

Vision & Ministry

For our current program year, we have employed the theme, “To think outside the box.” This was done because we have come to a critical juncture in our journey as a parish. We are clearly at a time and place in which the old ways in which we have ‘done church’ can no longer support the needs we have now. Despite the challenges all around us in Saginaw, there is a sense in which we not only feel called to continue offering the kind of ministry that has enriched the lives of many for almost 160 years now, but also think of new possibilities, new approaches and redevelop our ministry to best serve the needs of today and that of the future.

As everybody knows, we have been on an extraordinary journey over these past couple of years – to turn our beloved parish around and to live into the Vision that, as a community, we discerned together. For over two years, many members took advantage of the invitation to gather for conversation, prayer and study in an effort to best determine not only where we, as the parish of St. John’s stand, but also who we know ourselves to be about now, as well as what, where and how we feel God is calling us in the years ahead.

In this past year, your leadership of the parish has worked extra hard to best assess and then prayerfully consider where and how God is speaking to this faith community to move ahead. We are not simply trying to run existing programs with ever-stretched resources, we are in many cases trying an entirely different approach. You are what can make this happen – it takes nothing short of a shared commitment from all of us! Your leadership, including Vestry, Finance Team, and staff has affirmed a clear sense of our shared calling, which includes:

- A Calling to Pursue and Fully Live Into our Vision
- A Calling to Live Into our Identity and Purpose with the Challenges of Smaller Resources
- A Calling to Explore New Ways of Being St. John’s
- A Calling to Develop New Means to Be St. John’s

To Pursue and Fully Live Into Our Vision

From our Vision Process we have been able to articulate who we know ourselves to be and what we are about in terms of our purpose to care, share, worship, celebrate and love. The number one priority to emerge from this vision is the challenge to be a place of hospitality and welcome, particularly with accessibility. It is clear now as it was then that we all feel extremely blessed to be entrusted with the beautiful and historic buildings and grounds as our parish is; how to enable people to fully utilize and be included in our mission and ministry became the prime directive for us. Feasibility studies and options as to the best approach birthed the idea that we presented last year. And then...the market crashed and the economy has brought us to where we are today! Once again, life took another turn, but the mission and our vision have remained clear – to be accessible and welcoming for all God’s people, including those with physical limitations. Since our cottage meetings last year, we have also undertaken additional conversations and assessments from various professionals as to the best approach, while at the same time, attend to the challenges of our ongoing operations today. As a result, there were some small steps we were able to take, such as replacing the chairlift in the Community Room. We are confident the best way to turn our vision and top priority of accessibility into reality has been identified, and the time is upon us to give the parish the opportunity to make this happen beginning this year.

To Live Into Our Identity and Purpose with the Challenges of Smaller Resources

St. John’s is not immune from the challenges that have come along with recent market fluctuations and overall decreasing population in and around Saginaw. Two years ago, we faced a projected budget deficit of \$160,000;

now in 2010, that deficit is down to around \$49,000. As you have experienced yourself, we have made tremendous progress towards eliminating our recurrent operating deficit, while at the same time continuing to reach out in more ways. These next two years are critical!

To Explore New Ways of Being St. John's

While our resources have changed, our mission still remains the same. We still understand our core purpose as being a faith community called to care, share, worship, celebrate and love – it's just that how we live into this is changing. We are more united now than we have been in years! One of the ways this is clearly seen is in how we share our time and talent. Almost all of us have discovered or rediscovered the incredible gift and satisfaction that comes with direct involvement, with volunteering and sharing new ideas as well as collective wisdom and experience. Beginning with the Vision Process itself, we have explored new approaches, rediscovered valued traditions and established new practices. Now we are embarking on an even bolder path.

To Develop New Means to Be St. John's

As you may have heard from our recent Cottage Meetings this past fall, we are making great strides not only in planning and controlling expenses, but now with increasing revenue.

We have become quite effective in realizing that stewardship involves time, talent as well as treasure. Now, specifically with regard to financial resources, we need everyone to consider how to support our mission in at least three ways:

- Ongoing Annual Giving – pledge income that affects our annual budget.
- Extraordinary Need Gifts – a special gift that is offered for a specific capital need (once every ten years)
- A Planned Gift – to be realized in the future by bequest and/or investment

It is this latter aspect of financial support that from our conversations this fall, garnered the most interest, as it can include in some situations income benefits for you as a donor right away. Most people simply considered “planned giving” to be about a bequest made as part of a will. While that has certainly been and continues to be a great way to remember the Church, there are ways for you to make a significant contribution now and that will continue to benefit our mission in the years ahead.

At our recent Cottage Meetings we shared the great news that your leadership has now taken steps to create a way for any and all of us to make difference and contribute to the needs of our mission well into the future by developing a new Legacy Endowment Fund. By adopting a traditional endowment approach, this new fund would be protected, with only the growth helping to support new and existing ministry. Alongside our existing unrestricted portfolio, this new protected fund would help support four key areas of our parish life:

- Christian education,
- Building & grounds,
- Church music, as well as
- Worship & ministry.

The Legacy Endowment Fund is but one of the new means by which we each can share from what God has blessed us with in order live into our vision and realize our calling for future generations to come. This year come be an active part of this exciting time and help us take the ministry we share “Outside the Box” and continue to live into our Vision!