

ST. MARY'S STRATEGIC PLAN 2016-2019 WRITE UP

During the Spring of 2016, the clergy of St. Mary's along with the Chapter (this effort predated the change to Vestry), started down the path to create a three-year strategic plan. The Chapter hired a professional facilitator, and appointed a 19-person Strategic Planning Committee. These eight women and 11 men—a mix of clergy, staff and lay and diocesan leaders—embarked on a six-month effort to create a plan based on vital input gathered from all people connected to the Cathedral.

The committee, along with the facilitator, developed a process for discovering the current situation at St. Mary's and hearing the wisdom and opinions of congregants and other stakeholders.

- Five small focus groups (5 to 15 people) were conducted with people meeting the following descriptions: members with young children; St. Mary's youth (aged 10 to 18); Wednesday morning breakfast/service participants; church and diocesan leaders (external to St. Mary's leadership); and potential social justice organization partners.
- Two community conversations were held, one after the 8AM Sunday service and one after the 11AM Sunday service, to which all church members were invited. Approximately 50 to 60 people attended each session, 100 to 120 in total.
- A follow-up survey was developed to drill down into issues that surfaced during the focus groups and the community conversations. The survey was made available through hard copies and online, and garnered 116 responses.

With the results from these outreach efforts, the committee held four working sessions to mine and analyze input, uncover trends and themes, develop key findings, and ultimately, form the goals, objectives and strategies/initiatives of the Strategic Plan. The final plan was presented to the Chapter for approval in September 2016, and it was unveiled at the Annual Parish Meeting in January 2017.

The final stage of the process was implementation which included prioritizing initiatives, assigning and securing leadership for each goal and initiative, developing an action plan for success, and ensuring ongoing Chapter oversight. Chapter members or clergy were assigned as "goal" leaders, charged with recruiting congregants to assist in executing the individual initiatives. Timelines and milestones were set.

In summary, Interim Dean Laura Gettys reports that the committee determined that the main goal of the strategic plan was to position St. Mary's as the hub for social justice for the diocese, the conduit to this important issue to the wider diocesan audience. As opposed to taking up the traditional role of a Cathedral, St. Mary's was envisioning this new social justice leadership, a role that we are well-suited to live into given our history and our location.

From the results of the outreach efforts for input, the committee highlighted key assets within the Cathedral:

- Liturgy—Progressive liturgies and beautiful music in traditional magnificence of the Cathedral create a unique and valued experience.
- Community—St. Mary’s has an open and welcoming culture that attracts a diverse congregation.
- Outreach—Our historic tradition of outreach and social justice is very important; input varied as to how that tradition should be implemented.
- Youth—Members with young children value the way children are welcomed and included, and the high quality approach to faith formation. Youth enjoy active involvement and want to grow the youth community.
- Wednesday—Wednesday morning participants want to share their stories, are grateful, and want to give back to the community.
- Cathedral—Church and diocesan leaders acknowledge a gap in the traditional role of cathedrals and the role St. Mary’s plays; they lack consensus about whether St. Mary’s can or should play that role.

The committee also distilled the input findings into six key questions:

- 1) How can St. Mary’s better engage and leverage progress in the neighborhood?
- 2) How can we increase St. Mary’s membership and financial sustainability?
- 3) How can St. Mary’s most effectively support social justice?
- 4) What is the best way for St. Mary’s to fulfill its role as the Cathedral?
- 5) How can St. Mary’s communicate more effectively to members and to the community?
- 6) How does St. Mary’s balance the desire to “do more” with its current funding levels?

The committee set forth and stated additional directives that guided the plan:

St. Mary’s seeks to...“Live Where We Are...”

- Not to live in isolation from our surroundings, but rather be *of* the neighborhood.
- To have a membership that includes neighborhood residents and all other people who wish to be in our House of Prayer.
- To open our doors wide to anyone who wants to come in, and then listen to their thoughts and help them as we can.
- To reconcile and unite the human family.
- Ultimately to love our neighbors, fulfilling the ministry Jesus began 2000 years ago.

St. Mary’s seeks to...“Work to Right Inequalities...”

- To serve and lift up the neediest in our community.
- To provide leadership to help our community challenge injustices and value diversity—economic inequality, biases in the criminal justice system, marginalized voices, and more as members’ passions cause them to engage.
- To partner with others working for this—nonprofits, other religious groups, victims of social injustice, other parishes in the diocese, and more—to fix the structures in society that privilege the few over the many.
- To speak the truth.

The Strategic Plan comprised of three goals, each supported by tactics designed to fulfill those goals. The following includes actions taken over the course of three years to reach these goals. Note that this is not a comprehensive list, but one that highlights major milestones and/or key initiatives.

Goal 1: St. Mary's is a house of prayer for all people.

A. Deepen the intentional relationship with the surrounding neighborhood.

1. *Build relationships with nearby churches*
 - a. **Collins Church Outreach 2019**—Healing and wholeness health fair and ongoing conversations with pastors for bible study.
 - b. Participated in **Medical District Collaborative** community listening meetings activities.
 - c. Received a grant from **Medical District Collaborative** for a Morris Park health fair.
2. *Develop a plan to open the facilities more often to the public during the week.*
 - a. **REP, Refugee Empowerment Program**, a year-long after school program, meets Monday through Thursday, began in 2019 and is ongoing
 - b. **Center for Transforming Communities**, offices at the Cathedral and holds regular meetings and community gatherings, meets as needed in our space.
 - c. Periodic community groups gather here for space needs:
 - i. **Maria Montessori School** uses our facility for cooking and graduation;
 - ii. **Union Play Group** held practices and dancing sessions for six to eight months out of the year 2018/2019.
 - d. **Christ Community** brings their mobile health van to serve the displaced in the area once a month, every Wednesday; 2018 and ongoing
 - e. **HOPE**, Homeless Organizing for Power and Equality, housed here and meets once a month.
 - f. **The Bridge** street newspaper (a publication for the unemployed and displaced to sell as well as submit articles) holds training here every Thursday.
3. *Equip members to reach out to their networks to welcome potential new members*
 - a. **Shepherd's Program** began pairing new members with regulars, led by Patrick Williams
 - b. **St. Mary's 101** classes began
 - c. **Newcomers Table** every Sunday, open following 11AM service
 - d. **Potluck Faith**, led by Patrick Williams (see below)
4. *Enhance the youth program by retaining a full-time staff person and continuing partnerships with other Episcopal churches.*
 - a. Applied and received the **Home Church Grant** which allowed St. Mary's to hire Justin Merrick for a set period of time.

5. *Use small group to foster community*
 - a. **Small Dinner Groups**, made up of no more than 10-12 persons, get together, typically monthly, for a time of food and fellowship. A great way to get to know others in the St. Mary's community. Some groups meet in homes and others meet out in restaurants.
 - b. **Young Adults**, a group of young and young-ish adults who gather periodically for conversation and refreshment.
 - c. **Potluck Faith**, finding the holy by sharing our stories, meets in the Sisters' Chapel and is an intergenerational gathering where people bring a dish to share around a table and engage in a discussion based upon a faith question.
 - d. **Picnic & Prayer**, gathering of young families with children at a park for social time and community, potluck.
6. *Hire additional staff, clergy and lay employees that inspire more diversity at St. Mary's*
 - a. Hired more people of color in visible and important roles:
 - i. Patrick Williams, Canon for Welcome & Evangelism, funded by the Fr. Eric Pearson Fund ('17-)
 - ii. Justin Merrick, Youth Minister for Diversity, part-time, grant-funded position by the Church Home Board from the Diocese of West Tennessee ('17-'19)
 - iii. Kenyetta Thompson, part-time, Associate Youth Minister for Diversity ('18-)

Goal 2: St. Mary's is a community hub for social justice. (Note, the committee's usage of the term social justice was guided by Matthew 25:35-45.)

A. Build on St. Mary's current social justice activities.

1. *Develop a plan with desired outcomes for social justice efforts lead by Servant Ministry Team.*
 - a. Recently the team met to re-envision who they are and their mission; less money givers, more time givers and organizers. The team decided to partner with the St. Mary's outreach team of MICAHA (Memphis Interfaith Coalition for Action and Hope). A St. Mary's MICAHA team this group offers a diverse choice of ministries: Downtown Elementary School-tutoring in reading, back-to-school Incentive Reward Extravaganza, Christmas Angel Tree and Undie Sunday; volunteering for Constance Abbey and Pop-Tops; joining us at the Eucharistic Breakfast with our unsheltered neighbors on Wednesday mornings; MICAHA is a coalition of community and faith-based organizations joining together to give a more powerful voice for issues of justice in our city. Our current platform concentrates on three pillar issues, [economic equity](#), [education equity](#), and [immigration & intercultural equity](#). We organize and speak to our community and its leaders, always seeking to "do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God."
2. *Initiate training in racial harmony and diversity in adult formation offerings.*
 - a. A deep part of our programming, Pat Kelly worked with Laura Gettys to fulfill this initiative in a robust way with speakers and programming.

Add youth programming to further involve youth in social justice.

- b. Led Sunday youth gatherings during the Adult Christian formation hour as well as Sunday evening youth gatherings, planned frequent youth outings around the Walk with 901 initiative
 - c. Developed and led the Walk with 901 initiative, a program geared toward teaching youth how to be well-rounded servants to both God and the community. The program engages middle and high school students in activities centered around diverse cultural studies, racial reconciliation, and social justice. The program walks youth through a spiritual journey, building skills in leadership, discipleship community service and social justice while creating awareness of cultural differences. The aim is to broaden the perspective of young millennial's minds and raise leaders of this generation filled with the compassion of Christ.
 - d. For two years in a row, St. Mary's hosted weekend retreats led by Justin. In 2018, the youth retreat included Step U.P., Middle and High School Students, and FOOTPRINTS, and centered around MLK50. The Friday night, Saturday day program included: **Union, the Musical**, an original workshop production tells the story of the sanitation strike of Memphis in 1968, held at Clayborn Temple; **Workshop 1** | *Finding Your Voice: Rising Truth to Power*, Moderator: Florida Jackson (Memphis School of Servant Leadership); **Workshop 2** | *Understanding Your Voice: Implicit Bias*, Moderator: Vahisha Hasan (Memphis Center for Urban Theological Studies); **Workshop 3** | *Using Your Voice: Communities & Poverty*, Moderator: Janel Kragt-Bakker (Memphis Theological Seminary)
 - e. Planned a July Pilgrimage to the Equal Justice Initiative Peace and Peace Museum and Memorial in Montgomery, Alabama
3. *Seek frequent input from Diocesan leaders.*
 - a. This goal was a challenge and stalled out a bit, particularly as Bishop Johnson's retirement became more imminent
 4. *Convene and conduct education sessions for local Episcopalians and the general public.*
 - a. Ongoing through Christian Formation, Martyrs Weekend and robust music program.
 5. *Create and implement a plan to share social justice opportunities with the Diocesan and other local faith communities.*
 - a. Participated in the community-wide MLK50 celebration in a large way.
 - b. Working with MLK50 and Mark Metheny, presented a commemorative program at the Cathedral on April 7, 2018. Working in partnership with Voices of Justice in the Mid-South and the MLK50 committee the program honored Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and was in recognition of the many Memphis clergy members who were involved in the daily struggles associated with the 1968 sanitation strike and its aftermath. The event featured Rev. James Lawson, former minister of Centenary United Methodist

Church and Chair of Community on the Move for Equality (COME), who invited Dr. King to Memphis; Father Nicholas Vieron, Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church and former chair of the Memphis Ministerial Association, among others. Following the services, Dean Andy Andrews led a procession from the Cathedral to City Hall, in remembrance of the April 5, 1968 local clergy's march to City Hall, seeking to end the sanitation strike.

- c. Prior to the MLK50 service, St. Mary's along with Constance Abbey planned and hosted a "Jubilee Event" block party throughout the campus of the Cathedral, featuring live music, food and celebration. A two-hour community gathering for the whole family and free to all, featured live music, food, a bounce house, rock-climbing, video game truck, and more.
- d. Vestry approved Laura's role in the community-wide Lynching Project; she continues to sit on the board.
- e. Held On The Row: A Staged Reading From Arkansas Death Row Inmates held in October, 2018 at St. Mary's. Part of The Prison Story Project, a storytelling/creative writing project that benefits incarcerated women and men.
- f. Help facilitate and led "Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense: Light Up for Peace" for two years in Morris Park, ongoing annual event.
- g. The Servant Ministry Team worked with MIFA on commUNITY Days, September '18
- h. Worked with MIFA and Hope to conduct in-reach interviews at St. Mary's.

Goal 3: St. Mary's is well-equipped to carry out our mission and plans. Preserve St. Mary's for future generations.

1. *Develop and implement a facilities and grounds plan to support a cohesive approach to short and long-term needs.*
 - a. Jim Powell has been working diligently to properly access the roof, the causes behind its slow disintegration, and the solution to fixing. Recently, phase 1 has been completed and now he is leading the effort to gain cost estimates for fixing the problem. He continues to lead other repairs.
 - b. Additionally the unexpected death of John Geelan has stalled our efforts for future planning. The Vestry is working to replace his leadership.
2. *Continue to explore inviting organizations with similar goals to use/rent space (see Goal 1.3 above)*
3. *Develop and implement a coordinated stewardship plan.*
 - a. Pat Kelly is leading a three-year stewardship plan ('18, '19 & '20) that includes one-on-one and small group meetings, cottage meetings, pledge cards and a lesson on why we tithe.
4. *Develop and implement a comprehensive communications plan.*
 - a. Hired part-time communications manager, Allison Musick
 - b. Upgraded email communication software, synced Mail Chimp with Servant Keeper to better manage email contacts.

- c. Hired graphic designer for 10 hours per month.
- 5. *Realign staff to address strategic plan goals.*
 - a. In addition to the new hires listed above, repositioned organist Dennis Janzer to Music Director, added interim choir director William Skoog who groomed Paul Murray for the position of Choirmaster.
- 6. *Engage the Vestry to actively support and communicate implementation of the strategic plan.*
 - a. Vestry members were tasked as leaders for specific initiatives
 - b. Each meeting had a dedicated time to discuss Strategic Plan progress and updates
 - c. Presented progress at Annual Parish Meetings