

Vestry Planning Mini-Retreat Notes

May 7, 2011

Where We are – Goals already being worked on

YOUTH GROUP

Form an active Youth Group at St. Francis

Steps Taken to Date

- 2 meetings/month
- 3 Regular participants
- On Diocesan Youth email list
- Giving rides home to youth (helps parents)

Next Steps

- Grow participation
- Research potential new member
- Improve leader collaboration
- Do service project(s)
- Participate in Diocesan events
- Collaborate with other local churches (Episcopal and not)
- Fun trips (e.g. Ski trips, Dorney Park, etc.)

Resources Needed/Available

- Sunday Scripture readings in advance (done!)
- Regular leaders' meetings
- Diocesan staff/resources
- Back-up/support people to share meeting leadership
- Resource people to lead topical sessions
- Information on program for parents, prospective members/parents and congregation

Obstacles

- Time constraints
- People constraints
- Cultural busyness of kids and adults

Leadership

- Nancy and Paul

NEWCOMERS

Develop a process to welcome, track & incorporate newcomers into the life of St. Francis.

Steps Taken to Date

- COME committee formed
- Tools Developed
 - Postcards
 - Business cards
 - Brochure
 - Tracking Sheet
- Tracts ordered

Next Steps

- Create Welcome Bag for newcomers
- Utilize already developed tools in congregation and community
- Broaden involvement of welcome/incorporation
 - Involve all ages of congregation
- Provide training for
 - Vestry
 - Greeters/Ushers
 - Congregation
- Make Website more focused on and inviting to newcomers
- Incorporate/Enable involvement of Newcomers
 - Ask folks to get involved
 - Develop process for regular follow up

Resources Needed/Available

- Tract Rack -- \$
- Web Design/Maintenance people
 - David Dunham?
 - Leslie's sons?
- Trainers

Obstacles

- Challenge of Broadening Vision
- Challenge of involving all ages

Leadership

- COME!

SPIRITUAL GROWTH

Provide opportunities for Bible Study, the sharing of our faith stories and deeper fellowship.

Steps Taken to Date

- Advent and Lent Programs

Next Steps

- More Frequent programs/class offerings
 - Sunday Forum (between services?)
- Lay-led Morning Prayer during the week
- Provide more information/direction on spiritual growth resources to congregation
- Instructed Eucharist

Resources Needed/Available

- Parish Clergy
- Time
 - Service time change to accommodate Sunday Forum (?)
- Video/Web-Based programs
- Improved AV equipment
- Non-clergy discussion leaders
- Joint events with other churches

Obstacles

- Meeting Time(s)
- Good space for teaching/discussion
- Limited leadership availability
- Inadequate AV equipment

Leadership

- Clergy

TRANSPORTATION

Offer transportation to parishioners who need rides to/from church (and other places)

Steps Taken to Date

- Geri and Karen bring Doris regularly
- Rides provided as needed for Barbara Dalto (crisis response)

Next Steps

- Improve awareness of Transportation availability
 - Within existing congregation
 - To new(er) members
 - For prospective members who may need transportation
 - Make availability known on website
- Provide transportation for non-Sunday needs
- Back-up drivers for those offering regular rides

Resources Needed/Available

- More drivers
- Transportation coordinator

Obstacles

- Gas costs
- Concern about liability issues
- Lack of disability access in some vehicles

Leadership

- Program Coordinator (unidentified)

Where We are Going – Goals not yet being worked on

Vestry Rankings of One to Three Year Goals and Undone One Year Goal(s)

- *Giftng/Tithing* 19
- *Intentional Invitation* 18
- *Identifying Talents* 16
- *Expand/pave parking lot* 11
- *Hire Admin. Asst.* 2
- *Work with Lutherans* 2

Vestry Rankings of Three to Five Year Goals

- *Mission to Parish Status* 25
- *Community Needs Assessment
& Community Outreach Projects* 23
- *Full-time Priest* 11
- *Non-English Ministry/Worship* 5
- *3 Services/weekend* 3

Discussion

- Vestry consensus was to focus on top 5 Goals and drop others from consideration at present.
- *Mission to Parish Status* is in process on Diocesan level. This will require time/effort by Jack in his diocesan role, but should not require major parish effort other than paperwork at appropriate time (after 2012 Diocesan Convention). Does not need Vestry focus at this time.
- In initial discussion, many thought that remaining top 4 Goals could be pursued simultaneously, though some (Jack and Pam, at least) voiced reservations about the practicality of this.
- Group moved to explore remaining top 4 Goals in greater detail, with the following results.

IDENTIFY TALENTS/SKILLS

Identify talents and skills that parishioners have to offer for the ministry of St. Francis.

First Steps

- Form Committee to work on this goal
- Create the following information gathering tools, which might be used in combination:
 - Check-off survey of talents/skills
 - List of roles/responsibilities needed to be filled to achieve our goals
 - Follow-up on people's present willingness to work on goals they signed up for last year
 - People's time/availability
 - Visual aids
- Design process for following up on survey results
- Host a Ministry Fair

Resources Needed/Available

- Research Coordinator
- \$
- People's time
- Communication

Obstacles

- Time – AKA busyness
- Parishioner resistance to committing to responsibility
- Privacy concerns

Leadership

- Program Coordinator/Committee (initially unidentified)

INTENTIONAL INVITATION

Develop multiple ways to invite people in the community to events and worship at St. Francis.

Steps Taken to Date

- Formation of COME!
- Advertising/Publicity
 - TV
 - Newspapers
 - Flyers
 - Street Sign
 - Yellow Pages
 - Web
- Participation in Dunellen Street Fair
- Creation of St. Francis' Banner

Next Steps

- Congregational use of invitation tools developed by COME!
- Community Mailings (especially to newbies in area)
- Invite a Friend Sunday
- Improved Media usage
 - Research best bang for buck with advertising \$\$
 - Get coverage in local press

Resources Needed/Available

- Improved Signage
 - Better and more flexible sandwich board
- Diocesan Email lists
- Cynthia McFarland (Diocesan Communication Officer) as consultant
- Mailing list of other community churches

Obstacles

- Competition from other churches and other community events/orgs.
- Low-Medium visibility location
- Limited parking space
- Limited access to diverse local cultures
 - Latino
 - South Asian

Leadership

- COME! (?)

GIFTING/TITHING

Develop a spirit and practice of generous giving in the congregation.

Steps Taken to Date

- Annual Stewardship Campaign
- Outreach Collections
- Memorial Giving
- Advent Adult formation program on Stewardship

Next Steps

- Growth in Stewardship Awareness as part of spirituality
- Year-round teaching/formation on Stewardship
- Draw on people's time talent (see time/talent survey goal)
- Have outside speakers come in
- Develop Planned Giving program

Resources Needed/Available

- Diocesan Stewardship Committee
- Diocesan Planned Giving Committee
- Speakers
- Handouts
- Leadership
 - Vestry Delegation

Obstacles

- Economy
- People's Priorities
- Time
- Church and Cultural discomfort discussing money

Leadership

- Stewardship Committee
- More Needed

COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT AND COMMUNITY BASED OUTREACH PROJECTS

Assess the needs in our community to which St. Francis could respond with outreach projects.

Develop community outreach project(s) based at St. Francis, possibly using the Vicarage.

First Steps

- Define “Community” we seek to serve
- Get demographic information on Community
 - Available via Episcopal Church Website
- Find out what services are already being provided
- Find out what needed services are not already being provided.
- Assess scale of project(s) St. Francis can manage.

Resources Needed/Available

- Consulting/Outside guidance for research/needs assessment
- \$\$
- Legal advice
- Space
- Talent

Obstacles

- Appropriate kind of space
- Leadership
- Our inexperience in this work
- Identifying real unmet community needs

Leadership

- Vestry (oversight)
- Research and program coordinators/committee

Evaluation of Progress on Goals

Monthly Vestry Reports

- Create Tabs for Reports based on Next Steps for Goal
- Frequency of Goal Activities
- Participation in Goal Activities.

Annual Meeting Reports

- Create Tabs for Reports based on Next Steps for Goal
- Frequency of Goal Activities
- Participation in Goal Activities.

Survey newcomers as to their perception of parish ministries.

Conclusions and Observations

1. We are already doing a lot and cannot start on all 4 top goals simultaneously while maintaining the work already begun on existing goals.
2. *Identifying Talents/Skills* should be done next in order to assess human resources available for other goals. This goal should be our one new focus in the next 6-12 months. Cynthia Pelliccia offered to provide initial leadership on this. Others will be needed to work with her on this. Jack will research existing survey instruments in use elsewhere in the Church.
3. Other top goals can be pursued later, pushing our time frame back slightly – which is fine. (Note – we have actually been working on Gifting/Tithing and Intentional Invitation this past year (or longer).
4. Leadership is a key issue. Vestry must provide oversight, but cannot provide hands-on leadership for all our ministry goals. Broadening leadership base in congregation is essential.