

ACTION PLANNING TEAM REPORT TO VESTRY

January 2009

INTRODUCTION

The Reverend Dr. Peter Steinke was invited by Bishop Greg Rickel to consult with St. Mark's to identify issues in the life and health of the congregation during this transition period. Dr. Steinke initially visited St. Mark's in September when he connected with 170 individuals either in interviews, emails, or the community meeting at which he presented the Bridgebuilder process.

Steinke returned November 23, 2008 to present his Action Report, a compilation of parishioners' written and verbal comments to the congregation. He identified four major issues that needed to be addressed. Prior to that meeting, an Action Planning Team (APT*), consisting of sixteen parishioners drawn from various ministry groups was formed to interact with the congregation through focus groups and gather responses to Steinke's findings.

The APT met with 13 groups over four weeks. The report which follows will be shared with the Vestry on January 14th at which time, Peter Steinke, the Vestry, Rebecca McClain, the Canon Missioner, the Action Planning Team and leaders from various ministry groups will meet to formulate next steps in response to the report.

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

MISSION. *Who were we, who are we, who do we want to be?*

1. Consensus on the need to revisit our mission but concern with how that work gets done. "How do we get to mission without knowing who we are? Steinke process seems inadequate: identify members and stakeholders, seek their input, then discern mission."

Recommendation: Make development of a new mission the focus of parish discussion, led by Vestry and other parish leaders.

2. Whatever our mission, it should be a template against which all decisions are judged.

"A powerful mission statement applies to everything we do." Without a clear understanding of mission, there is a lack of direction in programs. Too many programs, too little consensus about our direction.

Recommendation: Develop a rubric for decision-making based on the mission to be used throughout the parish.

Comment: Who really comprises the St. Mark's congregation? How many are we and who are we? Consider doing an annual parish survey to hear parish responses to issues.

GOVERNANCE *Exercising authority, making decisions, setting priorities.*

1. Split in how congregation views current Vestry configuration. “9-3-3- exacerbates Cathedral/.parish tension. Diocesan and community reps mean fewer St. Mark’s people to do parish work.” Others disagreed, “Don’t trash the current model because it hasn’t been properly implemented. It’s a good system. Our role in the community is very important. “

Recommendation:

- Provide a history of how the introduction of community and Diocesan representatives came about (including the demise of the Chapter).
- Clarify how these representatives are chosen and how their Vestry responsibilities differ from parish representatives if this is the case.

2. Need for clarity on roles and responsibilities between authorities and governing bodies. “I believe it is the ‘who has the power to do what’ among the Bishop, the Dean and the Vestry that is at the root of St. Mark’s governance problems. These duties are not clearly defined anywhere in writing to my knowledge.”

Recommendation:

- Develop and publish roles, responsibilities and powers of the Bishop, Dean, Vestry and St. Mark’s Foundation.
- St. Mark’s Convention delegates should provide a written report published in the Rubric after each convention.
- Publish org chart of staff and lay leaders on web site.

COMMUNICATIONS *Communication is a two-way street. Leaders need to communicate; community needs to participate.*

1. “It’s a labyrinth trying to determine how to get the word out through various channels.”

Recommendations: Utilize a range of technological means to facilitate communication.

- Communicate to the parish which staff person will facilitate all communications issues.
- Develop an Owner’s Manual on the web site with a FAQ document outlining the process for communicating with and between parishioners.
- Put Parish Directory on the web site and also publish it in a looseleaf notebook so that pictures of newcomers can be added immediately.
- Create a monitored on-line discussion board where parishioners could add comments to a discussion thread.

2. Communication is the key to accountability. Yearning for more transparency between parish and Vestry, particularly around budget issues.

Recommendations:

- Mission needs a process to keep it alive. Empower Vestry to devise new ways to communicate with the parish. Consider using 10:10 forums more frequently (although this competes with an already full program built by clergy)
- Create a Master Flow Chart of programs at the Cathedral and who is in charge of what
- Keep a record of all actions/decision in a Cathedral archive.

CATHEDRAL/PARISH “This is a new moment in time to set an example for the country”

1. The role of the Cathedral in the Diocese. What does the Cathedral provide the Diocese in return for \$100,000 annually? Are we really doing enough for the Bishop? Deal with our hubris and the effect that has on the attitudes of other parishes. We should bring the Cathedral out to the Diocese.

Recommendations:

- Develop a closer relationship with the Bishop. Ask Greg how he wants the Cathedral to function and what his vision is for the Cathedral.
- Survey the Diocese for ways we might be of help.

2. Our responsibilities as the Cathedral vs. our needs as a parish. Mission will be affected by whether we see ourselves as the Cathedral for the Diocese or a parish. “Would cathedral/commons roles overwhelm the parish? We should get our own house in order before we minister to the Diocese.”

Recommendations:

- Create a taskforce using Diocesan representatives on the Vestry to facilitate dialogue between the Cathedral and other parishes in the Diocese.
- Research our history as a Cathedral. (Wasn’t Trinity initially the Cathedral? Was St. Mark’s a strong parish before it was the Cathedral and has never quite made the transition?)

3. Our role in the larger community. “We are both the Cathedral for the Diocese and a big church for the city – both are constituents (remember the *Cathedral As Commons*). The larger community knows us better than small parishes.”

Recommendation: Create a marketing/public relations plan to communicate St. Mark’s contributions to the larger community.

Action Planning Team Members

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