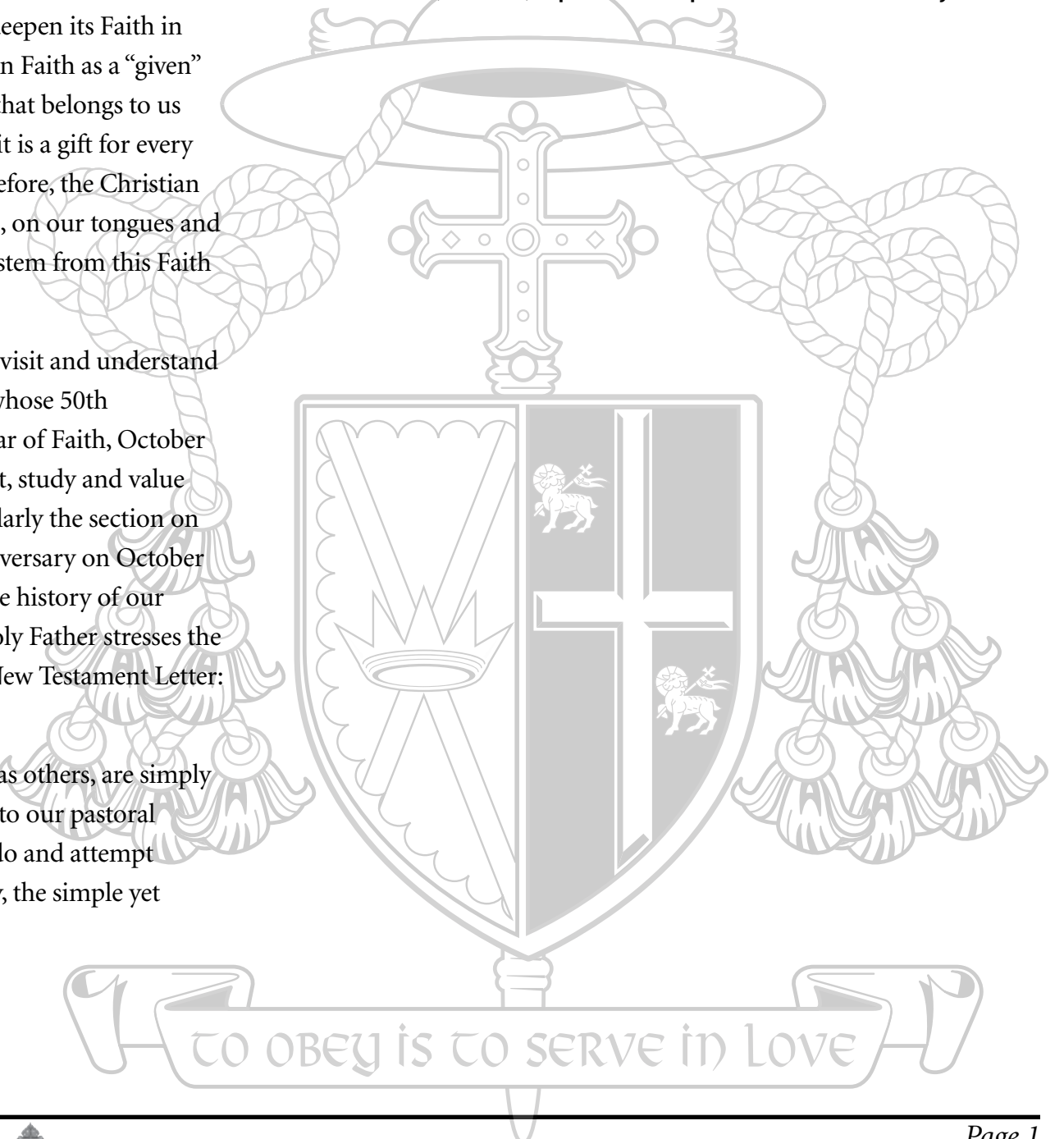
As a potentially fruitful help in planning over the next year or so, one should note that Pope Benedict has declared a Year of Faith beginning on October 11, 2012 – November 24, 2013. In the inaugural Apostolic Letter *Porta Fidei* (Year of Faith), he outlines the reasons for the Year of Faith and simply encourages the whole Church to deepen its Faith in Jesus Christ. He reminds us not to take our Christian Faith as a “given” or for granted. Our Faith, he says is not something that belongs to us like a possession or produced by our efforts, rather it is a gift for every human being if we open their hearts to Truth. Therefore, the Christian proclamation that “Jesus is Lord” must be within us, on our tongues and in every action. All our efforts in pastoral planning stem from this Faith and are connected to it.

In his Apostolic Letter, the Pope encourages us to revisit and understand anew the teachings of the Second Vatican Council whose 50th Anniversary is celebrated at the beginning of the Year of Faith, October 11, 2012. Pope Benedict also encourages us to revisit, study and value afresh the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, particularly the section on the Creed, as the Catechism celebrates its 20th Anniversary on October 11, 2012. Furthermore, he encourages us to learn the history of our Faith, what and who come before us. Finally, the Holy Father stresses the “witness of charity” as St. James reminds us in his New Testament Letter: “Faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead.”

In *Porta Fidei*, the above-mentioned points, as well as others, are simply laid out for us. The message is clear: when it comes to our pastoral planning in 2012 and beyond, everything we plan, do and attempt to achieve flows from one fundamental fact, namely, the simple yet scandalous proclamation: Jesus is Risen, he is Lord.



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Liturgy and Sacraments, Prayer and the Word Of God

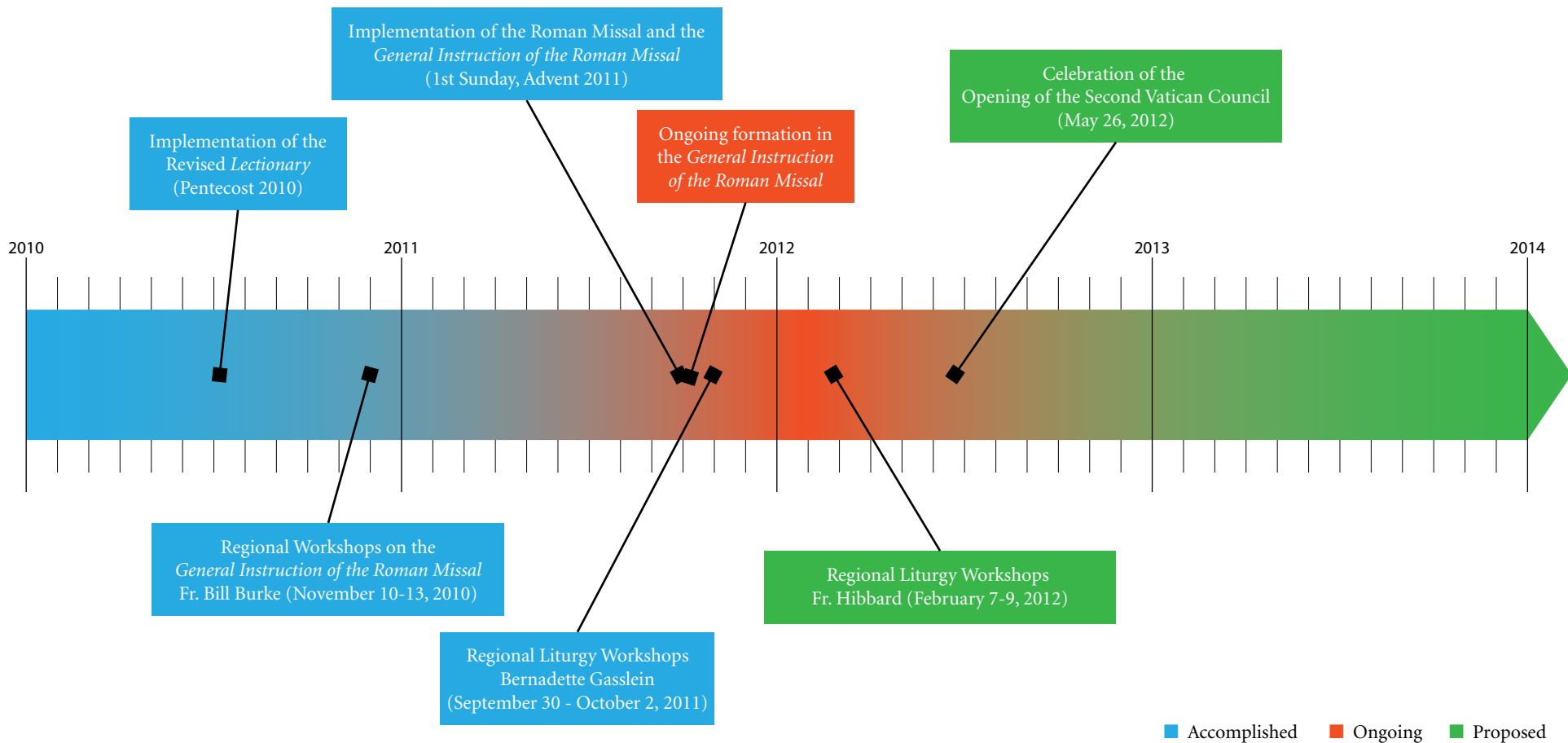
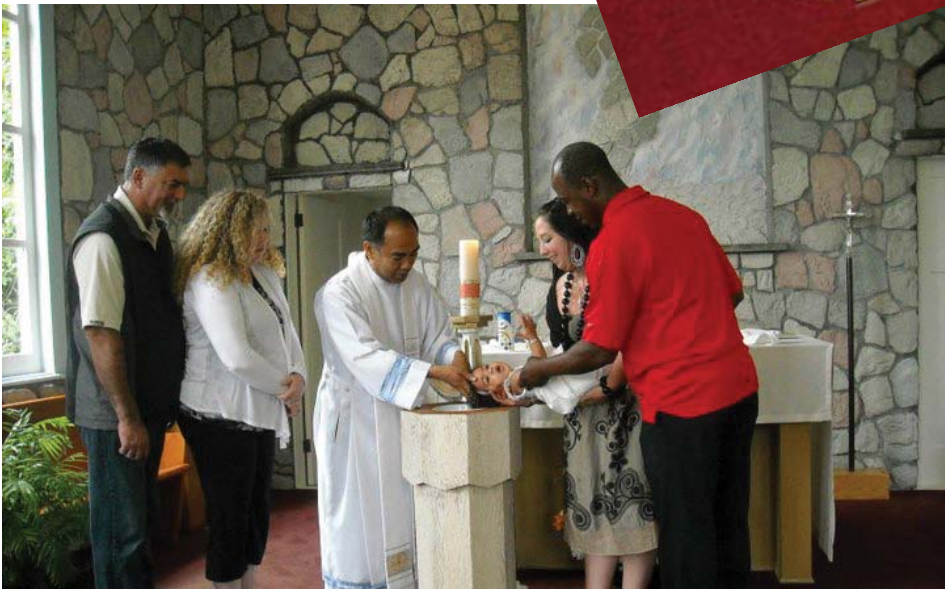
Goals

- Build up the Body of Christ through full, conscious and active participation in our liturgical celebrations, particularly the Eucharist.
- Nurture greater knowledge and prayerful reception of Sacred Scripture to renew and deepen our liturgical and sacramental celebrations.
- Celebrate and offer the Sacrament of Reconciliation as the compassion, love and healing of Christ.
- Promote our responsibility to practice hospitality, caring and welcoming at Mass.



Essential Diocesan Actions

- Encourage the Diocesan faithful to fully be the People of God through complete, conscious and active participation in our liturgical celebrations, particularly the Holy Eucharist.
- Provide faith formation and training resources for a better understanding of the Word of God, the celebration of the Holy Eucharist and the Sacraments, as well as other liturgical expressions.
- Encourage local faith communities to initiate a “Welcome Hospitality Ministry” in each parish to greet all persons, particularly children, the elderly, persons with disabilities and all those who are marginalized.
- Promote and educate parishioners about revisions to the new *Roman Missal* and the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*. Provide education on the revised *Lectionary* with regard to proclaiming and receiving the Word of God, as well as its impact on liturgical music.





Marriage and Family Life; the Sanctity of Human Life

Marriage and Family Life

Goals

- Enrich family life and support the pastoral care of marriages and families.
- Place a strong emphasis on marriage as a Sacrament and a Christian vocation.
- Focus on the importance of fostering the faith in the family, offering tools for parents to fulfill their role as the primary educators of the faith.

Essential Diocesan Actions

- To promote family life in all its aspects, particularly in the area of spirituality.
- Establish a “Diocesan Family Life Advisory Committee” to identify and implement a Diocesan-wide “Marriage Preparation Course.”
- Design ways to support parents in the home to fulfill their roles as primary educators of the faith for their children.
- Develop and oversee the implementation of a “Diocesan Family Life Plan” to assist parishes with best-practices training and resources to address such issues as marriage enrichment, parenting or troubled marriages, and offer programs for separated, widowed and divorced people.
- Encourage the establishment of “Family Life” ministries within parishes to assist pastors, catechists and other laity to help parishioners prepare for the Sacraments of Initiation and Marriage.
- Promote a wider understanding and appreciation of the *Theology of the Body*, and integrate this Theology into family life programs such as marriage preparation and marriage enrichment.
- Provide such opportunities throughout the Diocese as marriage and family enrichment retreats.

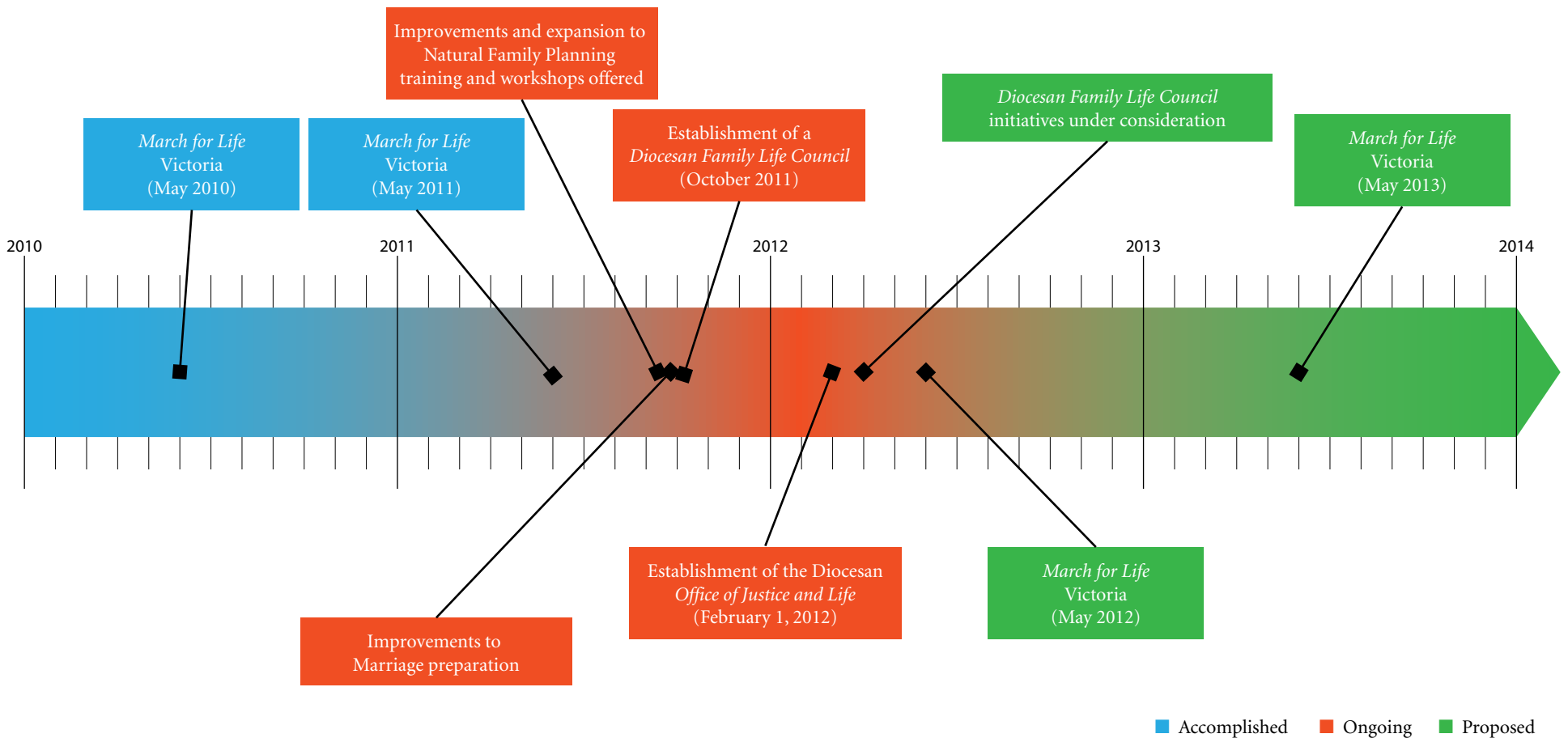
Sanctity of Human Life

Goals

- Enhance the Church’s teaching of respect for human life from conception to natural death.
- Ensure a culture where human life is respected and protected at all stages and sensitive pastoral care is offered, particularly to those affected by abortion, suicide and euthanasia.

Essential Diocesan Actions

- Continue to strongly encourage respect for human life from conception to natural death.
- Promote *Natural Family Planning* (NFP), including the recruitment of couples to be trained as NFP instructors.
- Promote and support parish ministry initiatives that have a mandate to assist single pregnant mothers in need of protection and support.
- Encourage homilies and diverse ways of presenting the Church’s teaching regarding the dignity of human life.
- Promote and coordinate programs of prayer and worship that focus on the sanctity of all human life.
- Counter the prevailing attitude on euthanasia as “death with dignity” and address the need to promote enhanced palliative care.
- Maintain working relationships with local pro-life groups and encourage the development of local pro-life lobbying networks.
- Develop responsible and effective communications with elected representatives: get to know them personally through one-on-one visits, telephone calls, letters and e-mail.





Outreach, Social Justice and Ecumenism

Outreach

Goals

- Recognize and seek to protect the dignity of all people.
- Continue the work of Jesus, responding to human needs with compassion and love both within and beyond our parishes.
- Inspire and invite laity to volunteer and to make a commitment to parish outreach services in the Diocese.
- Work with other churches and ecclesial communities for Christian Unity as a response to Jesus’ prayer “that they all be one.”

Essential Diocesan Actions

- Support local parishes in engaging people to actively work for parish outreach and social justice within our local faith communities, neighbourhoods, workplaces and in the world.
- Offer regional educational and training programs to find ways to address the marginalized and others in need.
- Formalize the *Diocese of Victoria Hospital and Homebound Outreach Ministry Training Program* to introduce, educate and assist parishioners involved in hospital and homebound visits.
- Develop and implement a “Ministry to the Elderly” strategy.
- Continue to support and develop programs that further healing and reconciliation in First Nations communities.
- Continue to promote Returning to Spirit workshops throughout the Diocese.

Ecumenism

Goals

- Work with neighbouring churches and ecclesial communities for Christian unity; develop new relationships between Christians and peoples of other faiths.
- Develop relationships between Christians and peoples of other faiths emphasising the human commonality that exists.

Essential Diocesan Actions

- Provide education in ecumenism and inter-religious dialogue to the people of the Diocese.
- Inspire parishes to get involved in ecumenism and inter-faith dialogue such as the *Week for Christian Unity*.
- Encourage parishes to develop working relationships with ecumenical partners and other religions.

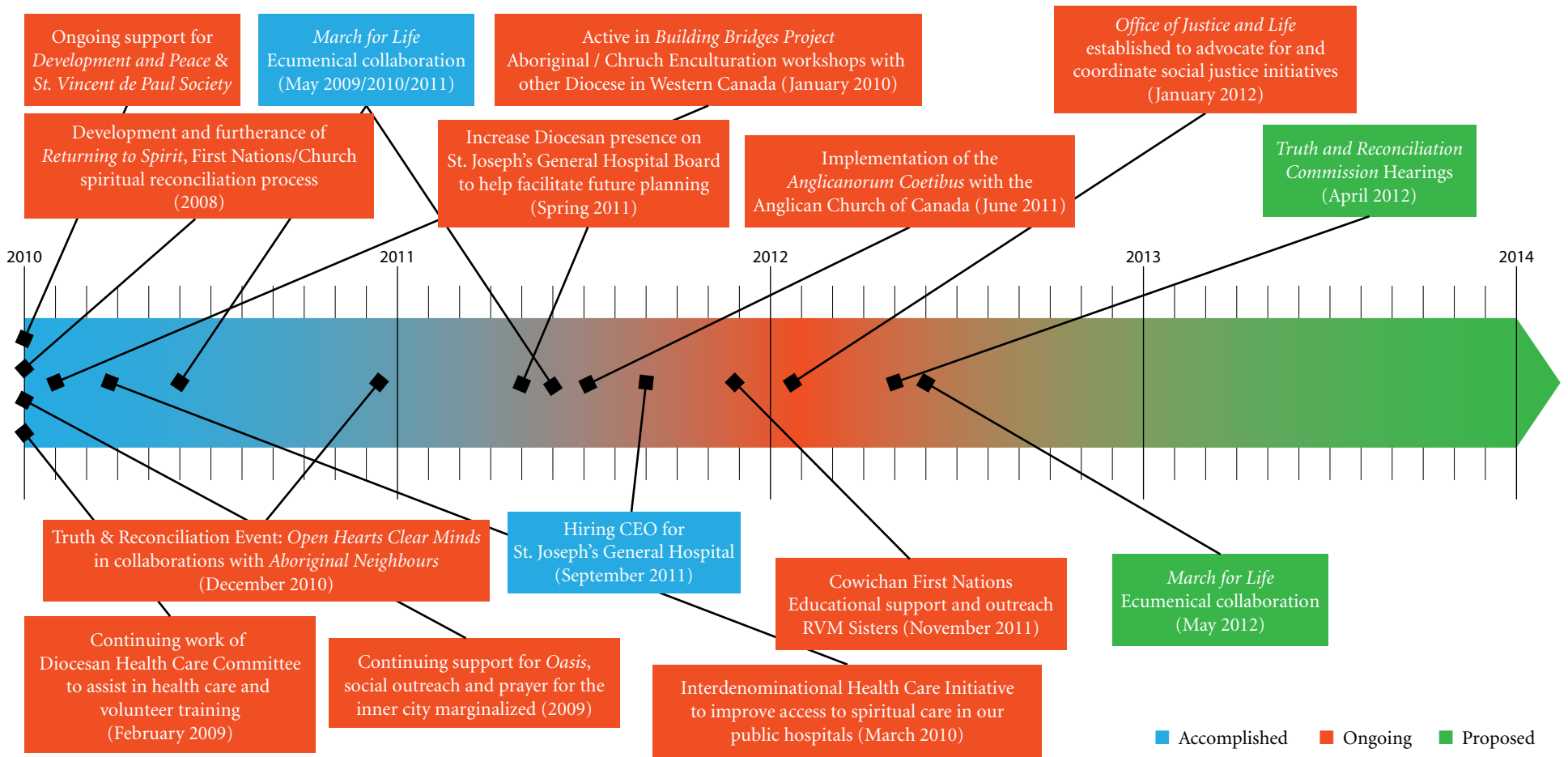
Social Justice

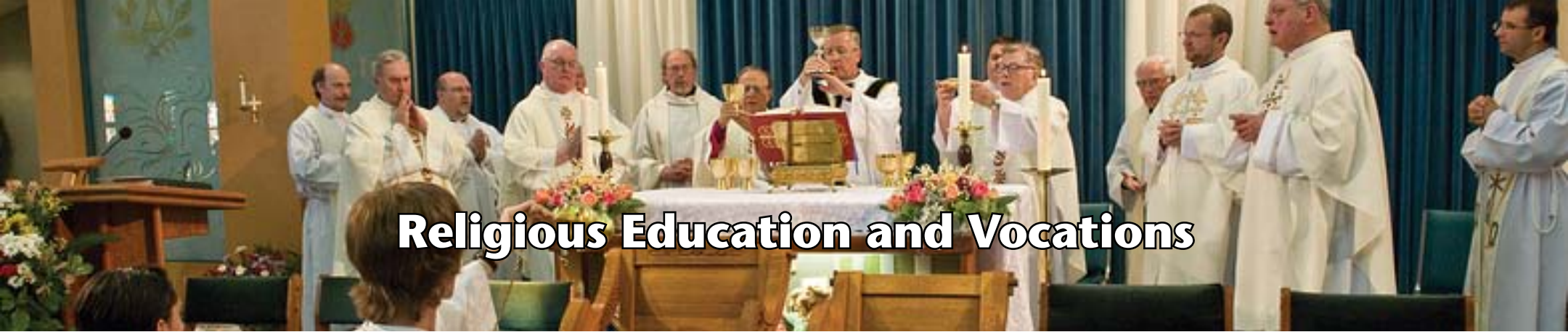
Goals

- Develop knowledge and understanding of Catholic Social Justice Teaching through worship, catechesis and direct service action.
- Advocate for issues of charity and justice through appeals to the appropriate government levels and other social structures within society.
- Increase awareness and understanding of environmental sustainability issues in light of the Church’s Social Teaching.

Essential Diocesan Actions

- Provide opportunities for the faithful to participate in living the social teaching of the Church.
- Through the Office of Social Justice provide training and education to local faith communities for developing ministries to support the poor, the marginalized, the isolated, those imprisoned, refugees and orphans.
- Provide training for implementation of the social teachings of the Church in the areas of advocacy to coordinators of religious education, liturgists, catechists and other ministers.
- Encourage parishioners and clergy to materially and spiritually support the just needs of others, nationally and internationally, through approved charities such as Development & Peace.
- Develop a web resource for identifying Diocesan and Parish contacts with information about local, Canadian and global social justice organizations
- Foster greater collaboration with the efforts of the St. Vincent de Paul Society in addressing the needs of the less fortunate.
- Stewardship of Creation: Encourage parishes to develop “Practical Steps” to educate parishioners about current environmental issues and emphasize models of ministry that incorporate protection, preservation and sustainability.





Religious Education

Goals

- Provide life-long growth experiences for people of all ages: facilitate understanding of our Baptismal call and communion and intimacy with Christ through ongoing catechetical formation with the participation and the support of all members of the parish community.
- Grow in an understanding of evangelization, deepening the commitment to live and spread the Gospel.
- Foster and encourage adult faith development among the marginalized and those who have drifted away from their faith.
- Continue the vision of the founders of Catholic schools in the Diocese: a commitment and dedication rooted in the belief that the school and parish are partners with parents.

Essential Diocesan Actions

- Actively foster lay education, formation and certification and call upon people who have experienced these opportunities to take a leadership role in the area of faith formation.
- Seek to develop new and innovative ways to more effectively proclaim Christ in the contemporary culture.
- Provide advice on faith formation resources, programs and printed materials; provide the required support for organizing and implementing local catechetical programs; develop a centralized database of catechetical resources at both the Diocesan and local parish levels.
- Enhance communication with and among parishes through the use of electronic media, particularly the Internet and the Diocesan Website.
- Ensure the commitment to strengthening relationships between Pastors and Principals and promoting strong Catholic identity in our schools.



Vocations

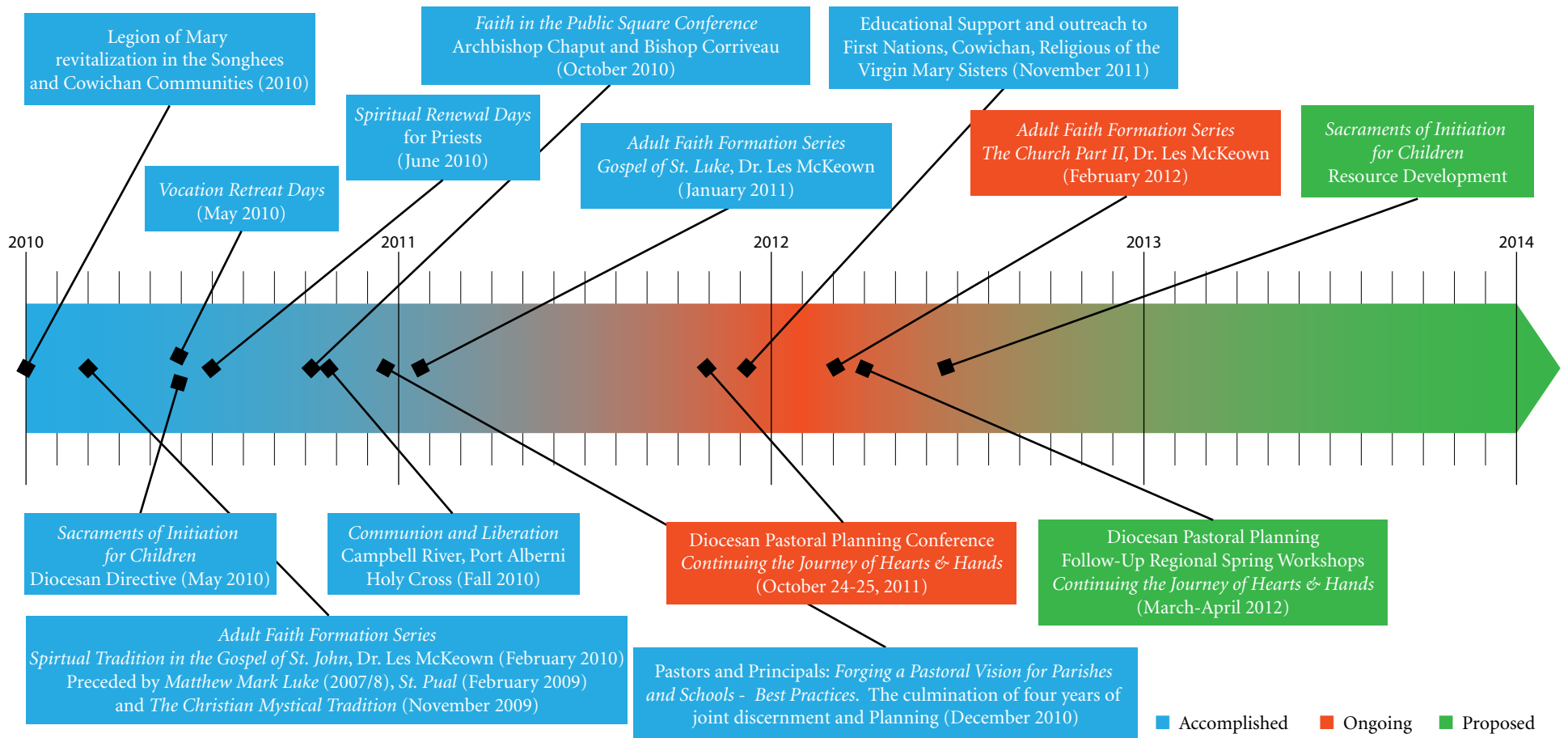
Goals

- Nurture our collective responsibility to contribute to the prayerful discernment of vocations to the priesthood and the religious life.
- Recognize that true happiness and joy come through answering God’s Call, regardless of our state in life: married or single, clergy or religious.
- Focus on the mission that calls forth our baptismal commitment to be lay leaders, in collaboration with our pastors, to share in the Church’s ministries.

Essential Diocesan Actions

- Foster a “vocations culture” promoting, encouraging and assisting in the discernment to pursue priesthood, religious life, single or married life.
- Engage all members of the Diocese to pray for and support those who are discerning their calling to the priesthood or religious life.
- Provide renewal opportunities for clergy

Go therefore and
make disciples of all nations
(Matthew 28:19—NRSV)





Stewardship, Administration and Finance

Stewardship

Goals

- Affirm and promote Stewardship (Time, Talent and Treasure) as a significant priority of the Diocese.
- Stimulate greater participation in developing a vibrant life for the parish community and in the mission of the Church.
- Lay collaboration: mutual support and cooperation with pastors to study and reflect on Diocesan Pastoral Priorities, and recommend how these can be implemented in the parish.
- Provide Best Practices in stewardship training, and form effective, collaborative and faithful Diocesan and Parish lay leaders.
- Nurture, support and acknowledge the contributions of ministry volunteers and those who have provided long-service commitments.
- Employ governance practices at the Diocesan and parish levels ensuring appropriate mutuality in decision-making, promoting transparency, efficiency and accountability.
- Improve communications within the parish, between other parishes and between the Dioceses.

Essential Diocesan Actions

- Develop and implement a “culture of stewardship” within the Diocese to support clergy and lay leadership parish efforts towards fostering Stewardship as a way of life.
- Sponsor educational and training opportunities for Diocesan and parish leaders (including Parish Pastoral Council and Finance Committee members) to encourage effective efforts for nurturing and sustaining stewardship and pastoral planning.
- Establish a Stewardship speakers roster.
- Establish a Diocesan-wide program to nurture and support volunteers who are involved in the stewardship mission of the Church.

Administration

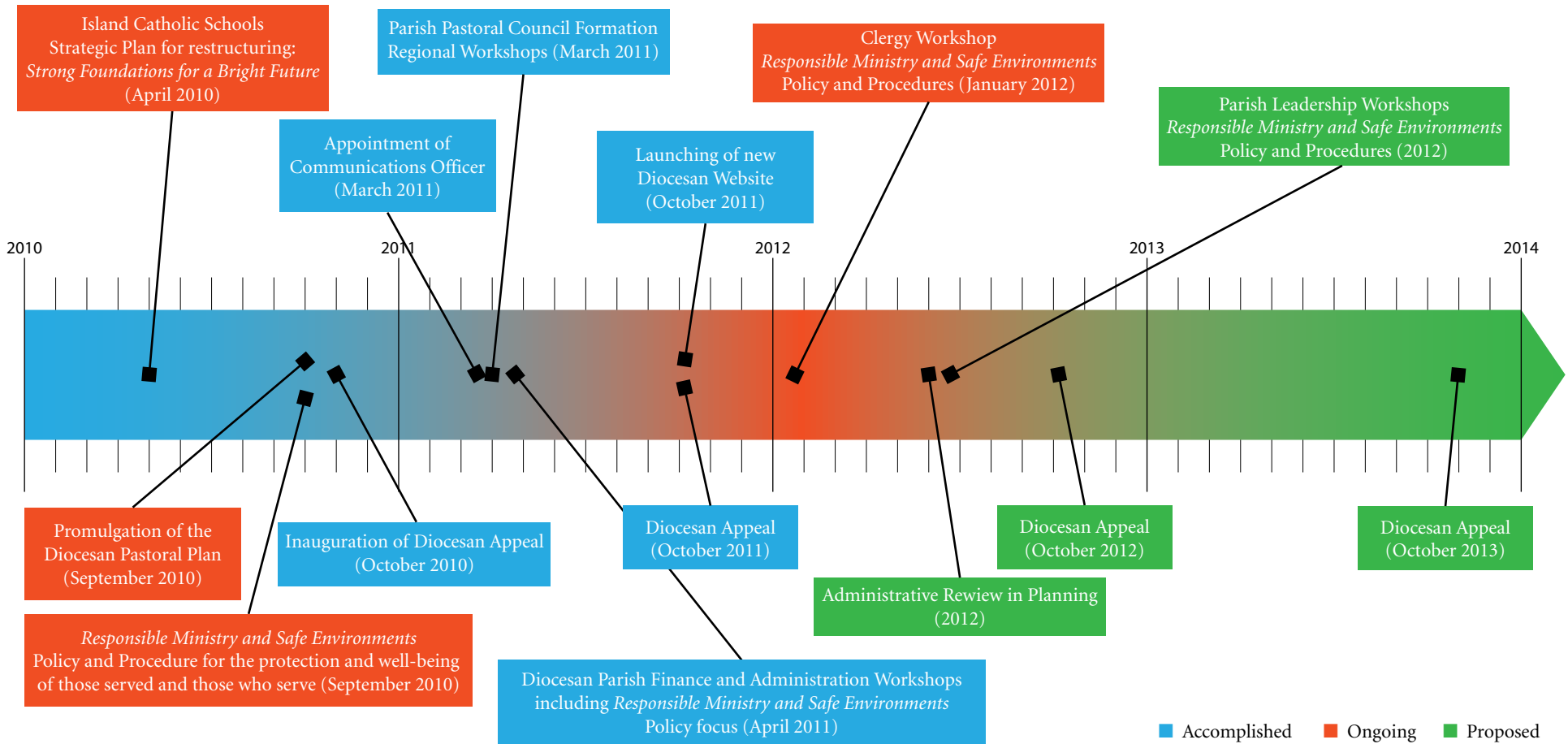
Essential Diocesan Actions

- Assist parishes regarding best practices in administrative policies and guidelines.
- Integrate the Diocesan “Governance Workshop” for new Pastoral Parish Council members with regional fall “Annual Pastoral Planning Workshops,” to assist parishes to develop their annual pastoral plans.
- Develop improved approaches to enhance communications between the Diocese and parishes, and between Parishes.

Finance

Essential Diocesan Actions

- Establish an “Annual Financial Appeal,” which will enable the Diocese to enact its Pastoral Plan and ensure a sound foundation.
- Incorporate stewardship teachings, principles and practices into fundraising, budgetary decisions and statements of accountability.
- Provide guidance to parishes for improved internal controls providing confidence that the Diocese and the Parishes are fulfilling their fiduciary responsibilities.
- Provide financial training to parishes as required.





Youth and Young Adults

Goals

- Engage Youth and Young Adults more deeply in a relationship with Jesus Christ and the Diocesan community; increase youth and young adults’ identification with and participation in the Mass and the Word of God.
- Involve youth in their local faith community.
- Bring youth from across the Diocese together in faith so they may feel connected in Christ.
- Form youth and young adults to help them seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit in vocational choices.



Essential Diocesan Actions

- Establish a Youth Ministry Office, with a full-time youth leader; provide outreach to youth and young adults throughout the Diocese.
- Provide resources, opportunities for social and community involvement of youth, and assist parishes with best practices involving youth.
- Plan additional annual activities that gather, encourage and provide mutual support for youth on their journey of faith.
- Advocate for Young Adult Ministry and support the formation of young people to serve in this ministry including the UVic Chaplaincy.
- Investigate engagement options for parish youth coordinators throughout the Diocese.
- Explore creating an online social networking resource for youth, to connect youth to the faith community, support them on faith matters and provide opportunities for involvement with social justice issues.

