

## Developing a Mission Plan

The purpose for any church to develop a mission plan is to fulfill the mission of the church presented by our Lord in the Gospel of Matthew:

*“And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age.”*

Matthew 28:18-20

For any church to actively be a Great Commission Church both the church as a body and the individual members need to recognize that the church exists primarily for two reasons. The first is to offer a community of faith so that those who have faith may gathered, be cared for, educated and offered opportunities to worship and celebrate the Blessed Sacraments. The second reason for the existence of the church is for those who are not members of it. The church (as are its members) is to be as light and leaven to the world.

The church must be a place of safety, refreshment and solace in difficult times. It must be a place of worship, prayer and praise. And she must a beacon shining in the darkness to welcome the souls who are lost or have never heard the good news. If our churches are not both places for us and places which attract others then we are not being authentically the church.

We may do good things, we may offer our own prayer and praise, we may even celebrate the Sacraments in a right and proper fashion, but if we are not opening our doors to shout the good news, then we are not fulfilling the mission of the church. And I am afraid we not much different from the local fraternal organization, sewing circle or book club. We may have the best intentions in mind, and we may even think that we are being authentically Christian, but the mission of the church is not to maintain the status quo.

The church, the Body of Christ, is like every other living organism, we are both growing and reproducing, or we are dying. Living is about being and doing – **being and doing**. It is not enough to simply say that we exist, we must exist with a purpose and God has given the mission and purpose for our existence. We are to go and make disciples!

A lot of words, but the questions that those words provoke are the important things for us to consider during this Synod. Provocative words, some might say and I would agree. And if these words cause us to question everything we are doing, wonderful; for that is exactly what each person and every parish must do. The next question is how?

The first matter to address is like looking at yourself in a mirror naked. Not quite the picture that our minds would have offered to us, before we looked. But in that honest examination all the warts, flaws and yes wrinkles are revealed. This reflection offers us two choices. We can either appreciate this clear and effective review of our status, or we can pretend that we really don't see ourselves in the reflection.

For a parish the first question to ask is: where are we at this time? Perhaps I can place the question in this context: Are we a Remnant Church? Are we a Maintenance Church? Or are we a Mission Church?

A Remnant Church is a place of safety for those who are seeking relief from an external oppressive force. They have identified both the external threat and those elements which constitute their belief system.

Some characteristics of a Remnant Church:

- A Common heritage
- A unifying set a principles and practices
- A difficulty with change of any type
- A suspicious nature and a concern about outside contamination
- Difficulty with integration of new members
- This is usually a small and shrinking church

I am not going to stand here and suggest to any of you that when those brave souls left the Episcopal Church as a faithful remnant of the Anglican Patrimony and Catholic Faith were wrong. Please understand that what they did was a necessary first step to preserve what we enjoy, but it is just a first step. What we are considering today and when you return home is the next steps.

Those who went before us gathered together and remembered their heritage. They persevered and preserved for us the faith that we celebrate. Their work is done; it is for us to take the next steps.

Some characteristics of a Maintenance Church

- Building Centered – energy and resources are focused on the building
- The members ask, “How many visitors have we attracted?”
- The clergy take the lead in introducing visitors
- New members are integrated slowly
- When change is considered the members ask, “How will this affect me?”
- If change is upsetting to any members it is not considered as important
- The congregation believes they must be faithful to the past
- The leadership style is managerial – maintenance of order and a smooth operation
- The congregation is concerned with maintaining and saving the church

To take breather, and rejoice that the building has been obtained is a normal human reaction and the reaction of most churches. The question is how long do we pause and celebrate, before we move from concerns about having a building, to the work of building up the church?

Some characteristics of a Mission Church

- Building are like clothes, good for now, but changed as necessary
- The members of the church are sent into the community for mission
- Most of the members consider change by asking, “Will is help bring people to God”
- The members remember the past, but look to the future
- Visitors are greeted by members and introduced to others
- Integration of new members is rapid and smooth
- Leadership in a Mission Church is transformational offering prophetic vision

- The congregation is concerned with the mission and new mission work

After looking into the mirror and assessing what type of church we have become, it's time plan for the future. As with any evaluation there are not always definitive and universal applications of the characteristics I have listed. Part of planning is recognizing the primary or predominate characteristics of your church and then planning not only the predominate group but also for the minority opinion.

This is not only the work of the Vestry and parish priest, but of the entire congregation. It makes no sense to look to the future and leave behind part of the congregation. This is not to suggest that there will be universal acceptance of every part of a mission plan, but by sharing the plan and allowing every member of the congregation to have input in the plan the percentage of the congregation that owns the plan increases exponentially.

## Some Elements of a Comprehension Mission Plan

### I. Religious Education

The reason that we begin with Religious education is that the process of evangelism itself has two movements. Evangelism is word that we use to describe the propagation of the Gospel, the individual sharing their faith and the Church as a body reaching out in Mission to the world.

The first movement is inward, that is to say that the individual members of a church need to be evangelized before they can become evangelists. This process is a lifelong project which includes, Bible Study, regular worship, a Rule of Life and prayer.

The church supports this work by offering to people of all ages systematic religious education. It begins with Biblical Based or theological sermons and continues with Sunday School for the Children, Bible Study and Special programs during the seasons of the liturgical year. We all know how important it is to engage the human person fully so that every sense is engaged in worship, prayer and study.

Once the parish itself has been evangelized and has heard the Good News of the Gospel their response becomes the next movement. This is the outward movement of sharing what we have found, heard and experienced.

### II. Primary Evangelization

When I first suggested that we needed to do primary evangelization at St. Dunstan's there was not a stampede of people volunteering to go door to door. That is part of primary evangelization, but only part.

We have a Garage Sale called the Man Sale. The Brotherhood of St. Dunstan has primary responsibility for this sale of man related articles (Tools, Sporting goods etc.) The purpose is for our fellowship, to raise funds and to make sure that the men in our neighborhood know that there is a church in their immediate area. The men of the church are nice, they have fun together and priest doesn't seem completely crazy. Primary Evangelism !

The ladies host the English Tea each year. They make a tidy sum, but as important is that we have people visiting us. We host tours of the church, offer information about the

Anglican Catholic Faith and yes, the priest is present usually with a least one granddaughter, so those who attend can see he is a regular guy. Primary Evangelism!

We have a prayer shawl ministry. The women knit or crochet shawls for the sick. We bless them each month when we offer the Anointing of the Sick and these shawls go all over the twin cities and beyond. Primary Evangelism!

Both of the priests with the encouragement and support of the parish offer their services to hospitals and nursing homes in the area. We both feel called to this work and through it many people who have never heard of our church receive the ministry of the church. It is a cooperative effort and would not be possible, without the permission and encouragement of the entire parish. We have carolers at Christmas and the Altar Flowers are often left in a hospital or nursing home.

More Primary evangelism and we still haven't made anyone knock on any doors!

III. Alpha Program – or other Cell group programs Hospitality, Study, Prayer and Mission

Why, because small groups are the best and most effective way of growing the church! Especially if we can engage those who are not currently attending a church

We are beginning the Alpha program this year at St. Dunstan's. If you have a different program that you like great! But the idea is again to first offer the program to the parish and then to take it out into the world. You may want to use Alpha or you may want to have a Summer Bible Program for the children in your town. Having this type of program, offers the parish the opportunity to reach out to those who do not know the church and may not have faith.

IV. Advertising

Advertising is an essential component to a mission plan. The situation in your town or city will dictate to you how this will be accomplished. In Superior, Wisconsin we could advertise regularly in the Newspaper and at that time, people read newspapers. In the Twin Cities the cost is enormous and we don't advertise in the newspapers. We are also deliberate in our decision making process. We want to get the most for our money and we note the decline in readership of newspapers.

The online advertising is very important to us. Our webmaster gets regular reports on hits to our webpage and how the advertising we do on the web produces results for us. Currently in the major search engines if you type Anglican Churches and Minneapolis we are either first or at least on the first page.

But advertising is not always something that we purchase. We try to encourage in every way possible members of the congregation to share their faith and invite their family and friends. There exists an unofficial contact between the congregation and those who invite people. We know we can count on visitors being greeted, invited to coffee hour and introduced. The liturgy is predictable and the priests try to behave. Each Sunday the sermon or homily is topical and we don't go off on tangents. This gives people the confidence to invite people to church.

## V. Outreach and Mission

Part of the work of a Great Commission parish is sending people out to engage actively in ministry. Once you begin you will find more opportunities and the members of your parish will bring new ideas to the mix. We recently have had our men's group involved in cooking and serving dinner to at risk young people. This opportunity came from a parishioner and he organized the event.

The local food bank can be a starting point, diapers for those who cannot afford them and direct involvement like Habitat for Humanity. You can also support the international mission work in Africa through Bp. Gill. The question is: Why engage in this work?

Because, it is what Christians do. In the Acts of the Apostles we read of the nascent Christian Community. They are known by their common life and their works of charity. When we have visitors we are often asked what we do for the community – In what mission work do we engage? We can't do everything, but we must do something.

## VI. Priest Replacement - Trading up to a newer model

I started my congregation a couple of years ago. When the vestry met I asked them to form a committee called the 2020 Committee. The purpose and work of that group was to plan for what needed to be addressed in the life of the church to get us ready for 2020. I began my discussion with them by reminding them in 2020 I will be 70 and I may no longer be their Rector.

As part of our mission plans we need to look towards the future. If we want our faith and practices to be available to the next generation of Christians it is up to us to provide for them. A new, young seminary graduate looking towards ministry in the continuing church may understand that he will have secular employment as well as priestly ministry, but this model will not build up the church.

We need more full time positions and these positions in turn need to be places where the church is growing and actively engage with the community. You may currently be served by a retired priest or consider your priest part-time. That may be working today, but what about tomorrow. It is only those parishes which can support a full time Rector that will be able to attract young men with families.

We have decided to work toward funding a seminary education for replacing our clergy and we have already been blessed by two men who are pursuing seminary educations. These two men have not sought support by the parish, but I can't help wonder if our readiness to help and planning for the future might have stimulated their thoughts and prayers about vocation.

You all have an outline of what I have presented to you today for your own mission plans. Please treat this as an outline only and not the definitive plan for every parish. Your mission plan needs to be just that – your plan.