

CHRIST ASCENSION CHURCH MISSION PRIORITIES

STRATEGIC PLAN

After struggling for many years with declining membership and revenue, Christ Ascension Church became the beneficiary of a large bequest from Louise Wash, a longtime member of Christ Ascension. With membership increasing and more income available, it was decided that the time had come to implement a discernment process to guide the congregation in understanding God's will and direction for Christ Ascension in the coming years. A Vision Team consisting of Corbin Cash, David Curtis, David Keill, Debbie Norton, Becky Perlstein and Jonne Warner was established to facilitate this discernment process.

The Vision Team realized that participation by the congregation was vital to the success of the discernment process. The team organized a series of five meetings, each focusing on a different area to be explored and evaluated. The congregation was invited to attend these meetings and to participate in the discernment process. The meeting dates and topics were as follows:

1. September 24, 2005; Where We've Been. Longtime members of the congregation, as well as newer members, discussed and shared the history of Christ Ascension.

2. October 29, 2005; Who We Are. Attendees focused on the identity of Christ Ascension and discussed what makes its diverse congregation warm and welcoming and committed to following Jesus.

3. November 19, 2005; Where We're Going. Attendees focused on and discussed the strengths of Christ Ascension and improvements we can make in other areas.

4. January 21, 2006; Our Mission Priorities. The fourth session was devoted to establishing a list of mission priorities. The mission priorities of Christ Ascension were determined to be the following:

- (1) Increase our outreach to those in greatest need.
- (2) Expand and strengthen our current music program through inreach and outreach.
- (3) Expand our outreach and ministries to families.
- (4) Increase awareness of our church through community involvement.

5. February 18, 2006; Our Mission Priority Goals. During the final session the attendees brainstormed specific ideas and goals that would carry out our mission priorities and make them a reality.

At the conclusion of the discernment process, the Vision Team prepared a report that was presented to the Vestry for consideration. The Vestry met on Saturday, March 11, 2006, to discuss the Vision Team's report and to evaluate the mission priority goals. At this meeting the Vestry discussed at length the ideas suggested for each mission priority. The Vestry consolidated like ideas, evaluated our capabilities based on the current capacity and resources of Christ Ascension, and drafted this Strategic Plan. The Vestry agreed that meeting these goals is a marathon and not a sprint. We do not need to accomplish all of the goals by the end of the year, but rather develop a strong foundation upon which to expand and build our mission priorities. The recommendations of the Vestry to achieve our mission priority goals are as follows:

1. **INCREASE OUR OUTREACH TO THOSE IN GREATEST NEED.**

(1) Support and Expand the Food Pantry.

- (a) A representative from the Vestry will meet with Corbin Cash to learn about the current operation of the Food Pantry and brainstorm ideas with Corbin about ways to support and expand the existing operation.

(2) Assist Area Churches with CARITAS.

- (a) Continue and strengthen our existing relationship with Emanuel Episcopal Church in the CARITAS program, including increased participation in serving meals, providing transportation and providing general assistance to the CARITAS participants.

(3) Involvement with the Daughters of Zelophehad.

- (a) The Daughters of Zelophehad (DOZ), an ecumenical Christian based ministry, is a transitional housing program for homeless women and their children based in Richmond. The existing home is in Chesterfield County. Eligible families may live in the home for up to two years. During this time, these women and children receive the education, training and spiritual support they need to prepare them for independent living. The Vestry and the congregation will explore ways in which we can support this program.

(4) Support ECW Programs and Ministries.

- (a) A Vestry representative will meet with Jean Robertson to discuss ways to strengthen and support our ECW. It was suggested that an evening chapter of ECW be organized so those unable to attend meetings during the day can participate.

2. **EXPAND AND STRENGTHEN OUR CURRENT MUSIC PROGRAM THROUGH INREACH AND OUTREACH.**

Ed Schutt was present during this discussion of the development of a strategic plan to expand and strengthen our music program. His presence provided the necessary expertise and experience to develop a realistic approach to the implementation of our goals.

(1) Organ Concerts and Other Events.

(a) Ed suggested, and the Vestry agreed, that Christ Ascension could realistically host or conduct two events during the remainder of 2006. Ed will contact the leaders of local music programs and groups and talk to them about holding concerts or events at Christ Ascension. Ed is considering conducting an organ music program during the Ginter Park Garden Walk on May 20.

(2) Evensong.

(a) Evensong several times a year and invite other churches or groups to participate.

(3) Caroling in the Park.

(a) The Vestry agreed that this activity involves more than just the music program and should involve a separate committee, or interested group, to receive, define, and execute ideas to expand and publicize this event. The Vestry did agree to review any expansion plans and consider adding resources, if necessary, in the upcoming budget in support of this important event.

3. **EXPAND OUR OUTREACH AND MINISTRIES TO FAMILIES.**

(1) Start a Youth Group.

(3) Outreach to Elderly in Nursing Homes.

(4) Sunday School.

(5) Family Movie Night.

4. INCREASE OUR AWARENESS OF OUR CHURCH THROUGH COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT.

- (1) Revitalize Church Landscape.
 - (a) David Lisowski will prepare a list of short-term and long-term ideas to improve our landscape.
 - (b) Continue our clean up days of the church grounds.
 - (c) A local resident has expressed an interest in erecting a pet statue in our park to honor the memory of her dog and of all pets. In return, she will maintain part of the park landscape.
- (2) Participate in Area Garden Walks (Ginter Park, Bellevue, Rosedale).
 - (a) Participate in the Ginter Park Garden Walk on May 20, possibly to include an organ music concert. Contact other area civic associations to participate in their garden walks.
- (3) Canal Walk Events.
 - (a) Continue our support of and involvement with Animalia.
- (4) Speakers at Monthly Potluck/Spaghetti Dinners.
 - (a) Identify and invite speakers to our monthly dinners to discuss wide-ranging topics of interest.
 - (b) Continue having speakers at the Lenten dinner and expand our guest speaker list.
- (5) Identify a Publicist.
 - (a) Kathy Thompson will continue in the role of church publicist. In addition, she will identify a professional public relations/marketing expert to provide assistance and insight with the development of specialized marketing projects for the Church. The professional also will assist Kathy in developing a marketing message for the Church.