



COPTIC ORTHODOX PATRIARCHATE OF ALEXANDRIA

THE CHURCH OF THE VIRGIN MARY AND ST. ATHANASIUS

Mandate, Vision, Mission and Values

Background

The Coptic Orthodox Church is one of the most ancient Christian Orthodox Churches in the world, founded in Egypt in the first century by Saint Mark the Apostle and writer of the second Gospel of the New Testament.

The Church of the Virgin Mary and St. Athanasius (VMSA) is a member of the Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria under the auspices of His Grace Bishop Mina, who was officially delegated by His Holiness Pope Tawadros II as the Diocesan Bishop of Mississauga, Vancouver and Western Canada on April 13, 2013.

Established in 1974, the Church of the Virgin Mary and St. Athanasius is a charitable, voluntary Christian organization dedicated to worshipping God, serving people, and sharing the Orthodox Christian faith. Our congregation reflects the rich multicultural diversity of Canada and serves both English-speaking and Arabic-speaking communities.

Through worship, education, fellowship, charitable outreach, and community service, the Church seeks to be a beacon of faith, hope, compassion, and service to all people.

Mandate

Modeled after the words of our Lord Jesus Christ:

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

— John 13:34–35

The mandate of the Church of the Virgin Mary and St. Athanasius is:

Loving God, Loving People, Seeking a Better Life for All

The Church is committed to:

1. Preserving and Sharing the Orthodox Christian Faith

Preserve, practice, and spread the Orthodox Christian faith that has been faithfully passed down through generations, remaining true to the apostolic teachings, spiritual worship, and sacramental life of the Church.

Our spiritual foundation is rooted in Holy Scripture, the Apostolic and Orthodox Creeds, the teachings of the Holy Fathers, and the decisions of the Ecumenical Councils recognized by the Coptic Orthodox Church.

2. Providing Places of Worship and Spiritual Growth

Provide places of worship that reflect Canada's multicultural heritage while preserving the sacraments, traditions, teachings, and spiritual richness of the Coptic Orthodox Church of Alexandria.

The Church seeks to provide opportunities for worship, discipleship, education, fellowship, spiritual growth, and service for people of all ages and backgrounds.

3. Serving People and Building Strong Communities

Promote human dignity and improve quality of life through spiritual, educational, charitable, social, cultural, recreational, housing, health-related, and community support services.

The Church is committed to serving the broader community, with particular attention to individuals and families experiencing poverty, social isolation, vulnerability, disability, aging-related challenges, housing insecurity, language barriers, and other obstacles to full participation in society.

Through its churches, community centres, schools, daycares, housing initiatives, retreat facilities, outreach programs, and charitable activities, the Church seeks to strengthen communities, foster social inclusion, support personal well-being, and create opportunities for all people to thrive.

Special emphasis shall be placed on supporting seniors, children, youth, families, newcomers, persons with disabilities, and individuals facing economic or social hardship.

4. Commitment to Children, Youth, Families, Seniors and Persons with Disabilities

The Church recognizes that every person is created in the image and likeness of God and possesses inherent dignity and worth.

We are committed to:

- Supporting children as an essential part of the Church today and the future of the Church.
- Guiding and empowering youth through faith formation, fellowship, mentorship, leadership development, and service opportunities.

- Strengthening families through worship, education, pastoral care, fellowship, and community support.
- Honouring seniors by recognizing their wisdom, experience, and continuing contributions to Church life.
- Supporting persons with disabilities through inclusion, dignity, respect, accessibility, and meaningful participation in all aspects of Church life.
- Providing care and support for vulnerable individuals through outreach, pastoral care, and charitable services.

5. Commitment to Accessibility and Inclusion

The Church is committed to creating an accessible, welcoming, inclusive, and respectful environment where all people can participate fully in worship, ministry, education, fellowship, and community activities.

We strive to identify and remove barriers to participation wherever reasonably possible and to provide reasonable accommodations for individuals with disabilities and accessibility needs.

Our facilities, programs, communications, services, and ministries shall be guided by the principles of dignity, independence, inclusion, equal opportunity, and respect for all.

5.1 The Church recognizes the invaluable contribution of seniors to the spiritual, social, and cultural life of the community and is committed to supporting healthy aging, active participation, dignity, independence, and social connection for older adults.

The Church shall strive to:

- Provide programs, services, activities, and facilities that are welcoming and accessible to seniors.
- Reduce social isolation and loneliness through fellowship, visitation, outreach, educational programs, recreational activities, and pastoral care.
- Encourage seniors to remain active participants, volunteers, mentors, leaders, and contributors within the Church community.
- Support aging-in-place initiatives, housing support programs, transportation assistance, wellness activities, and community services where feasible.
- Promote intergenerational engagement that strengthens relationships between seniors, youth, children, and families.
- Respect the dignity, independence, experience, and wisdom of older adults.

5.2 The Church is equally committed to supporting persons with disabilities and individuals with accessibility needs by promoting dignity, independence, integration, and equal opportunity.

To the greatest extent reasonably possible, the Church shall:

- Design, construct, and maintain facilities that are accessible and barrier-free.
- Improve access to worship services, meetings, programs, community events, and educational activities.
- Consider accessibility needs in communications, technology, transportation, signage, seating, washrooms, parking, pathways, and program delivery.
- Provide reasonable accommodations to enable participation in Church life.
- Foster a culture of respect, patience, understanding, and inclusion.

The Church believes that all people, regardless of age or ability, should be able to participate fully and meaningfully in the spiritual, social, educational, cultural, and community life of the Church.

Vision

The Church of the Virgin Mary and St. Athanasius is a vibrant, dynamic, Spirit-filled, multicultural Church that reflects the life of the New Testament Church described in Acts 2.

Our vision is:

To positively impact our city, our country, and the world by sharing an authentic Orthodox Christian faith that is faithful to the Gospel, relevant to contemporary society, and transformative for individuals, families, and communities.

We envision a Church where people encounter Jesus Christ, grow spiritually, serve others with love, and contribute positively to society.

Mission

We strive to revive the light of Jesus Christ in Canada by proclaiming the Gospel and extending God's love and care to all people.

We seek to live out the richness of the Orthodox Christian faith within an ever-changing and diverse society by:

- Worshipping God faithfully and teaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
- Serving people with love and compassion.

- Encouraging hope and spiritual growth.
- Supporting families and strengthening communities.
- Addressing poverty, loneliness, social isolation, and hardship.
- Promoting dignity, justice, inclusion, and accessibility.
- Creating opportunities for education, fellowship, service, and outreach.
- Building bridges between people of different cultures, backgrounds, and generations.

Inspired by Christ's teaching:

“Give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you.” — Matthew 5:42

We seek to ensure that every person has the opportunity to live with dignity, hope, purpose, and belonging.

Values

We are a community that seeks to follow Christ through love, kindness, service, faithfulness, and stewardship.

We believe that every human being is created in the image of God and deserves dignity, respect, compassion, and care.

Our ministry is guided by the following values:

Acceptance

We value every person and recognize each individual as uniquely created in the image of God. Every person deserves to be welcomed, respected, and loved.

Hospitality

We strive to build a Church community known for its welcoming spirit, where all people are treated with kindness, respect, and Christian love.

Authentic Relationships

We believe the Church is the Body of Christ. We seek to build genuine relationships with God and one another, fostering belonging, trust, support, and mutual care.

Ongoing Spiritual Growth

We believe every gathering is an opportunity to encounter God and grow spiritually through prayer, worship, the sacraments, learning, and service.

Family-Friendly Community

We believe the Church is a family and every family is a domestic church. We seek to support families in their spiritual growth and Christian witness at home and in society.

Accessibility and Inclusion

We believe every person should be able to participate fully in the life of the Church.

We are committed to creating accessible and inclusive environments for children, youth, families, seniors, persons with disabilities, newcomers, and all members of our community.

We strive to remove barriers and ensure that our facilities, programs, services, communications, and ministries are welcoming and accessible to all.

Service and Compassion

We are committed to serving those in need with humility, generosity, and compassion, reflecting Christ's love through practical acts of service and care.

Transparency

We value openness, accountability, and participation. We encourage involvement, welcome feedback, and strive to make decisions responsibly and transparently.

Unity

We believe God's intention for the Church is unity within diversity. We celebrate the gifts, talents, cultures, and experiences of all people and seek to work together in service of Christ's mission.

Organization

To serve the growing needs of the community, the Church of the Virgin Mary and St. Athanasius has established churches, community centres, educational institutions, retreat facilities, charitable programs, and outreach initiatives throughout the Greater Toronto Area and beyond.

Through these ministries, the Church serves more than 30,000 individuals across multiple locations, providing spiritual, educational, charitable, social, and community services in both English and Arabic.

The Church remains committed to serving future generations while preserving the Orthodox Christian faith and contributing positively to Canadian society through worship, education, service, inclusion, accessibility, and community engagement.