

The Vision of The Church of the Holy Comforter



Presented by The Visioning Commission

4/25/2010

Our Vision

As members of the Body of Christ, we are empowered by the Holy Spirit to carry out Our Lord's call to love God, love our neighbors, and share the Gospel through worship, prayer, mission, and the building of deep and lasting relationships in our community and the world.

Introduction

A vision is a way of seeing who we are and what we want to become. It is a sense of mission and purpose that is oriented towards the future. Great individuals and organizations know who they are and they know where they are going. The Church is no different in that respect. What sets the Church apart is not in having a vision but in that vision's source. The vision of the Church must always be a vision that comes to us through the calling of God. Our vision in the Church, if it is true, will always lead us away from pre-occupation with ourselves and towards faith in Jesus Christ, Our Lord and Savior.

The Church of the Holy Comforter has existed for 143 years, and during that time God has given us many opportunities to discern His calling in different ways. In 2007 and 2008, during the process of calling the fifteenth Rector of the parish, the Search Committee sensed that the time had come for a renewing of vision. That process was initiated by The Rev. Jonathan A. Mitchican and the Vestry of the parish upon the former's arrival as Rector in the fall of 2008. The Vestry authorized the formation of a Visioning Commission that would lead the parish through the process of discerning God's vision for us in the years to come. We, the members of that commission, now present to the parish this document as the fruit of that process. We ask the members of the parish to carefully and prayerfully consider this vision and to seek confirmation from God as to whether it is the path that He would have us walk.

Process

The mandate given to the Commission by the Vestry was not simply for the Commission to discern God's call in isolation but rather to engage the parish in an ongoing discernment that would be rooted in Holy Scripture, the Anglican tradition, the history of the parish, and the needs of the community.

The Commission determined to move from the macro to the micro level, starting by asking ourselves questions about the very nature of the Church and then narrowing down to the specific context of Holy Comforter. The Commission spent many months studying the bible and being guided towards an understanding of what the Church is, what she does, and how she does it. We spent time reflecting on what it means to be Anglican Christians, making use of the newly developed Anglican Communion Covenant as our guide. We gathered a great deal of information from the two histories of the parish that have been done in the last forty years, as well as from the parish profile that was completed in 2007. We also read literature on church vision and church growth, studied community demographics, and spent an increasing amount of time in prayer, listening for the leading of the Holy Spirit.

Additionally, the Commission spent a good deal of time seeking to engage the whole parish community in the visioning process, and that has been incredibly helpful in informing our work. There have been multiple articles in *The Comforter* on visioning. Throughout the Easter season in 2009, the parish was engaged in bible study about the nature of the Church, through a seven part sermon series on the subject and through multiple adult forums and evening meetings that were open to the whole parish. Visioning presentations were made to the Women's Group and the youth group and feedback was sought from both. A timeline for the first hundred years of the

parish was developed with the aid of The Rev. Christine Ritter. The adult forum series “Reimagining the parish” this past fall gave parishioners an opportunity to answer questions about their hopes, dreams, and fears. Our most recent “Anglicanism 101” class also spent time discussing how our Anglican heritage can and should inform our parish vision. Members of the parish have also been praying for the visioning process throughout its life, both in the prayers of the people on Sunday mornings and in their own private devotions. Insights and grace gathered from all of these sources have been invaluable to this project.

History

While a vision must be forward-looking, we would not be who we are if not for the courage and dedication of the many loving and faithful followers of Jesus who have been a part of this parish over the years. The timeline project, as well as the parish histories, reveal a parish with a long tradition of dedication to Christian formation, wonderful music, beautiful worship, and deep care for the community and the world. We have endeavored to seek a vision that would build on the legacy of the past and incorporate in these fine qualities.

We note with particular joy the fine leadership that has been exercised in this parish over the years by its priests, particularly the two most recent Rectors, The Rev. Christopher Moore and the Reverend William R. McKean, Jr. This parish is strong and faithful in no small part thanks to their loving service.

We note also the many contributions of faithful women over the years. Our parish was born out of the desire of the older girls in the Sunday School at Church of the Savior to bring Christian education to the many children living “out in the country.”¹ Since that time, women have kept this parish going through the leading of a variety of ministries, including music, Christian formation, the Altar Guild, the many charitable endeavors of the parish, and through prayer. We wish to bless and honor the faith of these women, even as the women in our own day continue to be vibrant church leaders at all levels.

The 1977 history of the parish identified us as “a family parish, a singing parish, a concerned parish, a growing parish, a working parish, and a praying parish.”² We believe the vision that God is giving us now reflects those same sentiments; that God is calling us to continue to witness to these things and to strengthen our resolve in those areas where we may have become lax. So too, we echo the sentiment of the parish profile, that “The Church of the Holy Comforter—a part of Christ’s Body in suburban Philadelphia—is a friendly, committed, and caring group of parishioners.”³ We hope and pray that the vision we present will help us to grow into these ideals.

Purpose

The purpose of the vision is to give us a commonly held dream of who we hope to become. It is meant to be a statement of our understanding of where God is leading us. The vision is not this document itself but the leading of God towards which the document points. The vision document and the vision statement are meant to be signposts that will help to keep us on the path that God has set for us as we go about engaging in ministry and organizing our common life together. As

we live into this vision, we'll need to reflect back upon it often and to ask ourselves at every turn whether what we're doing is in keeping with what we've discerned to be God's calling for us. It's for this reason that the Commission has tried to make its recommendations concrete enough that we can hold each other accountable.

Reception

We offer this visioning document to the parish on the fourth Sunday of Easter in the year of Our Lord, 2010, in the hopes that the parish will receive it. We hope and pray that it reflects where God is leading all of our hearts. We look forward to hearing from everyone in the parish as we prayerfully listen for the voice of God that warms our hearts and calls us to love, faith, and hope.

The Visioning Commission⁴

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¹ From the 1977 history, Church of the Holy Comforter: An Historical Record, page 12.

² *Ibid.*, page 60.

³ 2007 Parish profile, page 1.

⁴ David Hunter was unable to be with the Commission all the way through, but we are grateful for his participation and his insights during the first six months of the Commission's work.

Part I: Why does the Church Exist ?

Jesus Christ established the Church. He did not found or establish a religion or denomination. He did not start a club or a civic organization or a company. He established *the Church*. What does that mean? What is the Church?

The Church is Unified Amidst Diversity

The word “church” originally just meant gathering. The Bible teaches us that the Church is diverse, in that she is spread throughout the world and throughout time, but that she is also unified in calling on Jesus as Lord (1 Corinthians 1:1-3). There are many churches in many places that have different contexts, speak different languages, and do different things, and yet there is only one Church that Jesus established, the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church that we affirm in the Nicene Creed.

The Church is the Body of Christ

The Church is organic and alive. She is Christ’s Body, His continuing presence in the world (Romans 12:3-8, 1 Corinthians 12:4-31, Ephesians 1:22-23, Ephesians 4:1-16, and Colossians 1:17-28). She is dynamic in her sense of purpose and her ability to withstand change over time. The apostles and their successors the bishops organically connect the Church geographically and historically through the Apostolic Succession (Matthew 18:15-20, Acts 6:1-7, Acts 13:1-3, Acts 15:1-22, and Acts 20:28). Through our communion with our bishop, we have communion with the apostles, who received the Holy Spirit from Jesus Christ by his breath (John 20:19-23). The Church is filled with the Spirit of Christ and carries out the ministry of Christ. But we who are within the Church can only claim to be the Church when we act as Jesus would act.

Jesus is the vine, we (the Church) are the branches

In John 15, the Bible tells us much about the relationship between the Church and Jesus. In referencing vines, bear in mind that vines grow up and the branches grow out. Our sustenance as churches comes from staying connected to Jesus as the main vine feeds its reaching branches. Further, the passage references the Father as the vine dresser. The vine dresser sets the path, the overall direction, but a healthy vine will spread its branches and bear fruit. As the vines bear fruit, churches must also bear fruit. Examples of bearing fruit could include the Church growing numerically, but it will certainly include the Church growing in faith.

The Church as the Bride of Christ

In Ephesians 5:21-33, we learn that the Church relates to Jesus in the same way that a bride relates to her husband, that marriage is in fact a sign of the relationship between Christ and the Church. It is for this reason that it is proper to refer to the Church as “she.” Like a bride and groom, the bond between Jesus and the Church is forever and it is constant. The Church and Jesus are united as “one flesh.” Jesus provides for His Church. The Church serves Jesus who gives Himself for the Church. The Church submits to Him because He is perfect. He loves the Church; putting our well-being above even His own.

The Church is the Community of Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit first comes to us through our Baptism (John 1:33 and 1 Peter 3:21). The Holy Spirit is the breath of life in the Church, and He gives particular gifts and callings to particular people (1 Corinthians 2:12, 1 Corinthians 12:1-9, and Hebrews 2:4). Without the aid of the Holy Spirit, we cannot do what Jesus charges us to do. He is our advocate, making it possible to do “greater things than these” (John 14:12-17). In apostolic times, the followers of Jesus were moved by the Holy Spirit to sell their possessions and distribute evenly amongst themselves. They worshipped together through the Eucharist and the Lord rewarded by adding to their number (Acts 4:32-35). If we are in Christ’s Body, then we have the Holy Spirit within us, and we need nothing else.

The Church is the Community of Witness

The Church is built upon the “rock of faith,” with believers holding a common understanding of who Jesus is –the son of God (Matthew 16:13-20). Faith comes from God the Father who reveals the truth. The Church has authority to act based on the Spirit being alive in the Church, but she also has the responsibility to teach all people in His name and lead by example (Matthew 28:16-20 and Ephesians 3:8-10). The Church must encourage holiness through the upholding of Holy Tradition, including liturgy, teaching, councils and creeds (2 Thessalonians 2:16 and 3:6). As a Community of Witness, the Church must create or plant new churches (Luke 24:36b-48).

Why did Jesus establish the Church?

Jesus founded the Church out of the love of the Father for all people forever after. The Church is the place in which people come to know Jesus Christ, and in which His ministry of reconciling love continues throughout time. The Church serves Christ and His people in the following ways:

- The Church exists to spread the gospel and nurture the faithful. For those who know Christ, the Church reinforces their faith. For those who do not, the Church shares the Good News of the reconciling power of the love of God with everyone.
- The Church exists to worship God . The Church provides a physical and spiritual location in which we can worship together in spirit and in truth (John 4:23-24). All of the people of God are called to come together in worship, and when one person is absent the whole body suffers (Hebrews 10:24-25).
- The Church is the organic, living body into and with which we become one with Christ.
- The Church exists to be the organizing force to continue to do the work of Jesus in today’s world. It organically and dynamically links the work and teaching of Christ to carry them out in our world.

Part II: What is God Calling Holy Comforter to Be?

We are called to be the Church in Drexel Hill. As members of Christ's church, we, at Holy Comforter, must truly be **Ambassadors for Christ** (2 Corinthians 5:16-21). If God is love and the Church exists to serve God, then we must first be loving (1 John 4:7-21). We are the branches, reaching out from Christ's Church bringing the Holy Spirit, the truth and the light out into the community in an **authentic, honest** and **prayerful** manner. We are Anglican Christians living out our journey with Christ in the midst of The Episcopal Church, and we sense that we are called to fully embrace our Anglican identity and heritage, which primarily means that we embrace the ethos of the early Church and the great and Holy Tradition that we've received. As inheritors of Holy Tradition, we must lead by example to be instruments and servants of God. We are the caregivers and caretakers of Christ's Church and all of her people –caring for both members of Holy Comforter Parish and extending our philosophy of love and service out into the larger community. We are called to be **sacrificial**, especially in our approach to evangelism and mission, giving of ourselves in a way that puts our hearts at risk, trusting fully in God for our direction and our sustenance. **All** are God's people, and we as a church must minister to all, prayerfully and passionately; teaching by example that God is Love.

Part III: What is God calling us to *do* as a church?

Our work as a church is the **Great Commandment** and the **Great Commission**. The Great Commandment tells us we are to love God with our whole heart, our whole soul and our whole mind and to love our neighbors as ourselves (Matthew 22:34-40, Luke 10:25-27, Mark 12:28-34, and 1 John 4:20). If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us (Galatians 5:13-15). The Great Commission is Jesus' instruction that we are to "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you" (Matthew 28:19-20). We believe we are being called to carry out the Great Commandment and the Great Commission in the following ways:

1) Bring the true message of the Gospel to those who don't know it

Our focus should be on the community around us as this is where God has planted us. We are particularly aware of a growing population of young married couples with children in Drexel Hill, as well as a smaller but also growing number of immigrants and same sex couples.¹ Many of the people in this demographic are looking for "spirituality" but don't trust "organized religion."² This group likely includes a significant number of lapsed Roman Catholics.³ Matthew 5:16 states "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven." With this in mind we need to lead by example and try to change the ever growing skepticism regarding the Church that exists among otherwise faithful people because as James 2:17 states "Faith without works is dead."

2) Engage in mission globally and locally

We are called to build relationships within our parish, our neighborhood, our diocese, and across the provinces of the Anglican Communion. We are called to heal, to meet people's needs, to love them. We are commanded to feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked, welcome the stranger and minister to the sick and imprisoned. Our service to God is directly reflected by our service, or lack thereof, to others (Matthew 10:42, Matthew 25:31-46). As a parish within the Anglican Communion, our mission priorities should reflect those of the Communion which include evangelism, encouraging of repentance, teaching, baptizing, nurturing people to maturity in faith, responding to human need by loving service, standing up to injustice and protecting creation.⁴ As a parish we should be focusing on mission both globally and locally through outreach and by building community. We should be reaching out to the elderly, the poor, the sick, the hungry, immigrants, children and youth. We need to become a place that builds community in Drexel Hill. Jesus came to serve particular people in particular places, and the lack of a strong sense of community in our area makes the work of sharing the Gospel with the community very difficult. God Himself models for us a sense of what it means to be in community, in His very nature as three persons in eternal communion within the Holy Trinity.⁵ Holy Comforter is in a great physical location for building community, and the property itself affords us the ability to host community events. We do need to remember that community events need to be Christ centered and not drift away from our purpose as a Church.

Additionally, we should be entering into partnership with local organizations and with global mission partners who can help us to recognize needs and to address them. On the global level, our partnership with Living Water International may produce fruit in this regard. Locally, we may want to go into the community and ask the people around us what we can do to serve them. We should know the people who live around us, what their hopes and fears are and what their relationship is like with the Lord. We believe that service and the intentional building of relationships will yield opportunities for evangelism more surely than the passing out of pamphlets and a “hard sell.”

At the same time we also feel the need to build a stronger sense of community among ourselves within the existing congregation. We already do a good job of this by bringing communion to shut ins as well as bringing meals and other necessities of life and simply visiting those who are unable to leave their homes to enjoy fellowship at the church, but there’s always more we could be doing. We should give attention to members who have been absent for a long period of time.

3. Pray

We feel a need to strengthen our own faith/ the faith of the existing parish through worship, prayer and study. **We need to pray more intentionally, individually and communally.** We are called to devote ourselves to prayer and the ministry of the word (Acts 6:1-7) We need to open our hearts and minds to God’s plan for us as individuals, as a parish, and as part of the larger Church. We feel a sense that God is calling us to provide a healing prayer ministry at Holy Comforter.

4. Offer worship to God that is eucharistically centered

We are to worship God in spirit and in truth (John 4:23-24) which we interpret as worshipping with every breath, all the time, with our whole being, without hiding, sincerely, in Christ, within the body of Christ. We need to worship as a community, because when one member is absent the whole body suffers. The Eucharist gives us the centering and the grace to carry out our mission and we need to emphasize and teach the importance of the Eucharist. It is not only our central act of worship but the source from which we receive the grace to do any of the other things that we’ve mentioned (John 6).

5. Welcome strangers

We need to make visitors and strangers feel at home by offering hospitality which is literally defined as “empowering the stranger.” Generally speaking, we need to be more welcoming to visitors, acknowledging their presence, showing genuine interest in knowing them better and offering a sincere smile. This will mean opening our hearts and minds and stepping out of our comfort zone at times because God does not call us to be a club with a secret password at the door or a special handshake. As Hebrews 13:2 says, “Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it.”

¹ This is based on census data, as well as information that is available through the Domestic and Foreign Mission Society's Office of Congregational Development found here:
http://www.episcopalchurch.org/growth_60791_ENG_HTM.htm?menupage=50929

² This assertion is based both on our own experience as well as a wealth of resources on the subject, the most helpful of which is Dan Kimball's [They Like Jesus But Not The Church](#).

³ The DFMS statistics reveal an overwhelming number of Roman Catholics in the area, A recent study from Georgetown University shows that only a third of American Catholics attend Mass every week:
<http://cara.georgetown.edu/AttendPR.pdf>

⁴ These mission categories are based on Section 2 of the Anglican Communion Covenant, available here:
<http://www.anglicancommunion.org/commission/covenant/final/text.cfm>

⁵ See the Introduction to the Anglican Communion Covenant for a deeper explanation of how the Trinity models for us what it means to be in communion and therefore what it means to serve a community.

Part IV: How are we to do it?

Since we are called to be the Church in Drexel Hill, which means that we are called to be the Body of Christ in this place and to carry out Christ's work in the world, then our ability to carry out the calling that God gives us is ultimately not dependent on us but on the Holy Spirit who dwells within us (Acts 2 and Acts 8:14-17). Nevertheless, we are called to hold each other accountable to the dream that God has given us for our future (Matthew 18:15-20, Hebrews 13:1-17, and 1 Peter 5:1-5). We believe that we can live into the calling that God has given us to carry out the **Great Commandment** and the **Great Commission** and to hold ourselves accountable to God and to each other in the following ways:

1) **Evangelism**

One of our main responsibilities as Christians, according to the Great Commission, is to share the Gospel (Matthew 9:35-38). In the culture we live in, that can be a tremendous challenge. There are a growing number of people who have no church background, and those who do have a history with the Church have often been hurt by the experience. Additionally, the media portrays an image of who Christians are and what we believe that is often far from accurate. We need to keep these realities in mind as we try to show the outside community what a church really is, instead of all the false ideas being projected by the media. When preaching the Gospel and sharing God's good news with new people we need to ease them into it; we can neither use "fire and brimstone" nor "cultural relativism." We must share the truth about Jesus in a way that is uncompromisingly faithful to the witness of scripture and tradition, yet sensitive to the ways in which false presentations of the Gospel have made it more difficult for modern people to hear about the love that Jesus has for them.

In order to share the good news we need to use every form of communication possible. We need to stay ahead of technology. The use of the web, podcasts, social networking, and any new upcoming communication tool will be important to stay current and vibrant. The use of the public access channel may also ensure that all people in our community can find important information about us.

Our suggestions for ministries with measurable goals are as follows:

- Contacting new members of the community with information and an invitation to connect with us.
- A maintaining and expansion of our bread ministry to visitors and new members.
- Providing opportunities, such as an Alpha course, to introduce non-parishioners to Christianity through clear explications of the Christian faith in a non-threatening manner.
- Connect with people through our non-Sunday events, inviting people in the community to be a part of our mission work and our community based activities, regardless of where they go to church or what they believe.
- Utilizing the internet to share the Gospel and to build community with a diverse audience, and exploring the use of public access television.
- Providing more signs on our property to let the large numbers of people who walk and drive by the church know what is going on.

- Encouraging our membership to be more comfortable with their own faith and providing opportunities for people to learn how to build relationships and to talk about Jesus with their friends and families.

2) **Mission**

Reaching out to people in need is at the heart of the Great Commandment (Matthew 25:31-46). Currently we help by writing checks. We want to be more hands on and personally involved in outreach. We would like to build lasting relationships with the people we help. The community has a yearning for being helpful and doing mission. Inviting non-members to do these activities with us would go a long way towards connecting with them in a non-aggressive manner. Since the Church is both universal and local, both unified and diverse, we should be engaging in mission that connects us with our brothers and sisters in our local community and with our brothers and sisters in other parts of the world.

It is advisable that we choose one or two important ministries, on the global and the local level, to focus our attention upon, so that our resources and our energy can better facilitate these projects. We should spend time in prayer, as a parish, seeking to know where God would have us serve. Additionally, under hospitality below, we suggest how we might engage the community to join us in this discernment.

On the global level, our connection with Living Water International through the Advent Conspiracy Campaign is probably the best place for us to direct our efforts. We should endeavor to use our work with LWI as an opportunity to reach out and make connections with Anglicans in another province of the Anglican Communion. We should seek to partner with a local parish or diocese. The work of such partnership will be worked out in the midst of relationship, but it may include anything from mission trips to pulpit exchanges to ongoing prayer and mutual support. In reaching across the Communion, we may also help to strengthen the Communion and to heal difficult or broken relationships.

On the local level, many things are possible, but some suggested ministries include mentoring kids, running a blood drive, or helping seniors in the area who are without heat. Partnering with organizations that will help us identify need might be a good strategy.

3) **Prayer**

Another part of feeding the spirit is a healthy prayer life. We would like to encourage more engagement, discussion, and Bible Study. We have a current in-home Bible Study, but we would like to expand to meetings in a variety of places, for example coffee shops, bars, the

web, etc. To help people feel more comfortable praying we would like to have a Rector's Forum or class on how to pray. Also, having a Prayer of the Month would be useful for people that do not know exactly what to say while praying. Having a monthly universal prayer would help us to come together as a church. Prayer groups would help people to be able to be truly contemplative, maybe having groups during activities praying for the activity.

Our suggestions for ministries with measurable goals are as follows:

- Teach people *how* to read the Bible – encouraging greater biblical literacy.
- Prayer groups/prayer of the month.
- Conducting Bible studies in various locations at various times for short intervals, topical Bible studies, etc.
- Increasing our healing prayer ministry and living into our name as the “Church of the Holy Comforter.”
- Holding prayer before, during, and after important events in the life of the parish. Having dedicated prayer teams that can pray for us throughout events and in the days leading up to them.
- Teach people how to use the Book of Common Prayer in their home life and personal devotions.
- Make clear that a regular life of prayer is an expectation of membership in this church.

4) **Eucharistic worship**

Our ability to do anything that we are called to do is intimately tied to our corporate worship, particularly in the grace that we receive from the regular and frequent celebration of the Holy Eucharist. Once people have been brought into the life of the Church, there must be some substance that feeds their spirit. Worship is a big part of what does that. We need to experiment with different types of worship while trying to balance a feeling of familiarity and comfort. Music is an important part of our worship, and we look forward to our music ministry adding variety to our worship. One thing that we think would enhance the worship experience is to increase the reverence of the service. When someone walks into our worship for the first time, it should be apparent that God is truly present and that we truly believe it. This doesn't mean that we have to be stuffy or unreasonably formal, but there must be a sense of the sacred communicated by the way that we approach our liturgy, which is our greatest inheritance from our tradition.

Some ideas to increase the faithfulness of our worship:

- Move announcements to another part of the service and decrease the length of the peace; this will help to not interrupt the flow of the service.
- Also, to get parishioners more involved in the service, we should have more reading that require a response instead of just observing.

- We should feel free to experiment with things like service length, services on days other than Sundays, services with different shapes and contours, so long as we remain faithful to the core of the liturgy and to the ethos that is set out in the Book of Common Prayer.
- Encourage small group ministries in which members of the parish walk along side one another in their discipleship. An important piece of this would include small group members paying attention to who is present at worship, who is absent, and holding each other accountable in our prayer lives.
- Preaching and teaching the Gospel with clarity and confidence.
- Preaching and teaching, in as many ways and places as possible, the centrality and importance of the Holy Eucharist for our lives of faith.
- Assigning individuals to supplement the greeters before the service and to speak to visitors after the service. These people would be on the lookout for new people and would help to guide them through the service, answering their questions and helping them navigate through the confusing bits of our liturgy.

5) Hospitality

If hospitality means “empowering the stranger” then our responsibility as hospitable people is not simply to be nice or to make people feel welcome, but to help people to connect with one another and to serve them. As such, we recognize that there is a lack in Drexel Hill of a discernible community. We have no “Main Street” and no long-standing way of connecting with our neighbors. The Visioning Commission feels that we are called, in as much as it is possible, to use our resources to try to build community in Drexel Hill.

The ramifications of this will be good for both the parish and for the community. We think increasing the number of events we hold outside, for example, will increase our viability in the neighborhood and people are more likely to want to come check us out. The goal of building community is not specifically evangelistic in nature, but we nevertheless do so out of a deep conviction that God wants us to reach out to the whole world and that the relationship of perfect community between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit is the kind of community that the Church is called to encourage and model.¹

Our ideas for increasing our hospitality and building community include:

- Encourage parishioners to make friends with people outside of the Church (Christian and non-Christian), and to build relationships.
- We should send some of our parishioners to other churches for a day so they can have the experience of being “new to a church”; this will give us helpful insight.
- Instituting activities that are open to the community, such as a movie night or a concert series, and then being especially intentional about inviting the community. Holding these events outside would be helpful, when possible, so that our action is visible in the community.
- Perhaps our most important suggestion: Go into the community, perhaps door to door, introduce ourselves as “followers of Jesus who calls us to serve others,” and then ask people, “How can we serve *you*?” This should involve lots of listening and very little

pushing on our part. It should be about serving others. This will also help us to know what direction to go in regarding our local mission outreach.

- We should solicit feedback from visitors to worship and follow up with them with questions about what they liked and what they didn't, without pressure about coming back.
- We may wish to sponsor a "Community Day," which could be congruent with or similar to our current annual picnic on Rally Day. There should be a strong effort to invite the community, regardless of whether or not they are members of the church.
- We may wish to promote civic events on our property such as lectures, debates, first aid trainings, etc.
- We could sponsor fun runs or other events like that and hand out water bottles with church info.
- We were also rolling around the idea of having an ongoing non-Sunday presence, for example a coffee shop.

¹ See Introduction to the Anglican Communion Covenant.