

Long-Term Strategic Plan

Imagining our Future. . .

By Cindy Hampel-Litwinowicz

What will St. David's Parish look like 30 years from now?

Imagining our future – and planning how to build it – were the reasons for drafting our new parish blueprint, the Long-Term Strategic Plan. Our blueprint calls for some renovations while keeping and building upon the best of what we have.

The plan affirms two timeless core values of St. David's Parish:

- Serving God both inside and outside our walls, and
- Embracing diversity and welcoming all who come into our community.

According to the blueprint, the entrance to our renovated “house” will feature three familiar pillars: Worship, Outreach and Multi-Culturalism. At the door of our house, we'll still find the friendly faces of parishioners welcoming all to join us.

Inside, we will help form “compassionate, caring, Christian disciples...who respond to God in worship.” We want to provide “a life-changing worship experience that accepts everyone and reaches out to others.”

Developing the plan took planning itself. The process started in late 2009 and continued through the early months of 2011. It involved vestry meetings focused on defining key components of the plan, as well as seeking feedback from the parish-at-large.

“We had a consultant, Susan Diehl, help the parish with our long-term strategic plan,” said Maureen Mahar, senior warden of St. David's, explaining that Diehl also helps businesses create similar plans. “Susan facilitated the process and worked with us.”

The plan involved identifying St. David's core values, our strategic pillars and our vision for the future.

Our big goal: “To be the first and last stop for those whose basic spiritual needs are not being met in the Southfield area. To serve the needs of the local community on a sustained basis.”

People from all communities are welcome at St. David's. But the plan outlines the logical geographic area of the parish that includes not only Southfield but also Berkley, Royal Oak, Clawson, Lathrup Village and Beverly Hills.

Within our geographic area, the plan notes that St. David's may find future parishioners among “Those with an Anglican heritage, who appreciate multi-cultural worship, who are seeking a warm, loving community, who have young families, and many who share a Roman heritage.”

The plan also defines what we can offer new parishioners: “Worship, love, acceptance, pastoral care, spiritual nourishment, education, food and shelter.”

How will we advertise ourselves? Through worship services, the South Oakland Shelter, our community garden, and community events, according to the plan. “We will warmly welcome you and offer gracious hospitality. We will graciously invite you to participate in and support local homeless and hunger initiatives as well as help us in rebuilding Haiti.”

Our message: “We are a loving community where being you ‘fits’.” The strategic plan calls this our “Value Proposition.”

This is our “Brand Promise”: “We will walk along with you in your personal faith journey; we will meet you where you are; we will invite you to a multi-cultural service and challenge you to get involved in life-changing service activities.”

“The strategic plan was developed for several reasons,” said Simone Charter Harris, who served as senior warden when the parish vestry started drafting the plan. “To continue to be a viable parish into the future, it

was important for St. David's to discover, identify and articulate its core values and come up with a vision of who God is calling us to be today and into the future," Harris said.

The plan also looks at our SWOT: Our Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats.

Our Strengths:

- People-loyal, dedicated, warm and accepting with a charitable spirit;
- Debt free;
- Visibility and accessibility of the facility (due to our location on Twelve Mile Road);
- Pastoral care and hospitality.

Our Weaknesses:

- Lack of age diversity of members;
- Misconceptions of the Episcopal Church and how others view us;
- Perceived irrelevance of the church (from a non-churchgoers point of view);
- Lack of focus (perhaps spreading ourselves too thin).

Our Opportunities:

- Local community of unchurched people;
- Many parish-based opportunities for outreach;
- Involvement in the Southfield faith community (through Lift Up Southfield!).

Our Threats:

- Declining membership worldwide (the so-called "Mainline Slide");
- Increasing growth of secularism;
- Personal and financial strains.

"When St. David's was founded, I don't think these questions were even considered," said Mahar.

"Sustainability was not even a blip on their radar. The concerns of those parishioners were immediate. In order for us to sustain in a time of mainline church decline, we must make the effort to understand where we are and where we want to go from here."

According to the new plan, this is where we want to go:

"Our worship services will be relevant and uplifting; promoting our core values and addressing the evolving needs of our community and the world. Worship services will be enhanced through technological advances over time. Outreach will be relevant on the local, national and international levels and our doors will be open to all who seek to become the disciples Jesus calls us to be."

Over the next three years, the parish plans to take these steps:

- (1) Greater involvement in the local community;
- (2) Enhanced worship (with a screen, more musicians and higher quality printed materials);
- (3) Intentional promotion and celebration of multi-culturalism through worship and social events;
- (4) Increased involvement of young adults in all aspects of church activities and leadership;
- (5) Improved governance structure, including the option of a nine-member vestry.

Regardless of the renovations of our spiritual house at St. David's, the new parish blueprint keeps our purpose the same: To love and serve God through worship, outreach and love for all.