

Vision Committee Report January 31, 2007

The committee decided early on that before we could suggest where we should go we needed to agree on where we were. Our first task was to establish what our core values and beliefs were. After much discussion we found that we could best represent these values and beliefs diagrammatically. Attached is our diagram, along with an explanation, of our vision of our Core Values and Beliefs. We used this as both a filter to test our ideas for our vision, and a compass to direct us in our deliberations.

Some of our early discussions revolved around the wonderful sense of family, belonging and intimacy that exist in our church, and the fear that we would lose it. We had to come to grips with the reality that we are called to spread the Good News, and this will mean growth. We have to manage that growth such that we can maintain that sense of family and belonging, and we have to trust in God, and each other, that we can do that. We do not seek growth for its own sake, or to increase our financial resources, but because we are called to reach out and invite others to experience His love through us.

We also included in our discussions a review of our most recent Mission Statement, and a review of demographic data for the area.

With this as background we began to create a vision of St. James over the next 5 to 10 years. We have provided an outline of our vision, broken down into four areas, Financial, Staff, Plant and Program. We have tried to make our list as encompassing as possible while being consistent with our core values and beliefs. We have not prioritized these items, as we do not believe that we are sufficiently representative of our parish community to do that. We believe that it is essential to share this information with our parish community and, in turn, get their input and feedback. Without ownership of the vision little will be accomplished.

The Vision Committee strongly recommends that the findings of the committee be distributed to the parish. We also believe we should consider using the services of an outside service provider (like, e.g., a consulting firm specializing in this area or the Episcopal Church Foundation) to assist us with, or to actually prepare the material. We believe that a very important component of this process should be focus groups to help refine the data gathering and preferences, and to enhance ownership.

We thank the vestry for this opportunity to contribute our thoughts and suggestions to our Church. It was a challenging and rewarding experience that gave us one more opportunity to work together and to build community.

Financial

- Plate and pledge should fully support the operating budget such that funds raised from other sources (e.g., Thrift Shop, Pre School, Auction, Etc.) may be used for outreach, capital expansions and improvements, etc.
- We should contribute our full assessment and charges to the diocese.
- Devise a long term plan to secure our financial future using vehicles like deferred giving endowments, etc.
- Look for other fund raising opportunities, like the auction, which not only raise funds but also build community.

Staff

- Add a deacon to our staff.
- Fill the position of Music Director.
- Add another minister to focus on youth programs and relieve Fr. Tim of some of his duties to free him up for more pastoral activities.
- Increased involvement by our clergy in the ministerium.

Plant

- Remain at our present site to serve the greater Downingtown community
- Build or provide a rectory on our property
- Provide a new entrance to the Church with an emphasis on making it “welcoming”.
- Provide additional parking
- Assure that our facilities are handicap accessible
- Additional space for programs and meetings
- Outsource the regular cleaning of our facilities and free-up our Sexton for repairs, maintenance and special projects.
- Bring the preschool program into facilities above ground
- Provide air conditioning for our facilities
- Expand our worship space to accommodate more people
- Provide sports facilities (fields, gym, etc.) to draw people and build community

Programs

We see three key areas of impact for our parish:

Ministry and Outreach

- Revitalize the Stephen Ministry
- A strong and vital welcoming committee
- A program (committee) to help integrate newcomers into our parish family
- Distribute information about our activities to local news sources, and perhaps link with the Downingtown Main Street program for collaborative projects and to let our light shine. Also, actively invite new members through direct mail and advertising. Special emphasis on inviting people new to our community.
- A musical or passion play

- Expand our communication with enhanced web site capabilities to include, e.g. all activities and programs for next month, and pamphlets that list all of the programs we offer, when they meet, who to contact, etc

Provide support to parishioners in coping with the complexities of secular life

- Programs for our aging population, and those who care for them
- Youth programs—and support groups for their parents
- Continue and expand diverse support groups for those in transition e.g., single parents, unemployed, bereaved, etc.
- Bible studies specific to groups, e.g., for Moms, for men, etc.
- Support socialization among those with specific interests through, for example: diverse sports teams, outings both fun and social and “work” or outreach.
- Provide value centered entertainment, e.g., Friday family movie night
- Start an after school program (perhaps with a tutoring component) for children whose parents are working
- Provide child care to enable involvement in support and socialization groups

Provide volunteer opportunities

- Provide specific information on the diverse volunteer opportunities we have, one component could be a “volunteer jobs fair”
- Expanded and more defined outreach programs that create many and varied volunteer opportunities; we can also join forces with other organizations with established programs (like United Way, Habitat for Humanity, etc.)