

BREASTFEEDING FRIENDLY CHURCH TOOLKIT

Anglican Diocese of Nova Scotia & PEI



**By supporting breastfeeding, we can create healthier people,
healthier relationships and healthier communities.**



BREASTFEEDING
community of practice

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Why your parish should support breastfeeding parents?

- Breastfeeding is important for the health of the infant/child as well as the parent, but also has benefits for the wider community.
- Breastfeeding decreases the child's risk of asthma, respiratory infections, ear infections, obesity, and diabetes.
- Breastfeeding decreases the parent's risk of breast cancer, ovarian cancer, osteoporosis, heart disease and excess bleeding after childbirth.
- Breastfeeding is environmentally friendly (no waste), sustainable and reduces food costs.
- Breastfed infants & children typically have fewer doctor visits, hospitalizations and prescriptions, thus reducing the strain on the health care system.
- When supported in the workplace, breastfeeding employees tend to be more satisfied with the balance of their lives, resulting in increased job satisfaction and greater productivity. It may also result in fewer missed days from work to tend to a sick child.
- A parent who feels comfortable breastfeeding in church is more likely to attend services, meetings and other church activities with their young children. This increases their sense of belonging in the church community and also makes it more likely that their children will grow up connected to the life of the church.

How do we create supportive environments?

- Support is a key factor that may influence a parent's decision to breastfeed. It can be as simple as smiling and making eye contact with a parent who is breastfeeding. Although parents have the right to breastfeed **anywhere/ anytime**, some parents prefer a more private space to feed their babies. Offering a parent a spot to breastfeed their child will allow them to decide where they are most comfortable, for example "You are more than welcome to feed your baby here; however, if you would like a more private space, just let us know..."
- For parents returning to work, developing a plan that is workable for both the parent and the employer can be a "win-win" situation. It can have a positive influence as to whether and when they return to their job. Research shows that supporting employees who are breastfeeding can enhance productivity, satisfaction, loyalty and morale.
- For the church, a supportive environment for breastfeeding can present a more caring & nurturing image to employees, parishioners and to the community at large.
- Supporting breastfeeding will create healthier communities and will send a message that breastfeeding is valued, that the health and future of our children and our community members matters

**"It was you who took me from the womb; you kept me safe on my mother's breast."
Psalm 22.9**

TIPS FOR SUPPORTING BREASTFEEDING AT CHURCH/CHURCH FUNCTIONS

The importance of breastfeeding.

- It is recommended by Health Canada that babies be exclusively breastfed for the first six months of their lives. Breastfeeding is encouraged to continue after solid foods are introduced up to and beyond two years of age.
- Less preparation time and lower cost.
- Decreases parents' missed work time due to sick children.
- Protects the environment (no waste).
- Creates healthier families, healthier communities and lower healthcare costs.

How you can make a breastfeeding parent more comfortable?

- Ask a parent with a baby where they would like to sit. Allow them to pick a spot where they will be comfortable breastfeeding, if they choose.
- Talk to them in a relaxed manner. Ask about the baby. If they have a toddler, speak directly to him or her as well as to the parent.
- Making eye contact with a parent who is breastfeeding shows them that you are comfortable and that you support them.
- Avoid questioning a family's feeding method.

What if a parishioner expresses a concern about a parent breastfeeding in public?

- Explain that you are a family friendly church and that it is your policy to support breastfeeding.
- Inform the individual that a parent's right to breastfeed in public is protected in both Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island by the human rights legislation as well as a provincial infant feeding policy.
- Suggest that the individual sit in a different location in the church instead of near the breastfeeding parent. This is a tangible way of showing support to the breastfeeding parent.

Where can you learn more about breastfeeding?

- www.novascotia.ca/dhw/healthy-communities/healthy-eating-breastfeeding.asp
- www.breastfeedingcop.com/
- www.princeedwardisland.ca/en/information/health-pei/breastfeeding-your-baby-and-baby-friendly-initiative-bfi
- www.peibreastfeedingcoalition.org/

**“Jesus said to them, ‘Yes; have you never read, “Out of the mouths of infants and nursing babies you have prepared praise for yourself”?’”
Matthew 21.16b**

PARISH COUNCIL - SUPPORTING BREASTFEEDING PARENTS

(CLERGY, STAFF, VOLUNTEERS & WORSHIPPERS)

Promoting, protecting, and supporting breastfeeding.
Respecting the decision each parent makes about how to feed their baby.

Before having their baby...

- A new parent, whether clergy, staff or volunteer, should be made aware of the support they will receive to breastfeed their child within the parish.
- The handout *Making Breastfeeding Work* (see page 4 of toolkit) should be made available prior to them leaving. This provides suggestions to make the transition easier for the breastfeeding parent.
- This could greatly influence their decision to breastfeed and/or return to parish activities.

After having their baby...

- A plan can be made to incorporate breastfeeding into their day. This plan should be specific for the parent, the baby and the job. It may also change as a result of factors such as increased needs of the baby. For example, babies experience predictable growth spurts during which their breastmilk needs will be greater, requiring more frequent pumping or feeding for 2-3 days.
- The keys to a successful plan include:
 - **Space** - Often a small, clean area with a comfortable chair is all that is needed. If the parent is pumping their breastmilk, an electrical outlet may be necessary. Electric pumps are the most efficient way to express milk and a parent may decide to use one. A refrigerator should be accessible to store breastmilk until the parent finishes their day. If this is not available, a cooler with ice packs can be used.
 - **Time** - In most cases, breastfeeding or pumping can be incorporated into regular breaks throughout the day. The time required will vary according to the parent and baby.
 - **Support** - Talk to the parent before they return to work or engage in parish activities. This will allow the opportunity to develop a plan that is workable for everyone involved and can result in a win-win situation. Information should be made available to other parish leaders so they can effectively support the breastfeeding parent.

As Parish Council...

- Active implementation of a breastfeeding policy can raise awareness to everyone in the parish and make the breastfeeding parent feel more comfortable.
- It is important to provide an open line of communication. It may be difficult for the new parent to ask you for what they need and it may be difficult for you to know what they need. Effective communication is required for a successful transition to integrating breastfeeding with other duties. This can be achieved by:
 - Making the parish's support of breastfeeding common knowledge as some parents may worry that others may perceive them to be getting special treatment.
 - Asking the new parent what they need to make this transition easier and assure them of your support.
 - Remembering to show your support to all families regarding their feeding choices.

“A mother can give her child milk to suck, but our dear mother Jesus can feed us with himself.”
Julian of Norwich

MAKING BREASTFEEDING WORK

A resource for parents returning to work

Before having your baby...

- Talk to other parents who have breastfed on the go.
- Meet with your parish wardens to discuss your plan to breastfeed while engaged in parish activities and begin to explore possible options.

After having your baby...

- Meet with your parish wardens or support person if necessary to develop a plan. Let them know what you will need and what they can do to help you.
- Check your wardrobe. Two-piece outfits are a more practical choice when breastfeeding or expressing milk at work. Patterned tops can hide leakage and/or the contour of a nursing pad. It may be useful to keep a sweater with you, just in case.
- For clergy and other staff, discuss the possibility of starting back to work part way through a regular work week so that your first week is shorter. Another possibility is returning part-time and gradually increasing to full-time. Working from home for part of the day may be another possibility to ease back into work, while incorporating breastfeeding into the workday.
 - You may want to get your baby used to drinking from a bottle or a cup so your baby can be fed pumped breastmilk while you are at work.
 - Learn about expressing and storing breastmilk. Find the method of expression that works best for you. For more information, call local community supports or refer to **Breastfeeding Basics**, a free Public Health resource.
 - Begin storing your breastmilk about 2 weeks prior to returning to work to ensure that your baby has enough.
 - Perform a test run workday. Arrange for the baby to be left with a caregiver for a typical workday. Breastfeed and/or pump as you would during a workday. As a result, any kinks can be worked out before actually returning to work.
 - Provide feedback to your parish wardens if you wish.

When you must be away from your child for several hours...

- Stay organized. This can decrease the stress associated with being away and maximize your success with continuing to provide your baby with breastmilk.
- Give yourself time in the morning to breastfeed at least once and breastfeed right after you return.
- While away, pump as frequently as you would breastfeed if you were with your child. When with your child, breastfeed as often as you can. This will help you maintain your milk supply.
- Don't sweat the small stuff. Decide what is important and accept help from family and friends.
- Eat and drink well! Get enough rest!

“Like newborn infants, long for the pure, spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow into salvation.”

1 Peter 2.2



CHECKLIST FOR BECOMING A BREASTFEEDING FRIENDLY PARISH

- Review the Breastfeeding Friendly Churches information we have provided.**
- Create a breastfeeding policy:**
 - Discuss with your parish/church council and any other church leadership the importance of their support in creating a breastfeeding friendly environment for staff, parishioners and visitors alike.
 - Ensure new employees, council members, greeters and other volunteers learn about the breastfeeding policy during orientation.
 - In addition to your breastfeeding policy, ensure all staff and volunteers are aware that breastfeeding is a protected human right and that parents in Nova Scotia and PEI have the right to breastfeed everywhere.
- Create a welcoming space:**
 - Create a comfortable area for breastfeeding within the main space of the church and/or the parish hall, which will allow a parent to breastfeed quietly while staying connected to what's going on. Include some pillows and small blankets if possible.
 - If requested, provide a private space for parents to feed their babies or to pump.
 - An area to change diapers would also be helpful.
 - Once all clergy, parish council members and other leaders in the parish have learned how to support breastfeeding, contact the diocesan office at office@nspeidiocese.ca or 902-420-0717 to submit the signed policy and to obtain your International Breastfeeding Symbol and icon of Mary breastfeeding Jesus. Display the icon and symbol and/or post a sign to show everyone that breastfeeding is welcome.
- Ensure all pregnant employees, volunteers and parishioners are aware of breastfeeding supports they will receive after having their baby.**
 - Meet with pregnant employees before their maternity leave.
 - Post information regarding the parish's support of a parent's right to breastfeed anywhere, in the church bulletin, bulletin board and/or newsletter.





SAMPLE PARISH BREASTFEEDING POLICY

Having a breastfeeding policy is an effective way to ensure that all staff, volunteers, parishioners and the community are aware that the church supports breastfeeding.

_____ ;
(Name of parish or church)

- recognizes that breastfeeding is a protected human right and parents in Nova Scotia & PEI have the right to breastfeed everywhere,
- recognizes that breastmilk is the optimal food for healthy growth and development of infants,
- recognizes that breastfeeding benefits child and parental health,
- recognizes that breastfeeding contributes to the overall health of our community,
- will promote and support breastfeeding and the expression of breastmilk by clergy, other employees, parishioners, visitors and volunteers.

Leaders in our parish are committed to:

- ongoing education of new and prospective clergy and other leaders, whether staff or volunteer, regarding this policy,
- working with breastfeeding staff and volunteers to determine mutually agreeable hours of work and other expectations, which support breastfeeding practices and are compatible with diocesan/parish policies and contracts,
- providing a respectful & comfortable environment for all breastfeeding parents in the context of church activities.

Rector

Date

Warden

Date

Warden

Date



**Jesus, like a mother
you gather your people to you;
you are gentle with us
as a mother with her children.**

**You comfort us in sorrow
and bind up our wounds,
in sickness you nurse us,
and with pure milk you feed us.**

Anselm of Canterbury

**“Gather the people. Sanctify the congregation;
assemble the aged; gather the children, even infants at the breast.”
Joel 2.16**



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