



# VISION 20/20

Toward a Pastoral Plan – St. Luke's Episcopal Church, Lebanon, PA

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# Introduction

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*Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God. (Romans 12:2, KJV)*

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Another way of understanding the words of St. Paul from the Letter to the Romans is, “Fix your attention on God and you will be changed from the inside out.” This exhortation is as important today as it was for the early Church at Rome nearly 2000 years ago.

Perhaps no term fits the work of the Church in the 21<sup>st</sup> century than this: *transformation*.

We experience change in exponential terms. Our society continues to move ever more rapidly in new directions. Just think: “smart phones” did not exist thirty years ago. Yet today, few of us would know how to remain connected without at least the most basic mobile device.

Consequently, we can no longer afford to engage in “mission” without a careful examination of whence we have come, where we are, and where we want to go. Above all, we can no longer expect to rely on old cultural and church assumptions and ways of doing things. Like rotary dial telephones, they have become quaint conversation pieces. They simply no longer apply.

Very much like the early disciples, we live in a world that is increasingly secular and more apathetic, even hostile, to authentic Christianity. Many people we encounter on a daily basis have little or no familiarity with the messages involved in Christian believing. This is not the world of the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century (even though many of today’s churchgoers may have great nostalgia for those “days of yore”) when churches were filled to capacity, youth programming abounded, Sunday Schools flourished and worship was a foregone conclusion on Sunday mornings. Instead, churches seem almost empty, the average age of our congregations increases annually, Sunday School is probably more a tutorial program, and for many young families, Sunday mornings barely provide a few hours of quiet for calm cups of coffee, brunch with friends, kids’ soccer practice, or a time to curl up with a major newspaper.

Nonetheless, we believe that this remains a hopeful time for those who seek a genuine spiritual life. The gospel is ever new for seekers of every age and time. Jesus bids us to go and teach all nations, even as he promised, “I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:20). We rely on this promise. The Gospel is fresh for this century: God’s love is vibrant and real. God’s mission can transform people’s hopes and lives. The question remains, however, will we allow ourselves to be “transformed by the renewing of our minds.”

What follows is our vision for the disciples that call themselves St. Luke’s Episcopal Church in Lebanon, Pennsylvania into and beyond the year 2020. *The goals we set here may themselves change and transform as we live into them.* Regardless, we must keep them always clearly in view – with 20/20 vision – so that we constantly press forward. The key to our success is that each and all of us must first seek to be transformed. We need to fix our attention on God with laser-like precision. When we do this, we will find ourselves being changed from the inside out. All the rest will follow in God’s good time.

## Part 1: Whence have we come?

This might be a wonderful time to rehearse the long and storied history of St. Luke's Episcopal Church and its founders. It would be easier for us to do that than to recall our own recent history. It's easier to say that things are not the same as they used to be when the differences are distant and much beyond our memory and control. While there is no doubt that this history is important and interesting, it remains the stuff of shelves that may or not have become dusty with the passage of time. Carefully drawn histories abound. Effective summaries are available in parish literature and on our website, so there is no need to retell those stories here. Nonetheless, we must pay homage and tribute to the vision and foresight of past generations. Their work, sacrifice and vision have brought us to this day. We honor them for it and give praise to God for their blessings.

More relevant to the present work is a brief recall of our own history – the present generation of churchgoers at St. Luke's. To that end, we have looked up some statistics. Using 2020 as our year of reference, we will look at this information to tell us how we have changed over the last 50 years in four increments: 50 years ago, 25 years ago 15 years ago and 5 years before 2020. [1970, 1995, 2005, and 2015]

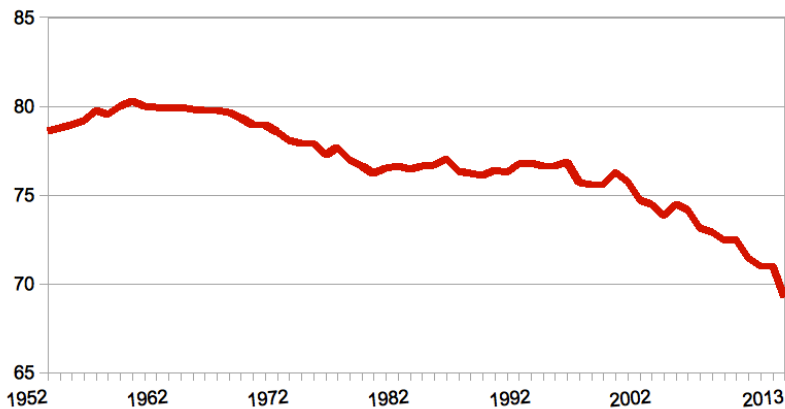
Year	1970		1995		2005		2015	
<b>Membership</b>								
Members 16 yrs & over	829		404		449		477	
Members under 16	UNK		96		34		32	
Communicants	612		369		338		315	
<b>Sacramental Life</b>		Adjusted for inflation (2016 dollars)		Adjusted for inflation (2016 dollars)		Adjusted for inflation (2016 dollars)		Adjusted for inflation (2016 dollars)
Baptisms	14		14		6			
Confirmations/Received	32		21		18		0	
Sunday Eucharist	129		108		120		106	
Marriages	6		6		2		0	
Burials	22		16		12		6	
<b>Christian Formation</b>								
Children & Youth	150		64		58		24	
Adults	101		15					
<b>Finances</b>								
Pledging Units	173		107		100		84	
Amount pledged	\$26,237	<b>\$160,274</b>	\$113,727	<b>\$176,872</b>	\$157,180	<b>\$190,754</b>	\$174,292	<b>\$177,481</b>
Revenues	\$50,771	<b>\$310,144</b>	\$302,490 *	<b>\$470,441</b>	\$286,117	<b>\$349,660</b>	\$307,354	<b>\$311,231</b>
Expenditures	\$51,100	<b>\$312,154</b>	\$213,652	<b>\$332,274</b>	\$301,224	<b>\$365,567</b>	\$306,993	<b>\$312,609</b>
Balance	(\$329)	<b>(\$2,010)</b>	\$88,838	<b>\$138,167</b>	(\$15,107)	<b>(\$19,548)</b>	\$361	<b>(\$5,255)</b>

*\*In 1995 there was an unusually large revenue attributed to unrestricted bequests in the amount of \$98,265 (\$155,624 in 2016 dollars). Adjusting for this changes the 1995 revenue figures to \$204,225 (\$323,427 in 2016 dollars).*

The statistics on the previous page tells an interesting story. Actually, they are an affirming story for St. Luke's Episcopal Church. But first, let's step back a take a "long view" before we continue.

The chart below is a credible survey about the level of religious practice in our nation and our society. Serious scholarly studies tell us that, as a whole, we, as a society, are less "religious" now than we have ever been.

### The Great Decline: Religiosity in the United States (1952-2013)



Graph by Corner of Church & State, an RNS blog  
Source: Aggregate Religiosity Index, updated from Grant, *Sociological Spectrum* 2008

While there is a great deal of talk about how strongly religious we are, the facts do not bear this out. Religiosity in the United States is in the midst of what some call 'The Great Decline.' Previous declines in religion pale in comparison. Over the past *fifteen* years, the drop in religiosity has been *twice as great* as the decline of the 1960s and 1970s.

2013, the last year for which figures are available, was a new low for the level of religiosity in the country.

The graph of this index tells the story of the rise and fall of religious activity in the recent past. During the post-war, baby-booming 1950s, there was a revival of religion. Indeed, some at the time considered it a third Great Awakening. Then came the societal changes of the 1960s, which included a questioning of religious institutions. The resulting decline in religion stopped by the end of the 1970s, when religiosity remained fairly steady. Over the past fifteen years, however, religion has once again declined. But this decline is much sharper than the decline of 1960s and 1970s. Church attendance and communal prayer is less frequent. The number of people who identify with no religion is growing. Fewer people say that religion is an important part of their lives.

*But wait!* How do we measure up? Looking at our own information, we see that our church membership has remained fairly steady and even increased slightly (404 baptized members in 1995; 477 baptized members in 2015). What has declined in our case is a measure of commitment from a number of our members: 369 communicants in 1995; 315 communicants in 2015. That represents a decline of about 14% in *committed sacramental participation* over those 20 years.

Let's look at some other indicators. In that same period (1995-2015) the *number of pledging* units declined by 21.4% BUT the *financial resources actually increased* by 4.1%! We can conclude from this information that although there are *fewer persons* committed to the support of the mission and ministry of the parish, the people that are part of this community of faith are *ever more deeply committed!* This conclusion is affirmed when we look at the figures that resulted from the just recently concluded Annual Membership Campaign.

## Part 2: Where are we now?

### Discovery

We have emerged from a period of transition after the retirement of our Rector, who spent a long tenure with us (13 years). The transition process involved introspection and self-reflection. During several months of interim ministry, the parish undertook three whole-parish meetings (Annual Meeting 2016 and two “Super Coffee Hours”). Under the guidance of our Interim Rector, St. Luke’s parishioners employed elements of *Appreciative Inquiry* to uncover what we understood as our “higher purpose” – that is, what it is exactly that we see as being of greater importance than ourselves and our personal desires. Our hope in these exercises was to begin framing decisions that we as a parish community need to make to move our participation in God’s mission forward. At first, we undertook them as necessary to call a new priest as our pastor. We soon discovered, however, that finding our higher purpose began a work of *transformation* we little expected.

We discovered that, while we needed to address some institutional questions about the way we organized things, deeper, more comprehensive *transformations* were needed. We probed our earnest desires for the future of our community and discovered that we held some things very dear. This discovery helped to bring clarity to the work of God in our midst even as we made these discoveries.

St. Luke’s found that its higher purpose consists principally in four “core elements”: Outreach, Christian Formation, Worship and Music, and Our Common Life. We recognize that these elements are mutually supportive and do not exist or operate in isolation from each other. They act like pillars holding a plinth (or platform) on which we build our community. Take one or another of them away, and the whole structure is in danger. They provide the foundation for our life as disciples of Christ. The following section takes a look at each of these core elements.

### The Four Core Elements of Life at St. Luke’s Episcopal Church

#### Core Element: Outreach

Outreach is not merely social work done in the name of the Church. In considering our priorities in Christian outreach, we must acknowledge that our role in performing these works is to create the conditions in which others may come to know and see God alive in us. It is God that calls people into relationship with God – the essence of being a disciple. Once we create the right conditions by going out, by showing compassion, and by forming intimate relationships with one another and with others, we step back and let God do God’s work on God’s terms. To this end, all outreach activities should arise within the framework of what is known as servant-discipleship and servant-leadership. This forms our perspective on outreach going forward.

In the core element of outreach, the parish’s discussions created the following priorities:

1. High level of engagement with the wider community
  - a. Service to those in need
  - b. Ecumenical cooperation and sharing
  - c. Resources used by non-parochial entities
  - d. Cyber or virtual presence using available technologies

2. Pastoral Care
  - a. Developing a parish-wide ethos/spirit of compassion
  - b. Visitation programs
  - c. Elder care
  - d. Family support
  - e. Life crisis support
3. Increasing Diversity
  - a. Race/ethnicity
  - b. Age
  - c. Culture
  - d. Accompanying ethos of acceptance

Core Element: Christian Formation

Christian formation is the *lifelong* process of growing in our relationship with God, self, others, and all creation. Every experience in our lives can provide us with the opportunity to express our faith; the challenge we face is recognizing these opportunities and learning ways to live a sometimes countercultural life in a secular world.

In the core element of Christian formation, the parish's discussions created the following priorities:

1. Children's Ministry
  - a. Spiritual formation opportunities
  - b. Church school
  - c. Worship opportunities
  - d. Nursery
2. Multi-generational approaches to Christian formation
  - a. Cross-generational
  - b. Age specific
3. Youth ministry
  - a. Spiritual formation opportunities
    - i. Learning opportunities
    - ii. Social growth and development
  - b. Participation in parish life
    - i. Worship
    - ii. Service to others.

Core Element – Worship/Music

We acknowledge that as members of the Episcopal Church, we believe that the Church is first and foremost a worshipping community. It is in our gathering together as the People of God for corporate worship that we find our heart and soul as Christians and as Episcopalians. In considering our priorities in Worship and Music, we affirm that at the center of our worship life is the Holy Eucharist. We acknowledge the importance of other forms of liturgical prayer, especially Morning and Evening prayer, as the supporting framework of our communal and private prayer lives.

In the core element of Worship/Music, the parish's discussions created the following priorities:

1. Engagement of children, youth, and young adults
2. Fidelity to tradition
3. Recognition of diversity within Episcopal/Anglican traditions

Core Element – Our Common Life

Much of our common life centers in and around our church buildings. These buildings are tools for ministry. Their design should support the ways we gather for worship and the activities in which the members and the community are engaged. We must also acknowledge that the church is more than its physical assets, namely, that our priorities will reflect the need to build a community that engages as many members as possible.

In the core element of Common Life, the parish's discussions created the following priorities:

1. Maximize the utilization of physical assets (Church, Hall, Sexton's House, Rectory)
2. Fellowship & social opportunities
  - a. Youth & Young adult socialization
  - b. Parish events
  - c. Continuing development of ECW
3. Allow the physical plant to communicate our spiritual values
  - a. Accessibility
  - b. Ease of use
  - c. Availability for community organizations/activities

This information describes our reflection on our higher purpose – what guides us today as we make decisions for the future. What follows in the next section is our plan for getting where we believe we need to be in the year 2020.

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<sup>1</sup> In the discussions of this core element, the highest priority was “Stability in Clergy Leadership.” With the engagement of Father Zwifka as Priest-in-Charge for a term of three years (which occurred after these discussions but before the compilation of this report), this priority is moot and is not noted here.



## Part 3: Where are we going?

*“Then the LORD answered me and said, “Record the vision and inscribe it on tablets, that the one who reads it may run.””*

*-Habakkuk 2:2*

*“Begin with the end in mind.”*

*-Stephen Covey*

Where we are going depends on our imagination – the ability to envision in our minds what we cannot at present see with our eyes. It involves the principle that all things are created twice. There is a mental (first) creation – the dream – and a physical (second) creation – the realization. Realization always follows the dream, just as a building follows from a blueprint. If we don't make a conscious effort to visualize who we are and what we want in our life as a parish community, then we only empower others people and external circumstances to shape us and our life together. It's about connecting with our own uniqueness and then defining the moral and ethical guidelines within which we can most happily live our lives as disciples. “Begin with the end in mind” means that we seek to begin each day, task, or project with *a clear vision* of our desired direction and destination, and then continue by using our energies and resources to make things happen.

### **VISION 20/20.**

VISION 20/20 is a description of our parish's road map to the future over the next three years. Here we hope to indicate both what the parish wants to become and to provide the guiding transformational initiatives that will set us on a defined direction for our growth into that vision. What we lay out in this document may undergo revision over the next three years as we encounter new opportunities or unforeseen obstacles.

## Outreach

*"The King will answer and say to them, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers or sisters of mine, even the least of them, you did it to me.'" (Matthew 25:40)*

Christ gave his Church no proper mission in the political, economic or social order. The purpose which he set before the Church is a *religious* one. But *out of this religious mission* comes light and energy to help infuse our larger community with gospel principles. When circumstances produce a need, the Church can and should begin activities on behalf of those affected, especially the needy, such as the works of mercy as traditionally understood.

Like many Episcopal parishes, St. Luke's is well-known for its responsiveness to social needs in its community environment. Efforts to lessen the impact of hunger and homelessness through feeding programs (e.g. Free Noon Meal, Power Packs) and shelter programs (e.g. My Father's House (transitional housing), H.O.P.E.S. (emergency shelter) continue to engage many parishioners and provide a high level of interaction with members of the at-risk community.

### 1. Organizational transformation

- **Long range:**

- By the year 2020 we will strengthen existing efforts and intentionally seek to address the *systemic causes* of hunger and homelessness and other forms of poverty in our community.
- By the year 2020, we will strive to ground *all* outreach efforts in prayer and study to discourage the tendency to reduce social justice and service efforts to "social work" and to encourage spiritual growth and development through servant-discipleship.

- **Short range:**

- By May 1, 2017, the parish will reimagine the concept of "outreach" in the context of the traditional categories of the corporal and spiritual works of mercy<sup>2</sup> by repackaging efforts under the banner *Mercy Works*.
  - Accountability: Church Growth & Development Committee
- By October 1, 2017, the parish will have engaged in an "Outreach Summit" wherein program stakeholders will join in common reflection to provide a strategic approach to all efforts including but not limited to a better resourcing for individual efforts. This summit meeting will use appropriate means to articulate specific outcomes to guide the development of the parish's outreach efforts (*Mercy Works*) beyond the year 2020.
  - Accountability: Priest-in-Charge, Wardens, Outreach Committee/Liaison, Pastoral Care Coordinator
- By January 2018, the parish will move to integrate ecumenical cooperation and sharing into its organization and programs by:

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<sup>2</sup> The traditional corporal works of mercy are: to feed the hungry; to give drink to the thirsty; to clothe the naked; to shelter the homeless; to visit the sick; to ransom the captive; to bury the dead. The traditional spiritual works of mercy are: to instruct the ignorant; to counsel the doubtful; to admonish sinners; to bear wrongs patiently; to forgive offences willingly; to comfort the afflicted; to pray for the living and the dead.

- Recruiting and training youth and young adults to play leadership roles in social justice efforts.
- Planning for leadership succession by recruiting delegates for and possible board leadership in Lebanon County Christian Ministries (LCCM) and the activities of the Lebanon Ministerium.
  - Accountability: Priest-in-Charge, Wardens, Outreach Committee/Liaison, Coordinator of Youth and Young Adult Ministries
- By January 2018, the parish will fully integrate appropriate forms of social media to engage the wider community in attaining its articulated outcomes in the arena of outreach.
  - Accountability: Communications Coordinator, Coordinator of Youth and Young Adult Ministries

## 2. Community Based Pastoral Care

In October 2016, St. Luke's Vestry approved a Pastoral Care Policy. In that statement, the Vestry articulated its understanding of what pastoral care entails:

“Pastoral care is Christians caring for other Christians through all circumstances of life and helping them come to a deeper awareness of the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ as one who cares for them as a “shepherd cares for the sheep.” This care is extended also to those who are not Christians as a sign of God’s love for them in the hope that they will be drawn to Christ. Care is above all shown through friendship, listening, emotional help, and the study of God’s Word.”

- **Long range:**
  - By the year 2020, the parish will make compassion a clear, luminous and dynamic force in our faith community by grounding ourselves in a principled determination to transcend selfishness in our relationships with one another and with those we encounter in the world.
- **Short range:**
  - By June 1, 2017, the parish will establish a *Lazarus Care Group* (or another appropriate name) that will undertake systematic care for those who are grieving significant loss, including but not limited to the care of those grieving because of death among immediate or extended family/friends.
    - Liturgical team: a team of trained volunteers to assist in the celebration of funeral rites in the parish.
    - Personal care team: a team of trained volunteers to assist in meeting the immediate needs of those engaged in the grieving process and provide follow-up care as needed.
      - Accountability: Priest-in-Charge, Worship Committee, Pastoral Care Coordinator
  - By October 1, 2017, the parish will recruit at least three (3) additional individuals to act as Lay Eucharistic Visitors in the parish and provide the training and resources necessary to establish a program of bi-weekly sacramental visitation to the homebound.
    - Accountability: Priest-in-Charge, Wardens, Pastoral Care Coordinator
  - By February 1, 2018, the parish will establish a faith-based support group for those providing care and support to family members with chronic debilitating diseases (including but not limited to dementia).

- Accountability: Priest-in-Charge, Wardens, Pastoral Care Coordinator
- By June 1, 2018, the parish will establish appropriate support for those contemplating marriage.
  - Accountability: Priest-in-Charge, Coordinator of Youth and Young Adult Ministries
- By June 1, 2018, the parish will establish a network of support among families with young children and other families experiencing significant transition issues.
  - Accountability: Priest-in-Charge, Pastoral Care Coordinator, Coordinator of Youth and Young Adult Ministries

### 3. Increasing Diversity

A common definition of “diversity” and “inclusion” is needed. Diversity means all the ways we differ. Some of these differences we are born with and cannot change (for example, race or ethnic origin). Anything that makes us unique is part of this diversity. Inclusion, on the other hand, involves bringing together and harnessing the forces and resources that arise from this diversity in a way that is beneficial. *Inclusion puts the concept and practice of diversity into action.* Communities need *both* diversity and inclusion to be successful.

#### • Long Range

- By the year 2020, the parish will create an environment of involvement, respect, and connection where the richness of ideas, backgrounds, and perspectives are respected and harnessed to enhance the richness of our experience of faith in Christ.

#### • Short range:

- By June 1, 2017, the parish will undertake a comprehensive program of anti-racism training by employing existing resources offered by the Diocese of Bethlehem, The Stevenson School for Ministry, and The Episcopal Church.
  - Accountability: Vestry
- By January 1, 2018, the parish will have undertaken a comprehensive study of its census and established an inventory of spiritual/practical gifts and talents available within the parish community.
  - Accountability: Vestry, Priest-in-Charge, Parish Administrative Staff
- By June 1, 2018, the parish will have explored possible networking/joint project opportunities with members of the Latino/Latina community in the greater Lebanon area.
  - Accountability: Vestry, Priest-in-Charge, Church Growth & Development Committee

## Christian Formation

*“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. And these words which I command you this day shall be upon your heart; and you shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise...” (Deuteronomy 6:4-8)*

For well over 100 years in the United States, Christian churches had a highly integrated religious ecosystem. It consisted in multigenerational family faith practices and the transmission of religious values at home; strong congregational community relationships and church life, especially participation in Sunday worship; weekly Sunday school for children and youth (and in many cases adults); and church groups (youth, men, women). Many Christian traditions, including our own, relied heavily on the faith traditions of their people to transmit faith from generation to generation—at home and at church. *And* all of this was surrounded by an American culture that explicitly and implicitly supported Christian value systems and Christian practices.

There is no way to go back to this older way of doing things – it has eroded over the past several decades because of all the changes in the culture and society, the family, technology, communication, and more. In other words, we have undergone great change in our environment. Similarly, the relationship between faith formation and its environment has changed. *We need a new system of faith formation that reflects these changes and that responds to the pace of change in the future.*

- **Long Range**

- By the year 2020, the parish will establish a comprehensive system of faith formation that provides resources for faith formation:
  - That engages every generation in the parish.
  - That addresses the specific needs of various age and generational groupings.
  - That is family-based.
  - That addressed those who identify as “spiritual but not religious” or religiously unaffiliated.
  - That exploits opportunities provided by online and other digital opportunities.

- **Short Range**

- Beginning March, 2017, the parish will form a Christian Formation Task Group to explore new opportunities for Christian Formation with initial priority being youth (7-17 years of age).
  - Accountability: Vestry, Priest-in-Charge, Christian Formation Task Group
- Beginning March, 2017, the parish will participate in “Re-Imagining Formation for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century” with John Roberto. (Sponsored by Diocese of Central Pennsylvania and Lower Susquehanna Synod).
  - Accountability: Vestry, Christian Formation Task Group, Church Growth and Development Committee
- By June 1, 2017, the parish will engage a specialist in youth and young adult ministry on a part-time basis. Parish will continue to explore cooperation with local Lutheran churches in a joint venture to sustain this position.

- Accountability: Priest-in-Charge, Personnel Committee, Vestry
- In July, 2017 (and annually, thereafter), the parish will participate in local ecumenical Vacation Bible School event.
  - Accountability: Vestry, Christian Formation Task Group
- By September 1, 2017, the parish will begin to integrate youth and young adults in the worship life of the parish more fully in current worship ministries and in special worship opportunities.
  - Accountability: Priest-in-Charge, Worship Committee, Coordinator of Youth and Young Adult Ministries
- By January 1, 2018, the parish will have explored alternate formats and proposed elements of inter-generational faith formation in place of/in addition to traditional Sunday School.
  - Accountability: Christian Formation Task Group, Coordinator of Youth and Young Adult Ministries
- By January 1, 2018, the parish will have scheduled and begun recruiting youth and young adults to participate in service/mission projects within and outside of the parish as available.
  - Accountability: Outreach Committee, Coordinator of Youth and Young Adult Ministries
- By January 2018, the parish will fully integrate appropriate forms of social media to engage the wider community in attaining its articulated outcomes in the arena of Christian Formation.
  - Accountability: Christian Formation Task Group, Communications Coordinator, Coordinator of Youth and Young Adult Ministries, Church Growth & Development Committee,

## Worship and Music

*“O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness: fear before him, all the earth.” (Psalm 96:9)*

The worship of the Christian community, properly understood and done, leads those who worship to act out the love of God in their lives. This forms the very heart of our worship. Worship also provides the sustenance that makes the Christian style of living possible. In turn, this style of living drives those who are committed to it back to the worship of God, to find forgiveness and strength.<sup>3</sup>

Thus, the Church believes that all its member should be led to a full, conscious, and active participation in liturgical celebrations. As Episcopalians in the Anglican tradition, we subscribe to the principle, *Lex orandi, lex credendi* (loosely translated, “We believe as we pray”). As such, the call to a full and conscious participation is not merely a convenience but is the right and duty of every Christian. This right and duty emerges from our baptism and is expressed in the baptismal covenant when we are asked: “Will you continue in the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers?” and we respond, “I will, with God’s help.” That help comes from the parish community when we offer “our selves, our souls and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy, and living sacrifice” to the Lord (*BCP* 334).

Moreover, worship is given increased dignity when it is celebrated in song, with ministers (lay and clerical) fulfilling their respective roles and the whole congregation participating. Through liturgical music, prayer is enhanced, the mystery of the liturgy is more openly shown, and the unity of hearts is more profoundly achieved as we join our voices together. This helps us to raise our minds more easily to heavenly things because of the beauty the surrounds us. When we worship “in Spirit and in Truth,” we begin to prefigure the heavenly liturgy which, as we see through the vision of the prophets as the heavenly Jerusalem – the throne room of our God. For us, then, worship and music are inextricably linked and are mutually supportive.

- **Long Range**

- By the year 2020, the parish will act to establish itself as a Center for Excellence in Worship and Music in the region.
- By the year 2020, the parish will have fully explored the possibility of establishing a county-wide choir school for youth.
- By the year 2020, the parish will broadcast its worship services using available technologies (e.g. “live-streaming”) on a regular basis.

- **Short Range**

- During Eastertide, 2017 (concluding on Pentecost, June 7, 2017), the parish will provide a parish-wide opportunity for an in-depth study of worship using a “one parish, one book” format where we all share in a parish wide study of our worship.
  - Accountability: Priest-in-Charge, Worship Committee, Church Growth and Development Committee
- By August 1, 2017 the parish will recruit at least 2 candidates for the role of vergers and employ resources available through The Vergers Guild of the Episcopal Church for training.

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<sup>3</sup> See Charles Price & Louis Weil, *Liturgy for Living* (Harrisburg: Morehouse Publishing, 1979, 2<sup>d</sup> ed., 2000).

- Accountability: Priest-in-Charge
- By September 1, 2017, the parish will re-organize its worship committee to reflect its renewed charter and the insights of the parish-wide study.
  - Accountability: Priest-in-Charge, Worship Committee, Vestry
- By October 1, 2017, the parish will engage a consultant to determine what hardware, software, and infrastructure is necessary to establish and maintain a high quality, internet-based broadcast of its worship services.
  - Accountability: Property Committee, Worship Committee: Subcommittee on Art and Architecture, Church Growth and Development Committee
- By October 22, 2017 (Feast of St. Luke, observed), the parish will have hosted its first worship and music training opportunity in partnership with the Diocese of Bethlehem, the Diocese of Central Pennsylvania, and the Stevenson School for Ministry.
  - Accountability: Director of Music, Choirmaster, Dean – Stevenson School for Ministry, Worship Committee
- By November 1, 2017, the parish will empower a Task Group to explore the establishment of a county-wide choir school. The Task Group will report findings to Vestry by February 1, 2018.
  - Accountability: Director of Music, Choirmaster, Coordinator for Youth and Young Adult Ministry, Chair of Outreach Committee



## Our Common Life

*Psalm 133 Ecce, quam bonum!*

<sup>1</sup> *Oh, how good and pleasant it is,  
when brethren live together in unity!*

<sup>2</sup> *It is like fine oil upon the head  
that runs down upon the beard,*

<sup>3</sup> *Upon the beard of Aaron,  
and runs down upon the collar of his robe.*

<sup>4</sup> *It is like the dew of Hermon  
that falls upon the hills of Zion.*

<sup>5</sup> *For there the Lord has ordained the blessing,  
life forevermore.*

The parish is where the Church lives. Parishes are communities formed by individuals of faith, of action, and of hope. These communities exist in the real world and often are housed in buildings and institutions that stand as symbols of the continuing life of the Christian community. The parish is where the Gospel is proclaimed and celebrated, where disciples are formed in faith and sent out to renew the earth. Parishes are the home of the Christian community; they form the heart and the hearth of the Church. Parishes are where God's people meet Jesus in word and sacrament and come in touch with the source of the Church's life – Jesus Christ the Lord. Community Life fosters a spirit of unity among all the individual families within our larger parish family. Whenever we encourage an ongoing spirit of fellowship, friendship and service, we work to build up the Body of Christ.

The geographical bounds of St. Luke's Episcopal Church encompass the entire county of Lebanon, including the City of Lebanon, several incorporated municipalities, and many more unincorporated civil communities. Within its sphere of influence, St. Luke's counts several public school districts and private schools, institutions of higher learning and even a continuing Chautauqua institute. Unlike the neighborhood parishes that were more common a century ago, the congregation that composes a modern parish does not share the same small geographical area, the same ethnic makeup, the same economic base, or any of the other natural bonds that existed in those small communities.

With parishioners of all economic backgrounds, educational levels and ethnic and national origins, St. Luke's must make a special effort to create an appropriate sense of fellowship and community, which is the lifeblood of any church. Ultimately, this work is the work of the Holy Spirit.

Our efforts in the arena of our common life act as a conduit for the work of the Spirit in linking us together in the love of Christ.

- **Long Range**
  - By the year 2020, the parish will establish intentional communities in at least six key geographical areas of the parish. (These may include but are not limited to: Annville/Cleona, Myerstown, Jonestown, Mt. Gretna, Cornwall/Cornwall Manor, and Palmyra).

- By the year 2020, the parish will have completed a full, professional assessment of its buildings including condition, accessibility, needed maintenance routines, and a community based valuation.
- By the year 2020, the parish will assess the feasibility of a multi-year capital campaign focused on long-range plans for physical assets and future mission and ministry needs.
- By the year 2020, the parish will underwrite its general fund (operating budget) by at least 80% by funds excluding revenues from unrestricted and restricted investment funds (informally termed our endowment).
- **Short Range**
  - By June 1, 2017, the parish will convene a task group to design and plan the addition of two fully accessible unisex restrooms in the parish hall.
    - Accountability: Property Committee
  - By June 1, 2017, the parish will convene a task group to design modifications to provide for full accessibility in the worship space.
    - Accountability: Property Committee, Worship Committee: Subcommittee on Art & Architecture
  - By September 1, 2017, the parish will submit a grant request to the Society of the Episcopal Church for the Advancement of Christianity in Pennsylvania to underwrite accessibility modifications in the parish hall and in worship space.
    - Accountability: Stewardship Committee
  - By September 1, 2017, the parish will engage with Partners for Sacred Spaces (Philadelphia, PA) to help St. Luke's leverage existing and new resources, solidify its continued relevance in our community, and ensure our sustainability.
    - Accountability: Property Committee, Stewardship Committee
  - By October 1, 2017, the parish will institute a series of local fellowship/social events in key population centers to consolidate its presence in those communities (e.g. "Salt Shaker Dinners").
    - Accountability: Church Growth & Development Committee
  - By January 2018, the parish will fully integrate appropriate forms of social media to engage the wider community in attaining its articulated outcomes in the arena of our common life.
    - Accountability: Communications Coordinator, Church Growth & Development Committee, Coordinator of Youth and Young Adult Ministries

## Part 4: Some Final Thoughts

This document seeks to put into words some of the many thoughts that emerged from our reflection over the last eighteen months. By no means does this plan presume to have gathered *all* our thoughts and dreams. It does, however, seek to collect some of them and organize them in such a way that we can realistically move forward into a new chapter in our community.

Most importantly, we all need to realize that this is not the end of a process. Rather, this is merely a model of how we intend to dream about the future, align our resources to realize our dreams, monitor the progress we are making, and, in time, to revisit our present as it becomes our past – only to renew our efforts at experiencing real transformation as we grow in wisdom and in grace.

Ultimately, we must realize that the work of transformation is, in the end, not our own, but the work of God. The day-to-day working out of this transformation is the responsibility not only of a few (Priest, staff, Vestry) but depends upon the *open and willing participation of every member* of the parish. Each of us can contribute to the effort through the use of our financial resources, talents, and time – through the faithful stewardship of the gifts God entrusts to us. Yet, if this is to be truly God’s work among us, the most fundamental work we can undertake is to pray. And all of us can pray, so all of us can participate in the work of transforming our hearts and minds that we might be filled with Christ’s “grace and heavenly benediction, and be made one body with him, that he may dwell in us, and we in him” (BCP 334). In this way, we can end as we began:

*Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God for us now and in the days to come.*