

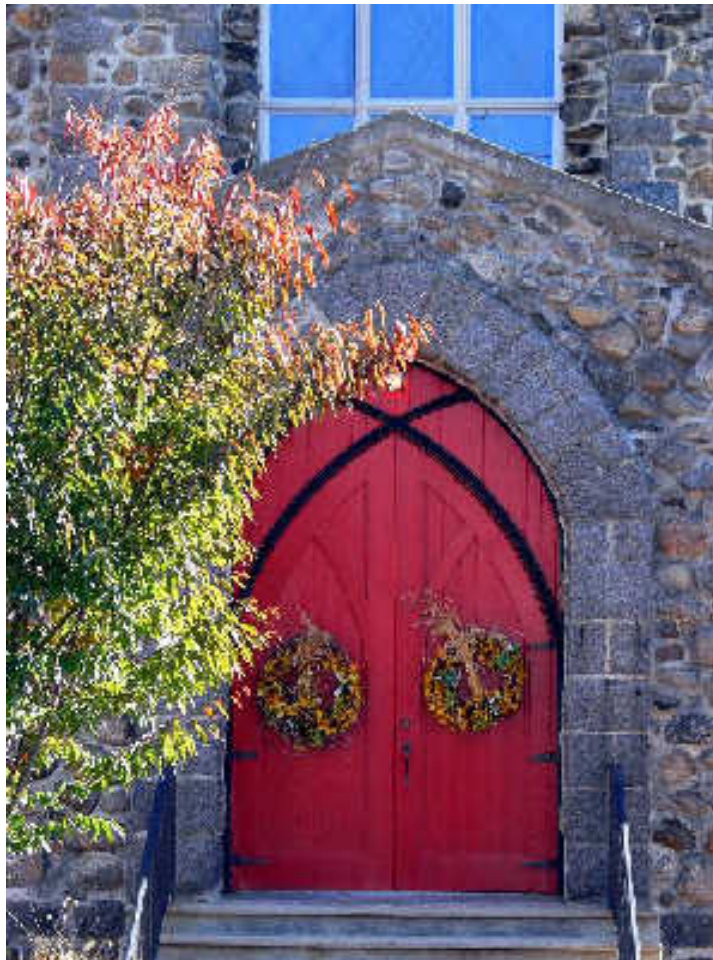
Saint James Episcopal Church

Celebrating 150 Years of Service to the Community

Strategic Plan - 2009

St. James Mission Statement:

St. James is a strong and loving community that welcomes, encourages and empowers all to grow in Christ and to do God's work in the world.



Introduction

The Strategic Planning Team presents this 2009 Strategic Plan to our Priest-in-Charge, the Vestry and the congregation of St. James Episcopal Church.

The genesis of the plan was the realization that much has changed in the recent past at our church. We transitioned from a rector with long term tenure to a Priest-in-Charge who made a three year commitment to St. James. We prepare now for another transition as we embark on a discernment process to call a permanent rector.

St. James has a rich history and tradition of strong lay leadership. It was important that we continued this tradition when we formulated our plan for the future. We started with an Appreciative Inquiry (AI) activity which was moderated by diocesan consultant, The Rev. Cynthia Hubbard, in early 2008. Approximately 85 parishioners participated in this process. Broad themes drawn from the AI process were developed into a mission statement and eight vision statements. In the fall of 2008 a visioning session was conducted. Again, this was supported by scores of parishioners who contributed literally hundreds of thoughts about 1) what St. James was doing well in support of our mission and vision, and 2) what we could do better to achieve our vision. The content of the plan is drawn largely from the AI and visioning sessions.

The goals in this plan are broken down into five sections, many parts of which overlap or reinforce one another:

- Internal Community
- Outreach
- Spiritual Growth
- Congregational Growth
- Resources

Call for Action: Within the plan, various groups/teams/committees have been designated for implementation, details, and timelines to achieve the goals in each of the five sections. The Strategic Planning Team recommends that the Vestry be the manager/overseer of the plan.

Further, this plan must be viewed as a living, breathing document that recognizes that the church has changed significantly, even in the year since the start of this process. The Strategic Planning Team recommends that an appreciative inquiry study occur on a regular basis, with an established feedback loop that allows input and reflection from church members. We hope that the Vestry will continue this self study/goal planning on an ongoing basis, and commit to reviewing the plan every few years so the church can continue growing in a direction that meets our members' needs.

We, the individuals on the team, would like to express our thanks and gratitude to each and every member of the congregation for their invaluable and continuous support during this past year; and we look forward to continuing this dialogue and journey with the church.

Vision Statements

1. Being part of an extended family with “brothers and sisters” who care about you.
2. Participating in the life of a community where your concerns make a difference.
3. Discovering companions with whom you can work to help bring to the world a greater measure of social, economic, and environmental justice.
4. Increasing your capacity for open and honest relationships with other people.
5. Approaching God directly, while growing and learning through traditional and alternative worship and prayer.
6. Having the place to celebrate the joys of birth, marriage, family and success as well as to find support in the sorrows of death, divorce, and failure.
7. Finding your roots in the rituals and traditions of an Episcopalian-Anglican faith with a rich history.
8. Growing in awareness of your personal values and your potential as a human being.

Goal – Internal Community

Objective	1 – 2 Years	5 Years
1. Strengthen parishioners' feelings of identification with parish ("This is my church", "I belong here")	<p>1a. Enhance parish newsletter. Responsibility: volunteers</p> <p>1b. Support pastoral events celebrating life events: baptism, confirmation, graduation, birthdays/anniversaries, funerals. Responsibility: clergy to officiate, parishioners to participate/support events</p>	<p>1a. Display parish newsletter on website. Responsibility: volunteers.</p> <p>1b. Continue and grow pastoral events celebrating life events. Responsibility: clergy/parishioners</p>
2. Strengthen existing relationships between parishioners and create new relationships	<p>2a. Create ways to strengthen coffee hours and support hosts. Responsibility: volunteers</p> <p>2b. Establish and expand whole-parish opportunities to congregate outside of Sunday worship (Parish picnic, parish suppers, parish field trips). Responsibility: Vestry and volunteers.</p> <p>2c. Encourage Dinner and Movie participation. Responsibility: volunteers and youth group.</p> <p>2d. Create ways for parishioners to gather in small groups, especially in private homes (e.g., dinner club, home-based Eucharist). Responsibility: volunteers, clergy to officiate.</p>	<p>2. Evaluate desire for once a month parish gatherings outside of the church. Responsibility: Vestry</p>
3. Encourage opportunities for mutual support (both spiritual and personal)	<p>3a. Increase participation in Men's Group. Responsibility: volunteers.</p> <p>3b. Increase participation in and define mission of St. Elizabeth's Guild. Responsibility: volunteers.</p> <p>3c. Promote Centering Prayer. Responsibility: Worship Committee and volunteers.</p> <p>3d. Support choir; explore possibility of new music programs. Responsibility: music director, Vestry, volunteers.</p> <p>3e. Explore ways to support spiritual growth. Responsibility: Worship Committee and Vestry</p> <p>3f. Assess need for "single seniors" group that meets regularly, and lay grief-support program. Responsibility: Vestry to assess need, volunteers to organize groups.</p> <p>3g. Evaluate interest in informal support forums for young mothers/parents. Responsibility: Vestry to assess need, volunteers to organize</p>	<p>3. Evaluate existing groups and start new ones if appropriate. Responsibility: Vestry</p>

Those responsible for implementing the Internal Community Goals are identified next to the individual objectives in the above table.

Goal – Outreach

Objective	1 – 2 Years	5 Years
<p>Local Outreach</p> <p>1. Enhance St. James' involvement and visibility with current St. James' partnerships with Our Neighbors' Table and Pettengill House, Jeannie Geiger</p> <p>2. Provide dedicated outreach services/ministries to at least one other community target program or population</p> <p>3. Develop summer outreach program for parish youth</p> <p>4. Partner with deanery churches for outreach work in Greater Boston area</p> <p>5. Enable support groups in community to use church building for meetings</p>	<p>1a. Ongoing assessment of each community partner's needs (St. Elizabeth's Guild and Outreach Committee)</p> <p>1b. Continue, adapt or expand outreach projects/ministries according to needs (Outreach Committee)</p> <p>2a. Assess community needs for youth, domestic violence, elder care etc. (outreach committee)</p> <p>2b. Survey skill sets and desires of congregation (outreach committee)</p> <p>2c. Evaluate role of LEV's re: ministry/visitation to sick/lonely</p> <p>3a. Explore needs/niche in Amesbury and greater community (Youth group/Outreach committee)</p> <p>3b. Explore participation in diocesan sponsored summer programs (i.e. B-Safe)</p> <p>4a. Insure consistent participation in deanery meetings by St. James representatives (Vestry)</p> <p>4b. Collaborate in at least one outreach activity with another church per year (deanery reps, Outreach committee)</p> <p>5a. Continue relationship with 11th Step Co-Ed Meeting</p> <p>5b. Explore other support group needs (i.e. grief, both within parish and in community) (Vestry, Outreach Committee)</p>	<p>1a. Conduct parish survey re: feedback and review of past outreach programs and future wishes</p> <p>2a. Community assessment of people in need</p> <p>2b. Discernment of strengths and gifts of parish members</p> <p>3. Explore needs and feasibility of sponsorship of off-site pre-school or "late afternoon free-time" program for Amesbury teens</p> <p>1-5. Any parishioner, when asked, can identify church missions and outreach programs</p>
<p>National/International Outreach</p> <p>1. Create an ongoing program of national/international mission with humanitarian aid and environmental focuses</p> <p>2. Support diocesan YLA, DYC, and other youth programs</p>	<p>1a. Evaluate desires and passions of congregation, areas of need, financial resources, existing diocesan outreach programs (Outreach committee)</p> <p>1b. For each event, set guidelines/parameters for participation: youth, individual, families...(vestry, Outreach committee)</p> <p>1c. Partner with deanery or other churches</p> <p>1d. Explore possibility of sister-church relationship</p> <p>2a. Encourage participation in programs/support fundraising efforts</p>	<p>1. Evaluate past mission trips and outreach endeavors; re-establish priorities and goals</p> <p>2. Explore parish sponsored pilgrimage to Europe</p>

Those responsible for implementing the Outreach Goals are identified next to the individual objectives in the above table.

Goal – Spiritual Growth

Objective	1 – 2 Years	5 Years
<p>Adults</p> <p>1. Survey parishioners about spiritual topics they would like to hear about or explore.</p> <p>2. Explore ways for parishioners to discuss and respond to sermons.</p> <p>3. Foster small group opportunities for sharing re spiritual topics.</p> <p>4. Promote attendance at spiritual events outside the local community.</p>	<p>1. Parish survey completed and shared with clergy, vestry, and parishioners. Survey results inform topics for sermons, discussions, small group events, etc. (Examples of possible topics: exploring Episcopal traditions; Bible study; etc.)</p> <p>2. Worship Committee (or other group) and clergy explore and implement ways to encourage discussion and response.</p> <p>3a. Support existing groups with a spiritual focus, e.g., Men's Group, Centering Prayer, Choir, etc.</p> <p>3b. Investigate what other parishes have done to foster small group engagement.</p> <p>3c. Plan and establish additional small group events and activities.</p> <p>4. Establish a system for identifying and promoting relevant events.</p>	<p>1. Survey updated</p> <p>2. Reevaluate</p> <p>3. Evaluate and renew planning for small group activity.</p> <p>4. Evaluate and revise plan as needed.</p>
<p>Youth</p> <p>1. Continue and expand support for Godly Play.</p> <p>2. Encourage involvement of church school children in worship.</p> <p>3. Support and expand confirmation program.</p> <p>4. Encourage family participation at Barbara C. Harris camp.</p> <p>5. Support and expand programs for teens.</p>	<p>1a. Explore and establish more opportunities for children to share what they do in Godly Play with adults.</p> <p>1b. Make sure Godly Play is adequately supported in the parish budget.</p> <p>2. Worship Committee, Church School staff, and clergy discuss and implement.</p> <p>3a. Involve recent confirmands in discussing and planning ways to reach out to new potential confirmands.</p> <p>3b. Ensure that the parish budget includes adequate funding for camperships and other program support.</p> <p>4. Publicize and promote camp opportunities.</p> <p>5a. Support and expand Dinner and Movie nights with a focus on youth involvement.</p> <p>5b. Identify and/or establish opportunities for youth to participate in service projects in the local area, elsewhere in the US, or internationally.</p>	<p>1-5. Reevaluate and revise plans/ programs as needed.</p>

Responsibility for implementing the Spiritual Growth Goals rests with the Worship Committee.

Goal – Congregational Growth

Objective	1 – 2 Years	5 Years
<p>Increase Membership by 5% a year for the next 5 years</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop comprehensive Membership Committee 2. Develop an Evangelism Marketing Plan for the church 2a. Commission a research study to identify ways to attract and integrate newcomers. Which may include a market research study and a poll of the perception of the church by the community 2b. Work to establish a budget for Marketing 3. Retain 1/3 of all new visitors 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Have a member of the membership committee attend membership seminars 2. Develop an "Inquirers Class" to present to groups within the surrounding communities 3. Create a sub committee specifically for the development and activities for retirement age persons
<p>Establish practices that will increase visitors interest in becoming members</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Work with the Buildings and Grounds group to make sure the exterior of Saint James has a good presentation "drawing people in vs. reaching out" 2. Explore ways to allow youths in the Amesbury area to consider membership 3. Create an "Invite Family and Friends" service 	
<p>Improve the way the Fellowship welcomes and integrates potential members</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Create a welcoming committee that focuses on new members <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1a. Expand Sunday morning greeters' tasks 1c. Develop a mentoring program for new visitors 2. Update/Create a newcomer welcoming packet (send within the first 2 weeks of visit and follow up with a phone call) 3. Develop a brief questionnaire for first time visitors 4. Create a Welcome Dinner 5. Place Episcopal signs throughout the community 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Create a newcomers link on the Saint James website 2. Develop pre-marital classes 3. Create a photo directory on the website

<p>Strive to keep our members involved through attendance at Sunday services and through participation in activities and/or committees</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increase the number of small groups in the church 2. Develop a strategy to increase the regularity of the "Christmas and Easter folks" 3. Continue to increase programs for children and families 4. Create a group that will call members without e-mail access and remind them of upcoming events 	
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The Vestry will appoint members to the Membership Committee who then will be charged with implementing the Congregational Growth Goals.

Goal – Resources

Objective	1 – 2 Years	5 Years
<p>Stewardship</p> <p>1. Ensure complete transparency with respect to the finances of the church</p> <p>2. Launch an educational campaign discussing the importance of stewardship</p> <p>3. Develop stewardship goal to support parish "wish list", including a "stretch target."</p> <p>4. Insure that stewardship growth tracks to growth of the parish population</p> <p>5. Plan for long term viability of the parish</p>	<p>1a. Put together a Communication Plan to keep the congregation informed</p> <p>1b. Provide a semi-annual report for the parish</p> <p>2a. Reach out to the Diocese for support, literature</p> <p>2b. Conduct educational program. Include results from pro-forma staffing plan. The message is, "We want to do, and will do, what the parish wants us to do, subject to availability of funds." (prior to stewardship campaign)</p> <p>3. Include a stewardship "thermometer" inside the church to measure progress towards goal, and stretch goal (perhaps 2 thermometers; one for # of pledges, one for \$)</p> <p>4. Refer to parish growth plans.</p>	<p>1. Develop an "Endowment Plan"</p>
<p>Buildings & Grounds</p> <p>1. Ensure that entire church property meets safety standards</p> <p>2. Make certain that the condition of the physical plant stays maintained and "up to snuff"</p> <p>3. Embark upon a capital improvement program</p> <p>4. Incorporate "green" thinking into all buildings & grounds projects</p>	<p>1a. Conduct a thorough safety audit</p> <p>1b. Implement corrective actions to address deficiencies</p> <p>2a. Insure that the annual budget adequately funds facility maintenance activities (annually)</p> <p>2b. Inspect all major systems (roof, heat, windows, etc.) to determine if any need to be addressed in the Capital Plan</p> <p>3. Develop a Capital Improvement Plan, with specific goals (e.g. parking lot improvement, accessibility improvement, etc.) and rough cost estimates</p> <p>4. Appoint a "green" steward who will be consulted in the planning of all maintenance and capital improvement projects</p>	<p>1. Repeat safety audit</p> <p>2. Inspect all major systems to determine if any need to be addressed in the Capital Plan update</p> <p>3a. Kick-off a 2 year capital campaign, separate from stewardship fund raising, to raise capital for improvements</p> <p>3b. Based on parish priorities and results of capital campaign, implement improvements</p> <p>3c. Update Capital Improvement Plan based on accomplishments and additional needs</p>

<p>Staffing</p> <p>1. Ensure that the church is staffed adequately to meet the needs of the congregation</p>	<p>1a. Construct a pro-forma staffing plan, for informational purposes, to include the cost of existing staff, and the cost of adding additional, paid personnel. Desired additions include expanding priest to three quarter time or full time, funding a deacon, and adding administrative support</p> <p>1b. Investigate need for additional staff support for youth music and administration</p> <p>1c. Brief pro-forma plan to stewardship committee and congregation. Is there the wherewithal to implement some of the plan?</p>	<p>1. Repeat the staffing plan exercise. Has anything changed? Do we have more resources now than previously?</p>
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Responsibility for implementing the Resource Goals rests with the Stewardship Committee, the Buildings & Grounds Team, the Treasurer and the Vestry.

Appendix 1

Episcopalians were worshipping in Amesbury as early as 1711. Congregations gathered in members' homes; worship was led by laymen or clergy borrowed from other parishes. The First Episcopal Church was built around 1745 in what is now known as Union Cemetery.

Around 1760, King George III's Chapel, part of the Church of England, was built in the Pond Hill section of town – which at that time was the center of Amesbury. Services were held there through the early years of the Revolutionary War. However, in 1778, the Rev. Moses Badger of Haverhill conducted a service which included prayers for King George III. Town authorities closed the Chapel and the parish disbanded. The Chapel blew down in 1810. There is no record of an active Episcopal Society in Amesbury until after 1825.

In 1827, St. James Episcopal Church was first organized in the Mills section of Amesbury. St. James received its Charter on October 8, 1833. Services were held first in Franklin Hall, located in Market Square at the site of the current Associates Building, and then in the Vestry Building of the Calvinist Baptist Society on Market Street. The Vestry Building was purchased and moved to the present Main Street site in 1835. It was consecrated on October 22, 1836 by the Rt. Rev. Alexander Griswold, Bishop of the Eastern Diocese.

By 1845, the parish had outgrown this building, and the first Building Fund Committee was established to procure funds for a new, larger Church. Within a year, the new church was built, and it was consecrated on November 5, 1846. The original building was sold to the Universalist Society for \$24.50 and moved to Friend Street. The new church building cost \$5,415.79.

On March 18, 1899, a fire started at the Opera House, directly across the street from St. James. Much of downtown Amesbury was left in ruins, including St. James Church. The parish resolved to build a new and larger Church. The current building was consecrated on May 7, 1903.

The building was damaged in another fire on April 30, 2001. Services were held at the Seventh Day Adventist Church on Main Street until Christmas of that year, while repairs were made.

The Team gratefully acknowledges the contributions of Edith Poor and Linda Davis Siess, in the preparation of this history.

Appendix 2

The members of the Strategic Planning Team, who met over a dozen times to synthesize hundreds of inputs from the AI and Visioning activities into this document, are listed below:

Jim Chapman

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