



Holy Trinity Episcopal Church
5333 Clyde Park Ave SW
Wyoming MI 49509
(616) 538-0900
contactus@holytrinitywyoming.org

March 17, 2017

Subject: Vestry Retreat

Attendance:

Senior Warden - Melissa Puzan
Junior Warden - Debbie Murphy
Treasurer - Beth Smith
Clerk - Allen Gradnigo

Arend Beerthuis
Lisa Nelson
Barb Stuitje
Tim Anderson
~~Mark Luurtsema~~

Called to order: Melissa Puzan called the Vestry Retreat to order on February 19, 2017 at 1 pm and then led us in prayer to highlight our purpose each day is to serve God.

Background: The purpose of the Vestry Retreat was to establish the foundations for the Holy Trinity Episcopal Church Strategic Plan and Parish Profile.

1. Spiritual Gifts

In preparation for our retreat, each vestry member completed the Spiritual Gifts Self-Assessment Tool located here: <https://www.elca.org/en/Our-Work/Congregations-and-Synods/Faith-Practices/Spiritual-Renewal/Assessment-Tools>.

The tool is endorsed by the Episcopal Diocese of Western Michigan. The Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (ELCA) developed the tool and agreed to let the Diocese link to it. The Spiritual Gifts Self-Assessment Tool is designed to be a quick survey that allowed us to visually identify our spiritual gifts.

2. Values

After reviewing a Heat Map that allowed us to visualize our spiritual gifts, we discussed what we believe are the values of Holy Trinity Episcopal Church:

- Family
- Friends
- Feeding
 - o Through the Word (such as Bible studies)
 - o Through food
- Encouragement
- Sheltering
- Parish Life (such as social events)
- Forgiveness



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3. Vision: *Moving Holy Trinity forward.*

The discussion began with a focus on where we see Holy Trinity Episcopal Church in a year. Typically, vision statements look 5 to 10 years over the horizon. However, with Holy Trinity going through a transition from Fr. Jim Croom to a new Rector, we thought it best to draw our gaze closer to the shore with the intent of moving Holy Trinity forward. In doing so, we also understand the importance of identifying and utilizing our (Holy Trinity's) spiritual gifts.

We want to set an example of Christianity for the community. We are located within Wyoming and near Grandville, Byron Center, and Grand Rapids. Although we brainstormed ideas such as tutoring, fostering, mentoring youth, and hosting refugees, we understand that we need to understand the pain points of our community before we begin to provide it with solutions.

Part of setting the example is becoming a vibrant member in the community (visible). One way to engage the community is to accept the invitation to invite at least two different people to service each week. In other words, if I invite John and Jane this week, I could invite them again for the coming week. However, I would also need to ask two additional different people other than John and Jane. The idea is to get out of our comfort zone and to tap deeper into our networks outside of church.

As we reach out to our respective networks, we would like to see more young people attending and participating in our church. For example, we want to encourage millennials to reconnect with their faith, and we want to connect with them. One way for connecting with younger minds is to provide modern Christian music such as what we hear on 91.3 FM. However, we know that changes in music programs provides an opportunity for disagreement. As such, we would like to hear your thoughts about ways we can include both traditional hymns and modern Christian music into the playlist.

In general, we seek the congregation's thoughts on what we can do to better appeal to the younger generation. Prior discussions in the parish included the potential for hiring a youth leader. Part of the answer continues to include finding the means to provide dynamic youth programs that will encourage parents to bring their children back to church. Plans for youth development could include revitalizing programs we already sponsor such as our annual Vacation Bible School. Specifically, we see opportunities for boosting the curriculum and broadening its overall scope.

However, a dynamic education program should consider both adults and youth. Because life is always busy, we need to determine what would motivate people to prioritize participation in an education program over numerous distractions of our daily lives. Work, families, play, and just daily living all vie for our time and attention. We need to think about ways to help us limit worldly distractions in order to prioritize the heavenly. One way to help is to hear from you as to what days and times you can commit to involvement in church programs.



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The beauty in being involved in a community of faith is that we can rely on and leverage our Christian brothers and sisters. To this end, we are interested in partnerships with the community and with other congregations. Moreover, we are excited to find and to partner with a new Rector (potentially younger) to help us grow as a congregation and within the community.

With all of this talk about recruiting new members, perceptions could allow our current members to feel undervalued. On the contrary, we are extremely motivated in engaging our current members. We want to talk to each of you and to leverage your experience and ideas. Although recruitment will increase our population and provide a new stream of resources, we want you to know how much we value you and the resources you already bring to bear. Yes, we need your time, talent, and treasure, yet we need you (the member) even more.

As we know, we (the people) are the Church. We are the Body, and celebrating together is most important. Where we celebrate is temporal. As such, we remain invested in the potential sale of our property and the potential for a new building.

Unfortunately, as some relationships appear to grow closer than others, perceptions of cliques may arise that we would need to dispel. If anyone in our congregation feels on the fringes, please know that we want to ensure everyone knows they belong in the inner circle. There should only be one circle, and that circle includes every member of the parish. To that end, we need your friendship to bring our Church together as one, and yes, we need your pledges to fund the hiring of our new Rector. Even still, we need each of you to know how much we value you (all of you), your skills, hobbies, passions, experiences, resources, and contacts.

We cannot afford to have people feeling as if they belong on the sidelines. So, we will come to you. We are ramping up our efforts to keep you better informed. For starters, we have already scheduled a Town Hall meeting for March 19 after Sunday service. The purpose of this and future Town Hall meetings is to elevate transparency by bringing information directly to the parish. For example, we intend to keep you abreast of our progress in the hiring process, and we invite you to embrace this journey with us.

4. Mission

After we looked toward the horizon, we drew our gaze to the path immediately ahead. We have ideas of where we would like to be at the end of the year, and we wanted to determine the practical steps that could get us there. In short, we wanted to explore potential reasons for God wanting us to remain in Wyoming, Michigan.

As the Lord would have it, we discerned that our values align with our mission. We believe God wants us to feed, lead, and disciple our community in order to advance His Kingdom.



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5. Programs

It also turns out that we have several flagship programs designed to implement our mission:

- Family Network of Wyoming
- Ivanrest Christian Reformed Church (CRC) Family Promise
- Access Thanksgiving Baskets
- John Knox Food Pantry
- Access Grand Rapids (providing assistance to individuals)

6. Goals

Entire sessions can be dedicated to developing goals. Ideally, these sessions would define goals that are SMART: specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and time bound. Nevertheless, in the interest of time, we decided to scope our conversation to identifying goals that can drive us to ACTION—not an acronym, just an emphasis deliberately placed on launching us into motion.

First, we owe you transparent information exchange. To begin, we intend to divide the list of parishioners amongst the vestry so that we can contact each of you personally. We want to know what you want in a Rector. Although we assume you want us to consider genuine, loving candidates who wear their emotions on their sleeves, we look forward to hearing you confirm our assumptions. We also want to know what you want in a new building. As these conversations continue, we intend to begin biweekly Town Hall meetings hosted by the vestry.

Second, we want to recruit a search committee in order to hire a Rector full time. The search committee will be comprised of vestry members and members of the parish. God willing, we believe this partnership will result in the hiring of our new Rector.

Third, we want to ramp up our youth programs. We are interested in options for Godly Play curriculum, we are looking ahead to expanding Vacation Bible School, and we see benefits to developing structured classes for communion and confirmation.

Fourth, we want to make ourselves more visible in the community—literally. For example, several of our parish members volunteer at Ivanrest CRC Family Promise. We would like to outfit our volunteers with identifying items such as nametags, shirts, etc. These items would have our Holy Trinity tree. As far as those being served are concerned, our volunteers are members of Ivanrest CRC. They currently have no visual way of knowing that our volunteers under the banner of Holy Trinity and that Holy Trinity will gladly accept them at our service.

More important, we see merit in expanding our outreach efforts to the homeless and to women with children (with no spouse, no job). We see one way of securing success is through developing partnerships with other parishes. Another way is to develop partnerships with the



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media, and another avenue is through our online presence with social media campaigns such as #ServiceBeforeSelfie. Through these partnerships, we aim to better understand, assist, and publicize the pain points (needs) within Wyoming, Grandville, Byron Center, and Grand Rapids.

Fifth, we would like 80 percent of the congregation to commit their pledges. Although we understand the hesitance of some parish members to commit financially, the time is now to commit. In particular, the only way we can budget for our new Rector is to know how much funds we have to work with. Essentially, we lack the funds in pledges to afford a full time Rector at a minimum salary of \$70,000. We also need to consider what measures we have in place to take care of our aging congregation (such as spiritual, physical, and financial needs).

Sixth, we are looking into the feasibility of restoring our Clothes Closet. Participants could purchase clothes items (maybe with Holy Trinity dollars, maybe with actual dollars). We could leverage our nonprofit status to collect donations from individuals who could then write those donations off as a tax deduction. As we continue to brainstorm, we intend to consider model programs such as Changing Times.

Seventh, we would like to double the congregation's size by the end of the year. However, we recognize that we need to take steps to make our services more comfortable for non-Episcopalians. While the Episcopal faith relies on tradition, the ritualistic nature of our denomination allows non-Episcopalian visitors to feel lost with simple things. For example, which book in the pew is the Book of Common Prayer, which page should they turn to in the Book of Common Prayer, and why are we doing the things we are doing? For those of us who have been raised in or are sufficiently familiar with these traditions, these traditions have become second nature. However, some of our visitors are new to the faith or maybe even new to Christianity. Therefore, we need to remember that not everyone in the church is a cradle Episcopalian, an Episcopalian, or even a Christian at all.

Eighth, we aim to support the discernment process for Allen Gradnigo. We ask for your prayers and assistance by volunteering to serve on the Parish Committee as we help Allen and his family discern his call to priestly ordination. Again, God willing, Allen will receive the blessing and approval of Bishop Whayne M. Hougland, Jr. when he applies for postulancy.



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7. Governance

When we begin to engage potential donors, they will presumably want to know about our governance. As such, we determined the following structure is in place:

- Bishop, Diocese of Western Michigan
 - Transition: Canon to the Ordinary
 - Property: Standing Committee
- Rector
- Senior Warden

Again, because we lack a Rector, this places an additional burden on the Senior Warden to serve as intermediary for Church matters.

8. Staff

Similar to governance, potential donors may be interested in the paid and volunteer staff we rely upon to handle our affairs:

- Spiritual Gifts (volunteers)
 - Vestry
 - Lawn Maintenance
 - Altar Guild
 - Choir
 - Acolytes
 - Greeters
 - Lay Eucharistic Ministers
 - Ushers
 - Sunday School teachers (Godly Play)
- Paid
 - Office Admin
 - Sexton
 - Choir DiRector
 - Organist
 - Worship Music
 - Cleaning



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9. Potential Donors (Partnerships)

As we begin to think about donor engagement, we listed the names of businesses, programs, or events that have partnered with us previously or could serve as viable partners going forward:

- Meijer
- Gordon Food Service
- Culver's
- Chili's
- Buffalo Wild Things
- Big Boy
- IHOP
- Habitat for Humanity
- Winterfest

10. Finances

When we engage our potential donors, they may also inquire about our financial processes and procedures. As you know, the vestry must approve all expenditures. What may be new information is that although the pledge envelopes indicate a General Fund and a Building Fund, in reality, Holy Trinity Episcopal Church only maintains one bank account: General Fund.

This means that all pledges and donations are deposited into our General Fund. With this in mind, when we budget, we need to think about incorporating line items into our budget. These line items would serve as a means to help potential donors earmark money for special interest items (such as buying Godly Play videos and pamphlets that support the year's curriculum). These line items would also help the Treasurer keep track of pledge and donor intentions.

11. Development

Even if we only wanted to maintain status quo, we would still need to change in order to survive. With each breath we take, we take in the air we need to survive. During the breathing process, our bodies are changing continuously in order to keep our bodies functioning. Although we know these processes are ongoing, they become a matter of life or death, should something obstruct our airflow. At that point, we become keenly aware of the importance of taking in air.

In other words, our actions become deliberate, and in a similar manner, we need to deliberately think of ways to develop spiritually, physically, mentally, and financially (before we perceive them as a life or death situation). Along those lines, we believe we need to deliberately equip our leaders with training and continuity binders. For example, when new vestry or committee members are elected, appointed, or onboarded, it seems likely that no one receives training on how to accomplish their roles. Just as our formal leaders need training, we also need to equip the



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congregation. Although we live on earth, our battles are spiritual battles with evil forces we cannot see. Our fight is not with our neighbors, and classes such as the Book of Romans led by Lynda Adams are critical to equipping our congregation for spiritual warfare.

12. History

Holy Trinity Episcopal Church has a rich history. Now that we have redesigned our website, we need to begin reconstructing our history. This will provide an important perspective to help inform why we are where we are and to help project where we may be headed in the future.

13. Strategy

We perceive that most of our strategies reside in the heads of parish members. Over time, it is our intent to extract those ideas and document them so that the entire parish is aware of the strategies in play and to learn of ways each member can plug into the operational implementation of them. Here are a few strategies that come to mind:

- Rector Search
- Communications
- Donor Engagement

14. Tactics

Because the purpose of the retreat was to think in a grandeur manner, we limited our discussion regarding tactics to one element: bulk mail permit. The discussion considered the idea of applying for a bulk mail permit in order to send communication through the US Postal Service to everyone in our local community. This option provides us the means for communicating with everyone in the community by mail without having to know every mailing address in the community.

15. New Business

Melissa Puzan introduced the topic of pursuing a Priest in Charge. Melissa conveyed that the Rev. Canon William Spaid approved Holy Trinity to have a Priest in Charge. As Senior Warden, Melissa is the only member of the vestry allowed to contact priests to serve as supply priests. This is a time intensive task that prevents her from investing her time, talent, and treasure on other vestry matters.

As such, Tim Anderson moved to pursue a Priest in Charge, and Arend Beerthuis seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

With that, we closed the retreat in prayer and adjourned at the top of the hour (4 pm).



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The vestry unanimously approved these minutes during monthly meeting on March 16, 2017.

If you have any comments, questions, suggestions, concerns, or any other feedback about these minutes, please contact Allen Gradnigo by emailing allen.gradnigo@holytrinitywyoming.org or by calling or texting (616) 583-2448. You can also contact any member of the vestry.

Thank you.

Blessings,

Allen Gradnigo

Allen Gradnigo
Vestry Clerk