

# St. Thomas: A Transforming Community



September 2015

*I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern the will of God — what is good and acceptable and perfect.* [Romans 12:1-2](#)

The Apostle Paul wrote these words to the little community of Roman Christians at a time when they were under great pressure. Suffering state persecution, they were also reviled by their pagan neighbors and forced to meet and worship in secret. Yet, they were filled with joy. How could this be? It was because, as Paul told them, a new world was being born. Their suffering was the suffering of the whole world groaning in labor. They were being *transformed in Christ* as this new world came into being. Their community became a model for other Christians. They understood that their transformation meant a new way of seeing and a new way of being. And, this transformed life proved so attractive to the surrounding pagan culture that eventually Christianity became Rome's preferred faith.

Fast forward to 2015 and this community of St Thomas. While we are not under a cloud of persecution, we are certainly living in changing times; times that are, at best, indifferent to, and certainly not supportive of, faith. As Christians, we are being called to stand against the tide of materialism, violence and polarization that dominate the world around us. Like those early Christians in Rome, we are called to be witnesses to and examples of another way of living. We are being called to transformation in Christ, called into a new way of seeing and a new way of being.

The new strategic plan document you are holding, *St Thomas: A Transforming Community*, seeks to provide a roadmap for our community towards the kind of transformation that St Paul commended to the church in Rome. It is the product of many hours of conversation, discernment, and hard work among the Vestry, clergy and staff, and neighborhood, affinity and ministry groups. Input from the entire community has been received at two all-parish gatherings. Out of that deep discernment has emerged statements of vision and mission and an expression of Core Values that guide and inform the goals, objectives and initiatives that seek to actuate our understanding of God's call on our lives today and into the near future. My hope is that what we have outlined in this document, along with Scripture, the Book of Common Prayer and the Holy Spirit living among us, will move us forward towards our goals of deepening our faith, building a community of healing and transformation, giving, caring, and serving generously, and practicing the Hospitality of God.

St Thomas will celebrate the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its founding in 2018. From its modest beginnings in a Medina boathouse to the contemporary, vibrant, and beautiful campus we know today, there has been a constant motivator of the gathered community: Love of God and Service to God's people. As we look towards that milestone anniversary, let us renew our commitment to this Love and Service and let us continue to praise God with joyful and thankful hearts for the abundant grace with which we have been blessed. Let us be transformed in Christ.

Faithfully,



# Our Mission

At St. Thomas Episcopal Church, our mission is to know Jesus Christ and make Christ's transforming love known to our community and beyond, through...

- Beautiful worship and music
- Thoughtful teaching and preaching
- Gracious fellowship
- Joyful service



# Our Core Values

At St. Thomas Episcopal Church, we hold as our highest values:

## Welcoming All

- We respect the dignity of all people, and welcome them wherever they are on their faith journey.

## Seeking God's Presence in Our Lives

- We celebrate the transforming power of faith in God through Jesus Christ and encourage all who seek God's presence.

## Serving Faithfully

- We faithfully and joyfully serve God, God's people and all of creation.

## Following Christ

- We are committed to following Jesus Christ, sharing Christ's love, and working for Christ's justice and peace in the world.

# Our Vision

At St. Thomas Episcopal Church, faith, community, service and hospitality are at the core of everything we do. Living fully and joyfully into relationship with Christ, one another and the world, our vision is to...

## Deepen Our Faith

- By recognizing and embracing the transformative power of life lived in relationship with God, with each other and with our planet Earth, and by embracing the transformative power of our sacramental and liturgical tradition

## Build Community

- By being a diverse, thriving and growing multi-generational community that seeks an ever deepening faith in God
- By offering teaching, programs, events and services to support people at all stages of faith and life
- By being adaptive, nimble and outwardly focused as we share our faith in Jesus Christ and Christ's transforming love

## Give, Care & Serve Generously

- By equipping and empowering servant leaders
- By sharing God's love with one another and the wider community
- By joyfully caring for and sharing the abundance of God's creation

## Practice the Hospitality of God

- By being a place of laughter, love, joy, comfort, healing and nurture
- By offering gracious hospitality and activities that welcome all
- By building relationships with one another and with the wider community



# Our Plan for Mission

In Luke’s Gospel, we hear, “From everyone to whom much has been given, much will be required; and from the one to whom much has been entrusted, even more will be demanded.”

God has truly blessed us, and our faithful response to God’s abundance has enabled us to accomplish much to build God’s Kingdom here at St. Thomas and in the wider community. Yet, there is more expected of us!

God wants us to continue to grow in faith as followers of Christ Jesus and to love and serve one another! The Plan for Mission that follows is grouped by the elements of our Vision Statement – Faith, Community, Service and Hospitality. We hope that our plan reveals a story of how God is working in and through us, how we are sharing Christ’s transforming love with our neighbors, how God is using us to help change the world and where we see God directing our future efforts.



# Faith

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Knowing Christ and making Christ's transforming love known are at the heart of our mission. Fully living into the mission, inviting and welcoming others into the joy of knowing God in Christ Jesus, and being fully engaged in the work of God's Kingdom, both at St. Thomas and in the wider community, is our vision of faith!

## 2016 – 2017 Faith Goals & Initiatives

### Weave our mission, vision and values throughout all aspects of the life of the parish

- Share the mission, vision and values renewal process and results of the strategic plan with the parish.
- Provide additional worship and formation opportunities to meet the diverse needs of our growing multi-generational congregation in a sustainable manner consistent with our mission and vision.
- Implement an annual evaluation process to review the activities, programs and ministries of the parish for alignment with the mission and vision, overall effectiveness, resource use, parish engagement and support, lay leadership and volunteer involvement, and the requirements on clergy and staff and make recommendations for changes.
- Further develop our annual planning processes for worship, formation, outreach, pastoral care, neighborhood programs, fellowship, community programs and activities to be a more holistic, integrated and coordinated process that will ensure best use of resources, provide better integration and coordination of activities, and be fully aligned with our goals, mission and vision.
- Provide regular reports on the parish's governance, operation, ministries and service activities to all parishioners.
- Review and revise the strategic plan every other year.

### Share the message of faith in Jesus Christ and his transforming love

- Develop and implement a communications plan to reach all segments of our parish family and the broader community with the message of faith in Jesus Christ and the power of his transforming love, as well as the details of the life and activities of the parish through print, electronic and on-line media.
- Develop and implement a plan to invite and welcome those seeking a place to begin or continue their faith journey to discover St. Thomas.
- Review the communications and evangelism strategies and activities of the parish annually.
- To develop and implement programs that seek to ground all in the Christian faith and invite them into a transformative relationship with Jesus Christ.

### Be fully engaged and faithfully present

- As a part of our year-round stewardship program, implement a "Worship + 2" campaign to promote regular worship attendance and participation in one formation program and one outreach activity throughout the year.
- Begin an intentional Gospel centered movement to promote living our faith every day and regularly sharing its transforming power with those in our lives.

# 2016 Faith Financial Plan - \$707,236

2016 Faith Financial Plan includes:

- Expansion of Youth Minister position to full time (0.5 FTE Youth Ministry and 0.5 FTE Communications)
- Clergy wages and benefits (60%)
- Music staff wages and benefits (100%)
- Formation staff wages and benefits (100%)
- Childcare staff wages and supplies (90%)
- Worship and liturgical supplies
- Devotional materials
- Organ and piano maintenance
- Sheet music and choir supplies
- Curriculum materials for children's formation, youth and adult Formation, and Baptism preparation programs
- Program supplies and materials for children's formation, youth and adult Formation, and Baptism preparation programs
- Teacher training for all formation programs
- Middle/High School retreats and events
- Library materials and supplies
- Pastoral Care programs
- Worship and event promotion
- Print and electronic communications, including website and social media
- Parish administration (45%)
- Utilities and facilities maintenance (45%)



# Community

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We experience God's love most fully in community. In loving and supporting one another and by joining together in prayer, worship, friendship, fellowship, care, nurture and service, we share God's love. This is our vision for community!

## 2016 – 2017 Community Goals & Initiatives

### Build community

- Develop and support small group ministries, programs and activities that invite us to more fully know one another and lead us into deeper relationship.
- Plan and implement an annual series of community events that invite and welcome the broader community with music and fellowship.
- Build a culture of diversity through welcoming invitations, acts of reconciliation, open dialogue, respectful listening, and sharing the love of Christ.
- More fully incorporate youth, seniors and “solos” into all aspects of the life of the parish.

### Love our neighbors and care for one another

- Develop and articulate a clear vision and goals for the parish's outreach ministries and services, including those provided through direct parishioner volunteer service and leadership, service partnerships with other agencies and organizations, and donated financial support.
- Plan and implement an ongoing program of outreach services and activities to achieve the parish's outreach vision and goals.
- Provide free or low-cost access to the Ebsworth Life Center for other non-profit service organizations and service projects that are aligned with and support our outreach vision and goals whenever possible.
- Continue to foster healthy, supportive partnerships with St. Thomas School, AA and the Boy Scouts.

## 2016 Community Financial Plan - \$306,245

2016 Community Financial Plan includes:

- Outreach activities and programs
  - Thanksgiving @ St. Thomas
  - Congregations for the Homeless
  - Neighbors in Need
  - Material Assistance
  - Companion Parish and Others
- Pastoral Care materials and activities
- Utilities and facilities maintenance (25%)
- Clergy wages and benefits (20%)
- Parish administration (25%)



# Service

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God has richly blessed us! We work to be good and faithful stewards of all that we have been given, and to joyfully share our, time, talent and treasure to build the kingdom of God where ever we find ourselves. This is our vision for service!

## 2016 – 2017 Service Goals & Initiatives

### Foster a culture of joyful volunteer service

- Maintain a database of parishioner’s talents, skills, spiritual gifts and vocational abilities to better support the volunteer, spiritual, service and leadership needs of the parish.
- Create detailed job descriptions with clear expectations for all volunteer and lay leadership positions.
- Regularly thank, recognize and celebrate volunteers and lay leaders.
- Cultivate, train and empower lay leaders for ministry and governance roles.
- Develop and share a set of basic “ground rules” to guide committee work and volunteer interactions.

### Be good and faithful stewards of God’s abundant gifts

- Develop and implement a year-round program of stewardship focused on discipleship and deepening our faith and trust in God.
- Encourage a culture of sharing and interaction between parish committees, ministry leaders and activity coordinators to promote good program management and coordination of activities, as well as efficient use of people and financial resources.
- Sustainably grow and support the clergy and lay staff to more fully meet the needs of our growing parish.
- Develop and implement a long-term plan and strategies to preserve, maintain and improve the parish buildings and campus grounds.
- Use green practices, wherever feasible, in the operation and maintenance of the parish’s buildings and grounds.

## 2016 Service Financial Plan - \$222,049

2016 Service Financial Plan includes:

- Diocesan assessment
- Staff compensation, professional development and continuing education
- Volunteer and lay leadership support
- Utilities and facilities maintenance (15%)
- Clergy wages and benefits (10%)
- Parish administration (15%)

# Hospitality

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Jesus understood the power of fellowship and time spent together over food! Gracious hospitality, table fellowship and celebrations of the life build community and deepen relationships. This is our vision of hospitality!

## 2016 – 2017 Hospitality Goals & Initiatives

### Develop and deepen our relationships with friends and neighbors

- Foster activities and events that encourage relationship building and provide opportunities for us to fully know and care for our friends and neighbors.
- Conduct a regular schedule of table fellowship events that celebrate our milestones, refresh our spirits, educate our minds and deepen our faith.
- Continue to host and grow events for children and families in our parish and beyond around Christmas, Easter, Mardi Gras, Halloween and other appropriate holiday celebrations.
- Promote activities and events that strengthen neighborhood bonds between parishioners and their neighbors and encourage caring relationships.
- Grow our network of pastoral care programs and providers.

## 2016 Hospitality Financial Plan - \$128,003

2016 Hospitality Financial Plan includes:

- Fellowship food and supplies
- Utilities and facilities maintenance (15%)
- Clergy wages and benefits (10%)
- Parish administration (15%)



# Financial Plan for Mission

Over the last year there has been much prayer, thought, effort and time spent discerning God’s call for St. Thomas as we have undertaken our strategic planning process, and we are excited where God is leading us with our new Mission and Vision! As faithful stewards of all that God has entrusted to us, we have approached this plan with gratitude for God’s abundance and with a desire to grow in faith as fully engaged followers of Christ.

Our strategic plan sets the stage for us to build on our strengths, address areas for growth and move forward with new initiatives aimed at bringing our vision of deepening our faith, building community, giving, caring and serving generously and practicing the hospitality of God to life.

Each of the numbers in our plan is much more than a line in a budget. Each number represents our love for God, our love of our neighbors and the change we want for the world. 2016 is going to be an exciting year!

## Building God’s Kingdom in 2016

Faith	\$707,236
Community	\$306,245
Service	\$222,049
Hospitality	<u>\$128,003</u>
Total 2016 Mission Costs	<u>\$1,363,532</u>



# How will we know how we are doing?

As we live out our new mission and vision, and we walk the path of loving God and loving our neighbors, God will use our efforts to change lives. We believe that we will experience deeper faith; a stronger, more caring community; abundant, generous living; reconciled relationships; and lives lived in the joy of faith in Jesus Christ and his transforming love. This kind of transformation is not measured with traditional attendance and giving statistics.

We will be soliciting stories of transformation, surveying parishioners about their faith and life journeys, and looking at the impact of our service and outreach ministries. We will also be working on a system to quantify engagement through a weighted scale of participation in worship, formation activities, volunteer and leadership service, and fellowship activities. This will be paired with a regular review of key financial performance indicators to give us a snapshot of how we are using God's gifts of time, resources and energy. These two assessment tools will provide a measure progress toward achievement of our mission and vision, as well as our financial sustainability.

## Plan Milestones

There are several major items that constitute milestone achievements in our vision. These items relate to the worship and formation activities of the parish, volunteers and staff, and stewardship of our facilities and resources. The list of milestones includes...

- Ministry Review Process
- Outreach Goals and Plan
- Addition of Staff
- New Worship Services
- New Small Group Programs
- Community Fellowship Programs
- Volunteer Job Descriptions
- Lay Leader Training Programs
- New Website and Communication Plan
- Year-round Wednesday Night Programs
- ELC Debt Retirement
- Campus Improvements
- Endowment Level
- Communications Plan

## Reporting

The Vestry, clergy and staff will regularly review the stories of transformation, responses to the annual surveys, achievement of the milestones and progress toward meeting the objectives for each of the plan's goals. The Vestry will share this information as a part of the Annual Report and in other forms as appropriate.