

## ST. THOMAS' CHURCH, WHITEMARSH STRATEGIC PLAN 2006-2008

### Operational Plan

The Operational Plan to carry out the Strategic Plan 2006-2008 of St. Thomas' Church, Whitmarsh is detailed below.

#### **Membership: Growing our Community in Faith**

*Scriptural Basis:* Matthew 28:19-20

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age.”

*The Plan:* To increase the number of new and existing members of our Church who regularly attend worship and actively participate as members of our faith community.

*The Goal:* Annual increase in sustainable average regular worship attendance of 50% by the end of 2010, using 2005 as the base year.

#### *Commentary:*

We are called to be disciples of Christ, to follow Christ, and to invite others to share the journey. We have been blessed with a large and beautiful church campus that provides us with the space to grow. We are committed to reach our fullest potential to become a large dynamic community actively engaged in ministry. The best measure of Church growth is an increase in members worshipping in church on Sunday. By this standard, St. Thomas' has had virtually no net growth over the past three years.

There are important questions we need to answer in order to develop a plan to increase our active membership:

- We must analyze honestly what brings people to St. Thomas' *and* what causes them to leave.
- We must be sure that current parishioners have found a meaningful way to participate in the life of our community.
- We must discover ways to reach out to less active members and inspire them to become more active.
- We must develop and strengthen programs in every area of ministry.

Inspired and actively engaged parishioners will naturally share the Good News of God in Christ and invite others to come and see that St. Thomas' is a vibrant place of worship and service.

**Implementation:** Convene a Vestry-led Task Force to: (i) study further the issues identified above: and (ii) evaluate, and if appropriate, implement the Diocesan-sponsored Natural Church Development program to strengthen the quality characteristics of our Church (empowered leadership, gift-oriented ministry, passionate spirituality, functional structures, inspiring worship, holistic small groups, need-oriented evangelism and loving relationships). This Task Force will work collaboratively with the Task Force on worship and Music and the Task Force on Stewardship. Working with staff, the Task Force will also oversee the development of a “tool-kit” of messaging materials to promote the community of faith at St. Thomas’. The Task Force will present to the Vestry for approval a fully developed plan of action by June 2006. Implementation of the plan will commence by no later than the Fall of 2006.

### **Program and Budget: Sustaining our Ministries**

**Scriptural Basis:** 1 Chronicles 29:12-14

”Both riches and honor come from you, and you rule over all. In your hand are power and might; and it is in your hand to make great and to give strength to all. And now, our God, we give thanks to you and praise your glorious name. But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to make this freewill offering? For all things come from you, and of your own have we given you.”

**The Plan:** To position our budget so that all core ministries are funded on a self-sustaining basis.

**The Goal:** All core ministries will be funded under a balanced budget by 2008.

### **Commentary:**

Our rate of revenue growth over the past several years has been less than our growth in expenses. As a result, core ministries have been cut and/or are being funded outside of the operating budget (e.g., Diocesan Pledge, Music, Outreach, Youth). Operating budgets over the past several years have been either negative (2003) or balanced through stop gap measures (e.g., most of Outreach is funded outside of the operating budget, Music has been supported by special fund raising, Youth has been funded in part by special gifts, bequest monies have been allocated to operations and endowment has been borrowed to meet shortfalls).

To address this problem, the Plan will:

- Continue the monthly budget monitoring process put in place during 2004;
- Design and implement a budget building process so that the views of all important program constituencies impacted by the budget will be heard;
- Adopt, and require adherence to, strict rules regarding transfer of bequests to endowment and access to endowment income and principal to support the operating budget;

- Establish a cash flow projection system to anticipate cash needs, and a commercially reasonable internal or external line of credit to meet cash shortfalls occurring in the normal conduct of business;
- Evaluate honestly whether we are spending budgeted funds most effectively to meet core program needs and achieve the objectives of the Plan, and recommend and adopt changes to meet those needs and achieve those objectives;
- Develop a plan to allocate increased annual revenues resulting from the property, membership growth, stewardship and planned giving components of the Plan.

***Implementation:***

- The Accounting Warden, working with the Rector, Rector's Warden, Finance Committee and Business Manager, will be in charge of implementation.
- The Business Manager will oversee the monthly budget monitoring process, and through the Accounting Warden, report on the effectiveness of the monthly monitoring process at least quarterly.
- Working with the Business Manager and Finance Committee, a new budgeting process will be developed by June 2006 and deployed in September 2006 for purposes of building the 2007 budget.
- The planned giving resolutions adopted in July 2005, establishing a new Endowment Committee, setting strict ground rules for transfer of bequest funds to the endowment and endowment support for the operating budget, will be implemented by the end of 2005.
- A cash flow projection system, will be adopted and implemented by the end of 2005.
- A program and budget task force, already convened, will evaluate and recommend budget changes aimed at meeting core program priorities, effective implementation of the Plan and program priorities for allocating excess revenues resulting from successful implementation of the Plan.

**Youth: Rekindling a Our Youth Program**

***ScripturalBasis:***Deuteronomy6:6-9

”These commandments that I give to you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.”

***The Plan:*** To create a thriving, multi-faceted youth ministry that will help youth to know, love and serve Christ, while also helping to build and enliven the St. Thomas' community.

***The Goal:*** Develop a sound and lasting infrastructure for youth ministry, while providing a successful, though modest program, during 2005-2006. In the Fall of 2006, launch a sustainable youth ministry that will engage 40-50 youth each week.

**Commentary:** Our Baptismal covenant calls us to raise our children in the knowledge and love of God. St. Thomas' has done very well in providing spiritual nurture for our youngest members, but we have been less effective with our teens. After much prayer, reflection and discussion, we are now firmly committed to creating and sustaining a vibrant youth program. We believe this ministry will benefit our teens and their families and is an essential element of a healthy parish ready for growth.

**Implementation:** Working in consultation of Youth Ministry Architects, the Youth Commission will take the following steps to implement the Plan (many of which are already underway):

- **Visioning:** Create a statement of mission, values, and three year goals, with specific benchmarks to guide implementation. Design an organizational structure to support achievement of the vision.
- **Staffing:** Write job descriptions for ten leadership roles, two paid staff and eight volunteer Youth Commission positions. Write job descriptions for four non-leadership volunteer roles. Recruit talented people to fill each position. Develop the ability of each person involved in youth ministry to successfully fulfill their role.
- **Infrastructure Building:** Create an 18-month calendar, 6 year curriculum plan, youth directory, event planning system, participation tracking process, compliance documents, volunteer application and screening process, youth website, and youth ministry operations manuals.
- **Engaging students:** Offer a variety of spiritual nurture, service and fellowship events that encourage spiritual growth, build a web of deep relationships and are consistent with the values of our youth ministry. Connect with students in planned, as well as spontaneous, encounters.
- **Engaging adults:** Organize fellowship and educational events that will build a supportive community among parents of St. Thomas' youth. Inform, promote and celebrate youth ministry events to engage the interest and involvement of other adult members of St. Thomas'.

### **Program Development and Restoration: Revitalizing Our Program Ministries**

**Scriptural Basis:** Paul's letter to the Romans Chapter 12: 4-13

"For as in one body we have many members, and all the members do not have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them; if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; if service, in our serving; he who teaches, in his teaching; he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who contributes, in liberality; he who gives aid, with zeal; he who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness."

**The Plan:** Develop an organizational framework for the effective implementation of existing and new program ministries and restoration of funding to ministries which have been cut in the past.

***The Goal:*** To have all program ministries (i) well organized, (ii) effectively administered, (iii) accountable, (iv) financially sustained and (v) supported by strong lay leadership and effective succession planning.

***Commentary:***

In order to grow our membership, St. Thomas' must have great ministries. Because of ongoing budget constraints, our programs have been impaired in the past, with funding cut from a number of them, including Music, Outreach, Adult Spiritual Formation and our contribution to the Diocese. We plan to reverse this trend by addressing the following:

1. Rebuilding our Youth program is one essential component dealt with elsewhere in this Plan. The organizational model used to rejuvenate this program can, we believe, be a model for revitalizing and reshaping other ministries as needed in the future;
2. An interim Chair of Outreach has been appointed to lead an effort to reorganize and refocus our Outreach Programs. We need to ensure that this effort is successful and the leadership to move our Outreach Programs forward continues. A major fundraising event conducted at least every other year, together with Second Saturday Sales, will replace the Fair as the major methods for funding Outreach to supplement the current level of funding from the Operating Budget (\$4,000 for 2005).
3. Our Nursery School has a long tradition of success and fine leadership. As a window to the community of young families who can join the life of our Church and as a financially successful program, we will determine whether a long term strategic plan should be developed aimed at possible expansion of the program;
4. The Vestry will work with our Commission Chairs to: (i) help build our Operating Budget, beginning in September of each year, so that needs, resources and issues can be sorted out in advance; (ii) develop best practice standards for operating our program ministries; (iii) generate new and creative methods for implementing our ministries so that they can be adapted to new members and changing circumstances; and (iv) develop leadership and succession plans so that programs are not impaired when Commission Chairs are no longer able to serve ("Commission Chair Goals");
5. As the positive financial effects of our Plan take hold, the Vestry intends to increase funding from our Operating Budget for key ministries which have been cut in the past and develop additional

budgeted surpluses to augment other ministries and develop new ones (“Restoration Goal”).

***Implementation:***

- Establish an organizational plan for Outreach and assure that leadership of Outreach continues uninterrupted; implement a plan to continue Second Saturday Sales and find successor leadership for this program by the end of 2006; and implement major fund raising events in 2006 and 2008 (the overall goal of these actions will be to increase Outreach funding);
- The Rector and leadership of the Vestry and Nursery School will make a determination whether to conduct a strategic planning study for the Nursery School as soon as practicable, but by no later than March 2006; if there is a decision to proceed, leadership will be appointed, a charge for the study will be developed and the Vestry will set a timetable for the study by no later than June 2006;
- The Junior Warden, working with the Commission Chairs, will develop a plan and timetable to meet the Commission Chair Goals and present the plan to the Vestry for approval by February 2006; and
- As a first step in meeting the Restoration Goal, the Vestry will, by December 2005, establish within the Endowment special funds earmarked to support key program ministries in order to give parishioners new opportunities for giving.

**Stewardship: A Spirit of Inspired Abundance**

***Scriptural Basis:*** Paul’s Second Letter to the Corinthians chapter 9: 6-8

”The point is this: he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must do as he has made up his mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that you may always have enough of everything and may provide in abundance for every good work.”

***The Plan:*** To transform our Stewardship Program to a year round program of information, inclusion and inspiration

***The Goals:***

- We will transform our Stewardship Program to a year round program of information, inclusion and inspiration.
- Every active member of the Church will be visited over the next three years. We will listen to what our members have to say, inspire them with our Vision for the future and help them engage more actively in the life of our Church.
- We will increase the number of parishioners who have found a way to use their unique combination of gifts in our program ministries.
- We will grow a natural spirit of giving which responds to our program needs and achieves the envisioned future of our Vision.

**Commentary:** “Christian Stewardship” means the faithful management of the gifts God has given us. Our Stewardship Commission’s core purpose is to inspire every parishioner to: (i) discover his or her God-given gifts of time, treasure and talent; (ii) manage those gifts faithfully; and (iii) offer those gifts generously to help carry out God’s mission in the world. The Stewardship Commission will conduct a 4-6 week annual appeal for resources of time, treasure and talent set within a context of year round stewardship education. Recognizing that people may be motivated to give to our Church for many different reasons, the Stewardship campaign will reach out to our members in different and flexible ways designed to appeal to them based upon where they are in their own unique spiritual journeys.

**Implementation:** The Stewardship Commission will establish and begin implementation of a year round Stewardship Program, to be approved by the Vestry, during the first quarter of 2006. Recruitment of new leadership and expanded membership to help sustain the expanded role of the Stewardship Commission will be essential. The financial gifts will be managed by the Accounting Warden and Business Manager. The gifts of time and talent will be managed by the Shared Ministry Committee. The Vestry, as stewards of parish resources, will allocate these gifts according to the program priorities set by the Vestry consistent with this Plan.

### **Property: Generating Revenue for Programs from our Unique Gift**

**Scriptural Basis:** Genesis 1: 29-31

”And God said, ‘Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.’ And it was so, And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good.”

**The Plan:** To generate new sources of revenue from our property

**The Goal:** Generate not less than \$50,000 of additional, sustainable revenue from our Property by the end of 2008.

**Commentary:**

For too long, we have looked at our wonderful property as a burden rather than a gift from God with potential for revenue generation to help sustain our program ministries. Accordingly, the Vestry will study, and implement if feasible, new sources of revenue from the Church’s property. The initial areas of focus will be potential opportunities for parking and administrative space with McNeil, commercial uses of the Corner and School Houses and catering options for the Parish House and Barn area. Other areas of

focus to be explored after these will be physical expansion of our very successful Nursery School program and new uses of our unoccupied acreage.

The following will be taken into account in considering these options:

- Any outright sale of Church property (v. a long term building and land lease) is not likely to be considered favorably (in the absence of compelling circumstances to the contrary); new uses should be appropriate to a Church;
- The impact on Church programs, the cemetery, traffic and parking;
- Zoning, the Church's tax-exempt status, liability, insurance and other implications; and
- The impact of other planning strategies (e.g., membership growth) and other long term plans (e.g., the next capital campaign).

**Implementation:** The Vestry will commission a task force (with significant Vestry representation) to conduct the study and make recommendations with regard to those revenue generating ideas which appear to be feasible. The task force will be appointed and begin deliberations on or before January 1, 2006, and make its first round of recommendations to the Vestry by March 31, 2006. Recommendations approved by the Vestry will be implemented under the supervision of the Vestry member charged with responsibility for Property pursuant to a plan approved by the Vestry. Immediate opportunities for specific revenue generating discovered by the task force will be reviewed and approved by the Vestry on a case-by-case basis.

### **Planned Giving: Remembering our Future**

**Scriptural Basis:** Luke 8:11-15

“Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. The ones along the path are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, that they may not believe and be saved. And the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear the word, receive it with joy; but these have no root, they believe for a while and in time of temptation fall away. And as for what fell among the thorns, they are those who hear, but as they go on their way, they are choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life, and their fruit does not mature. And as for that in the good soil, they are those who, hearing the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bring forth fruit with patience.”

**The Plan:** To establish an ongoing planned giving program to encourage parishioners to remember our Church in their wills.

**The Goal:** To design and implement an ongoing ministry that will: 1) provide parishioner education about planned giving and 2) offer programs which will encourage and assist bequests to St. Thomas' Church. No specific objective (e.g. 10% of parishioners participating) will be established.

**Commentary:** While the church has historically benefited from numerous gifts, there has been no ongoing, established program of planned giving. The Planned Giving Committee is developing a year-long timetable that will establish the process for giving to St. Thomas. The initial step was adoption of a Vestry resolution that creates a Vestry discretionary fund and a planned giving program. Our vision statement will be used to create the key themes for the marketing plan. This resolution should inspire confidence that money given to the church will be put to the appropriate use. The Vestry will also consider the establishment of funds for various purposes such as the music program, youth program, building and grounds, outreach and adult spiritual formation.

**Implementation:** An initial draft of a proposed timeline for the planned giving program has been developed. It envisions adoption of a name for the program and kick-off by early 2006. Other actions will include a pledge card process, a note with “Remember the church in your will”, a Wills Awareness workshop and perhaps a Rector’s Forum devoted to this topic. During January, the Baptism of Jesus Sunday will be established as Planned Giving Sunday, and annually acknowledged. The initial budget for this effort through 2006 in the amount of \$30,000, funded from the endowment, has been established. The committee has begun discussions with various churches to learn more about staffing and job descriptions for a planned giving individual. Consideration will be given to a new staff position who would be devoted to planned giving and stewardship.

## **Leadership Development: Guiding our Future**

**The Plan:** To attract excellent lay leaders and develop leadership talent.

**The Goal:** To have laity as Vestry members and in Commission Chair positions who not only contribute their time and talent but benefit positively, including spiritually, from their service.

**Commentary:** Lay leadership is an essential ingredient for a successful Church and to accomplish the goals of this Strategic Plan.

**Implementation:** Three initiatives will be undertaken in this regard:

**1. Nominating Process Plan:** The Vestry adopted a Nominating Process (published in March 2005) which has established a year round Nominating Committee with two key roles: recommending new members for election to the Vestry, and scouting for and developing new leaders. The Nominating Committee has been meeting throughout 2005 and will, during 2006, fully implement the second part of its role so that we will be continually identify and cultivate new lay leaders for our program ministries and the Vestry.

**2. Vestry Membership:** Continuing to attract excellent parishioners to serve on the Vestry will continue to be a very high priority for the Nominating Committee and Vestry.

**3. Enhanced Role of Commission Chairs:** Building on our tradition of having had very strong lay Commission Chairs in charge of program ministries, we plan to integrate our Commission Chairs more intentionally with each other to realize new program potential. As the same time, we intend to connect those Commission Chairs more intentionally with the Vestry in terms of program coordination, budgeting, establishment of best practices, leadership development and succession planning.

### **Communicating the Plan: Spreading the Good News**

#### ***Scriptural Basis:***

**The Goal:** To communicate our Vision and Plan to the parish so that our members will understand, and help in every way they can to accomplish, the goals stated therein.

**Commentary:** While the Goal of our Vision is clear and understandable, our Plan has many elements and poses significant implementation challenges. Unless our fellow parishioners understand our Vision and Plan, we cannot expect them to embrace it and actively help us unlock and achieve their potential.

**Implementation:** The Vision and Plan will be communicated to the parish regularly over the next three years through multiple communications channels.. These will include; :

- A printed Strategy Booklet which includes the Vision and the goals of this Plan,;
- Prayer, visioning, dialogue and written communications by existing Church committees, forums and groups;
- Website;
- Written communications;
- Widespread use pictorial representations across our campus;
- Homilies;
- Adult forums; and
- New membership, stewardship and planned giving activities

A member of the Vestry will work with the staff to develop a comprehensive plan to accomplish the foregoing by March 2006.

### **Implementation and Success Measures**

The Vestry, through the Executive Committee or member of the Vestry, will coordinate and track implementation of this Plan on an ongoing basis. In this connection, a tool will be developed to track the persons responsible for actions to be taken and the accomplishment of those actions against deadlines established.

Success will be measured against the Plan goals. A financial forecast making reasonable assumptions related to those goals will be developed and used as one important tool against which success will be measured.

This Plan, and the Strategy Booklet will be provided to all new Vestry members during their orientation process.