

Parish Growth Report

July 2011

Holy Trinity Episcopal Church

With God's help, we will . . . Seek Christ in all persons; Serve others; and Strive to be a vibrant, growing, and visible Episcopal community of faith.

Ready, Set, Grow!

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, - Matthew 28:19

Committee Members: *Beth Smith, Eunice Converse, Bill Atwell, Ron Tiller, Gary Skidmore, Karen Murphy, Deirdre Toeller-Novak*

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Summary: "Church Planting and Congregational Growth; Research Review for 2008"
by Rev. Ken Howard

Full report available at:

<http://www.saintnicks.com/upload/churchgrowth/Church%20Planting%20&%20Cong%20Growth%202008%20-%20A%20Research%20Review%20Update.pdf>

Holy Trinity Episcopal Church
Parish Growth Committee Research Summary

These things we know. . . these churches grow faster than others . . .

Italicized items to be included in survey questions.

- ❖ Diverse (multi-racial/ethnic/gender balanced) churches
- ❖ Churches with more young adults and children grow faster
- ❖ *Churches with a clear and shared vision, mission, intentionality, and purpose*
- ❖ *Those with spiritual vitality adaptability, and willingness to change*
- ❖ *Desire to grow*
- ❖ *Outward looking orientation (focus on evangelism, outreach, sharing by word and action)*
- ❖ *Those that view stewardship as involving all aspects of life*
- ❖ *Churches that train lay persons for leadership roles in all areas*
- ❖ *Those without serious conflict*
- ❖ Churches with a variety of worship services and times
- ❖ *Churches whose congregations find them joyful, experiential, inspirational, and worship is intentional*
- ❖ *Those with engaging preaching, music and worship*
- ❖ *Where recruiting is thought to be every member's job*
- ❖ *Where evangelism is relationship focused and need-oriented*
- ❖ Where evangelism is targeted and strategic
- ❖ Congregations with website and which use internet technology grow faster (social networking and websites are growing rapidly as ways to find and encourage the investment of new members)
- ❖ There is systematic and varied visitor tracking, follow-up, and integration
- ❖ *Broad and varied programming is well matched to community needs*
- ❖ *Parenting and marriage enrichment programs are offered*
- ❖
- ❖ *Midweek programs and special events are offered for children and the community*
- ❖ Invitations are mailed for services and programs (community)

Specific to the Leadership (Clergy and Lay)

- ❖ *Leadership is vision/goal/purpose driven*
- ❖ *Transparent*

- ❖ *Outward-focused*
- ❖ *Entrepreneurial/flexible/adaptable*
- ❖ *Relationship oriented*
- ❖ Healthy boundaries set by clergy
- ❖ *Cooperative leadership between clergy and lay leadership – shared ownership*
- ❖ *Faith-oriented/dream-oriented/task-orientated/ open to suggestions*
- ❖ *Willingness to collaborate with other churches/organizations/professions*
- ❖ *Functional (form follows function)*
- ❖ *Unabashed Spirituality*
- ❖ Leadership team is fully staffed, adequately compensated, experienced

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Next Steps (Initial action plans to be completed by the September 8 Vestry meeting in preparation for the September all congregation meeting to be scheduled by Fr. Jim:

1. Draft and implement a Zoom.com based survey for parish members. (Ron Tiller and Beth Smith)

Survey Goals: determine the readiness of HT members for church growth; discover areas in which education and training may help to promote growth and incorporate new members; learn from the insight and wisdom of members how HT may grow well.

- a. Survey to be based on research; use the attached summary, "These things we know" as the basis for questions and solicited feedback.
- b. The survey will be completed by a representative sample of parish members with all members who wish to complete it given an opportunity to do so.
 - i. Constituencies: youth, seniors, single adults, families, middle-agers, _____, _____, _____)
- c. Paper copies of survey will be available for members who prefer not to use a computer based system.

2. Assign the following to existing committees:

- a. **Worship (Fr. Jim and committee)**
 - i. Review hospitality efforts at every level
 - ii. Review type and structure of worship offerings in light of survey results
- b. **Spiritual Growth: (Lynda Adams?)** Review current and potential program offerings for children and adults

- i. For current members, consider program that emphasize the values that enhance growth: for example, Benedictine Spirituality (prayer, stewardship, hospitality, mutual respect)
- ii. Consider offering a “Dave Ramsey Financial Planning” and/or or marriage enrichment workshop (and others that may be of interest)
- iii. Consider a recurring orientation and recommitment: Who/what is the Episcopal Church?

c. Mission and Ministry: (Vestry member TBA) Review current and potential program offerings for children and adults.

- i. Plan and hold community wide event(s) that “brand” HT (BBQ on the lawn, Block Party, Ice Cream Social, music program at Christmas, Holy Grounds, Food In-Gathering)
 - 1. Increase visibility and use of Clothes Closet **(Deacon Brad)**
 - 2. Children: VBS, Easter Egg Hunt open to the community, midweek programs, _____, _____ **(Deb Hunter)**

3. Appoint the following subcommittees: (assure representatives from all constituencies):

a. Materials and Information Review* (Brian Tillman, Karen Murphy, Kevin Wells, Nancy Tweddale)

- i. Redesign and upgrade the HT website; explore working with a consultant/contractor to design and train church secretary re: maintenance
- ii. Assure a user friendly, easily updated parish database and a separate community mailing data base
- iii. Review, and where necessary, create or redesign all materials (welcome packet, pew cards—“Episcopal Church Welcomes you,” invitation business cards, visitor registration book, etc.).
 - 1. Include email request on everything
 - 2. Include list of committees and activities (with contact information) for church members and new-comers who may wish to participate

b. Parish Marketing and Hospitality* (chair TBA, coordinate with existing committees)

- i. Consider a parish-wide “commitment/challenge to growth” campaign (Stewardship)
- ii. Design a marketing program built around Christmas and Easter and perhaps other seasons (summer, academic year, etc.)
- iii. Review current and potential program offerings for children and adults and make recommendations to Worship, Spiritual Growth, and Mission and Ministry.
- iv. Consider a direct mail campaign to targeted demographic and geographic areas for seasonal and special events (consider boundaries that include Wyoming, GR, Hudsonville, Jenison, Byron Center)
- v. Encourage members to participate in events/groups/clubs in the communities in which they live with an eye toward extending invitations to persons who may be looking for a church home.
 1. Consider whether there are events at which HT may participate as a congregation—markets, fairs, races, bazaars, clubs, organizations
- vi. Review and strengthen, revise, and develop new member inclusion efforts/strategies; extend invitations and make contact information easy to locate.
- vii. Review and recommend a way to make the entrance drive to the church grounds easy to find and create smooth access.

Concurrent with the above:

4. Ask each committee/subcommittee to review perceived strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) identified during the Vestry Retreat in light of successful growth strategies.
5. Each committee/subcommittee: design a year-around program with successful growth strategies in mind:*

a. *Following are a few considerations offered by a congregation (Good Shepherd Lutheran, Pastor Jim Foster) successful in growing from 46 to 107 members in 11 years:*

- i. Place strong emphasis on hospitality.
 1. Assume that there are visitors in the pews every Sunday; offer brief introduction at the beginning of every service with information or explanations throughout the service.
 2. Highly visible welcome station staffed by church member every Sunday; name tags for guests made available at the first visit if they are willing
 3. Offer mug filled w. candy or similar token of welcome to newcomers during service
 4. Personal and handwritten note to all newcomers w/in 24 hours
 5. Pastoral or lay person team appointed to visit or have coffee with newcomers
- ii. Sign-up sheets for events and volunteer needs are located in an attractive and highly visible spot.
- iii. Nursery is located in highly visible area; staffed by energetic, trained, paid persons; parents greeted with confidence; pagers used; room attractive, well stocked
- iv. The church offers a variety of services that are seasonally specific, inclusive and diverse
- v. Marketing: direct mail to new home owners resulted in some success; do not use "occupant" addresses; best results from personalized, merged, hand signed letters

* These items may be the subject of a grant request to the Whittemore Foundation