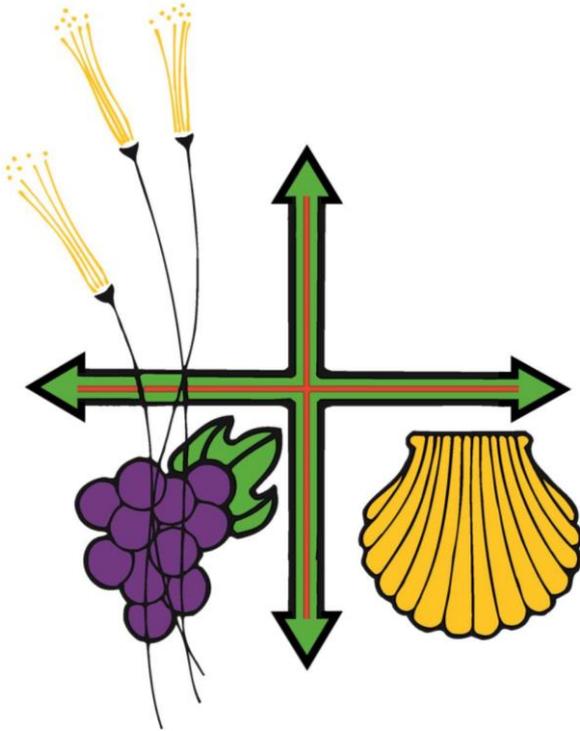


St. Paul's Lutheran Church Aberdeen, MD Vision for the Future!



Three Year Plan Approved June 2015

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“For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope.”

-Jeremiah 29:11

What a powerful truth from the prophet Jeremiah, that God has plans for us! In fact, God has more wonderful plans than we can ever imagine, but we have our part, to seek these plans and to be about what He wants of us!

It's with this in mind, in the fall of 2014, St. Paul's Church Council approved a Visioning Process and nominated the leaders listed below to follow that course. The purpose of that plan was to ask one simple, but extremely powerful question, "God what do you want us to look like in three years?" This team read about and studied thriving and healthy churches, studied the demographics of our area and congregation, prayed, and studied the Bible. They also surveyed and interviewed our congregation and also the community with the ultimate goal of creating a three year vision for our congregation.

Literally hundreds and hundreds of hours of work, study, prayer, meetings and faith have gone into creating the vision you will find in these pages. We believe that it has been a fruitful time and that God will use this effort for His plans!

At the May 12, 2015 Church Council Meeting, believing that it is biblically based and God inspired, unanimously approved this Vision for recommendation to the congregation. On June 14, 2015 the congregation voted and approved these recommendations and ideas to be implemented over the next three years. We hope as you read this Vision that you also find it inspired and inspiring! We also hope you will see ways you can contribute to this grand vision!

In Christ,

Jake Bauer

John Blomquist

Lee Ann Brainard

Walt Clifford

Pastor Stuart Luce

Jim Shumaker

Susan Wakefield

The first part of the Visioning Process focused on revising our Mission Statement. Few knew the correct mission statement and no one had it memorized. We spent much time crafting something short, but deep, which every member can easily memorize. We wanted something that would capture the heart and soul of our congregation and God's purpose for us in this community. We offer this new mission statement:

“Helping People G.R.O.W. with Jesus!”

The second part of the mission statement was expanding on these few words in strategic areas of emphasis and focus, derived from the mission statement. Hence, you will note the word “G.R.O.W.” is an acronym which indicates the following four directions for us as a congregation:

- G**ather into the church
- R**elationships that bless
- O**bserve faith practices
- W**ork for God

We feel these four areas embrace the journey that most Christians take in their faith and four of the most important ideas we should focus on as a congregation.

In the pages that follow, you will find each of these four key areas described in more detail with scriptural encouragement. Furthermore, over the next three years, it is our plan to work on and accomplish the following ideas and tasks.

Before you continue, a word about implementation is appropriate. These ideas are a vision for the whole of St. Paul's! They might be implemented by the council, an existing committee, the staff or a short-term taskforce. In some cases they will need to evolve or be modified as they are explored. Where funding is required, it would be built into the budget, gifts would be sought or fundraising might to be conducted. Ultimately, though, the ideas will be implemented by the people of St. Paul's as we find ways to use our gifts of time, talent and treasure. It is our prayer, as you read, that you will discover ways you can be part of this envisioned future at St. Paul's!

Gather into the church

“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, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:19-20)

The church is meant to help people grow in faith. The first step is to invite and welcome people! As Jesus commissioned us with His last words, we must go out and gather people in to be the maximum blessing possible!

Immediate Goals

1. Add the website address www.GrowWithJesus.com, which could also be used for a future ministry or worship service name.
2. Starting September 13, 2015, move the Contemporary Service to 10:30 am with Christian Education at the same time.
3. Provide more training and encouragement for our members in how to reach out, invite and welcome.
4. Develop plans for replacing the furnace.

Intermediate Goals

5. Drop Evangelical and sometimes Lutheran from publicity such as mass mailed postcards, but of course to keep the valued background and theology of the Lutheran tradition.
6. Hold a contest to design a new church symbol/logo.
7. Improve signage and visibility for those outside St. Paul's and those who use the building.
8. Develop plans to renovate the Fellowship Hall and Kitchen.

Long Range Goals

9. Add a third worship service with a different time and “feel.”
10. Develop plans to renovate the Narthex.

Relationships that Bless

“All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.” (Acts 2:44-47)

A congregation is nothing more and nothing less than a group of people, on a faith journey together! We need to create and implement ways to deepen our connections and relationships with each other! Everyone who comes to or is part of St. Paul’s should know they are loved and valued!

Immediate Goals

1. Add fellowship opportunities after all worship service.
2. Create thriving small groups that develop around common interests and learning.
3. Add an appropriate permanent gift to our welcome bags or cookie patrol given to new guests.
4. Continue to improve communication through email, telephone, direct and social media. Also provide training in these areas.

Intermediate Goals

5. Develop ministries to target younger people (college age, young adult and young families) and more diversity to our congregation.
6. Add parking lot greeters with umbrellas when it rains.
7. Provide more fellowship events and prayer partner ministries to deepen relationships.

Observe Faith Practices

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.” (Mark 12:30)

There are fundamental faith practices that have blessed people of faith for thousands of years. Learning and growing in these practices will bless people today. We want to encourage and help others grow in them!

Immediate Goals

1. Grow our Sunday School ministry.
2. Offer free adult and children’s Bibles.
3. Update and expand our prayer ministries.

Intermediate Goals

4. Offer our Vacation Bible School to the community.
5. Develop van ministry for worship and other ministries.
6. Develop a Men’s Ministry.

Long Range Goals

7. Explore what needs exist in our community for a preschool, daycare or after school program.

Work For God

“The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ.” (Ephesians 4:11-13)

God calls all of us to find and use our God-given gifts. The work of the church is to encourage, equip and empower this call. The church also needs to provide numerous hands-on ministries and constantly needs to train gifted lay and clergy leaders.

Immediate Goals

1. Encourage people to be more involved with better communication of the available needs and opportunities.
2. Expand our Care Ministry to help people who have challenges.
3. Develop a Volunteer Coordinator staff person which could be a volunteer to start.
4. Provide better coordination, training (live and video) and responsibilities for ministries.
5. Offer child care for all church events.
6. Evaluate and update the church constitution.
7. Develop a long range planning team to shepherd and continue the work of the Visioning Team.
8. Seek ways to be engaged with the ministries of our community.

Intermediate Goals

9. Develop a youth leadership program to integrate their gifts into the life of the church. (This would help students satisfy their graduation requirements.)
10. Conduct a study for staffing needs.
11. Offer local and non-local mission trips.

Thank You to the Visioning Team

I cannot begin to express in words how grateful I am to the Visioning Team. They have put in an inordinate amount of time (far too many long meetings) and more than this, they have really poured out their care and faith for their Lord and for St. Paul's. Leading is never an easy task and especially when charting new territory. They have taken on this challenge and my eternal thanks go out to them.

At critical leadership times, I often think "with the end in mind." I truly believe that as people are brought into a new or deeper relationship with Jesus through St. Paul's, the Visioning Team's work will have been validated a hundred-fold. In fact, if God grants this joy in heaven, a long list of people will gather to thank each one of them for their contribution to God's vision on Earth at St. Paul's! If you feel the same way as I do, please take the time to thank them on this side of the Kingdom for their extraordinary work on this Visioning Process!

With eternal gratitude,

PASTOR STUART