

Strategic Plan 2013-2016

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Terms of Reference for the Strategic Plan Report

External Context: The situation as it exists outside of the congregation. External context includes demographics, economics, community resources (such as quality of leadership and community facilities), existence and size of other congregations, **community morale**, etc.

Internal Context: The situation as it exists inside the congregation. Internal context largely parallels external context. For example, what are the congregation's demographics, economics, etc.?

Outcomes: a benefit or change that the church would experience after a specific initiative or action. Outcomes are what those in or around St. Paul's know, think, or can do; how they behave; or how their condition has changed as a result of the initiative. These are often difficult to quantify and measure.

Outputs: more tangible results of the initiative or action, which influence the outcomes. They are more quantifiable than outcomes and easier to measure, but outputs are not to be confused with the desired outcome

Values: Values represent who we are as a church family and what we believe in. They represent what we hold important in our collective ministry life and what we should live out daily in our internal and external ministries to the congregation and the community. They are long-term and do not change with the whims of society and culture.

Mission Statement: A short statement of the foundational purpose of our church and how we express it for the entire world to clearly see. A succinct statement of *the reason* why St. Paul's exists.

Vision Statements: They represent where, based on our Values and Mission Statement, we believe St. Paul's should go in the period covered by this strategic plan.

St. Paul's Strategic Plan 2013-2016

BACKGROUND:

Churches are unique in many ways; they are a body of believers who normally share a common bond, but are never in complete agreement. They represent something more than just a collection of individuals with theological beliefs or social structure that bind them together. The church is a building, a group of people, and a representation of God amongst us. The image of our church does not belong to our denomination or to us...it belongs to God for whom we exist as a body. It is our task to be good stewards of the image God allows us to use and to set the corporate body of the church on the correct path to live out God's specific plan for us. St. Paul's has not updated its strategic plan since the *Crossing the Bridge* document written in 2006.

The St. Paul's Incubator Group was created to be representative of the congregation. We come from different life stages, identify with different worship services, and have varying degrees of time spent as members of the church. The group has spent nearly two years together working towards an understanding of our church's current situation, including values, mission, and vision. We studied successful churches and unsuccessful churches, pausing repeatedly to try and see where we would put St. Paul's along this continuum. We found elements in our church that reflected both the positive and the negative, but always found a common spirit that shaped who we are. In all of this work, we kept in mind that while churches are unique organizations because they are based in faith, they also have many things in common with non-religious or non-spiritual organizations. One area where churches are similar to many other organizations is their need to lay out

plans for their future. Because of this we also studied other not-for-profit organizations from which we could learn.

As mentioned previously, the Incubator Group spent significant amounts of time examining St. Paul's values, mission, and the context in which we currently find ourselves. These components are the bedrock of the strategic planning process that we have chosen to use and each play a different role in the planning process. They provide the structure for this report and will lead us to an understanding of the long-term vision for St. Paul's that this process was intended to discover.

Our values represent who we are and what we believe in as a church family. They represent what we hold important in our collective ministry life and what we should live out daily in our internal and external ministries to the congregation and the community. If we do not live our values on a daily basis, then either they do not truly represent what we believe to be important or we are not living the ministry lives to which we aspire. Our values help to shape our view of the world around us and how we, as a church family, must interact with that world. They lay out the boundary conditions within which we should operate as a church and provide short-term direction in our quest to identify St. Paul's mission. We identified the values articulated in this document from our collective conversations in the Incubator Group and through the information we gathered through surveys and the various groups we visited with during the last two years. One example of a group from which we learned a significant amount was the series of Sunday School classes which dealt with St. Paul's history and brought together church members to talk about different components of church life over the years.

ST. PAUL'S VALUES:

Our values represent who we are as a church in relation to what we deem to be important to our ministries. These statements express where our focus is in ministry, both individually and collectively.

As Christ's servants, we are empowering people to live fully and faithfully in a changing world by...

- ***Living a theology of grace***
- ***Constantly seeking God's guidance***
- ***Being conscientious stewards of our human and financial resources***
- ***Welcoming all persons, celebrating the worth, dignity, and gifts of every person as a child of God***
- ***Supporting and practicing social justice***
- ***Finding life in serving others***
- ***Challenging ourselves to be dynamic and creative in worship***
- ***Acting as conscientious stewards of our world's environment***
- ***Providing a safe learning environment that encourages questions and exploration of Scripture and our world***

ST. PAUL'S MISSION:

From this collective set of values we sought to identify **the reason** why St. Paul's exists. What is the foundational purpose of our church and how do we express it for the entire world to clearly see? It must be a statement of our mission in Lenexa and the surrounding community, which is in agreement with our stated values, and one that does

not change easily with the winds of theological or economic change. It is the representation of who we are and why we exist as a congregation. We tried to capture the answer to the question, “if our physical church disappeared today, what would we have as a church?” It, and our values, do not change from strategic plan to strategic plan, but provide us a constant foundation from which we can always focus on our future. Because of this enduring nature of our mission, it is imperative that the mission truly represents the congregation’s belief as to our true purpose. Based on the value statements represented earlier in this document, we reached a concise statement that expresses the real reason for St. Paul’s existence:

We exist to LOVE God and all others unconditionally, SEEK answers to our questions, and SERVE God by serving others.

OUR VISION STATEMENTS:

Our vision statements are built upon our Values and our Mission Statement. They represent, based on those two enduring statements of who we are and our current context, where we believe God wants St. Paul’s to go. Over the next three to five years, we believe that St. Paul’s should focus on the following three areas.

Connect each person at St. Paul’s with an opportunity to:

1. be part of a community where they feel valued, cared for and that their presence matters.

2. question and to learn about Scripture, our world, our community, and God’s love regardless of where they are in their spiritual journey.

3. serve others in their own unique way and know that their contribution is important.

THE WAY AHEAD:

Strategy: We have focused the way ahead for this strategic plan on achieving outcomes that are related to our Vision. For the purposes of this document, we have defined outcomes as *a benefit or change that the church would experience after a specific initiative or action. Outcomes are what those in or around St. Paul's know, think, or can do; how they behave; or how their condition has changed as a result of the initiative.* This definition is adapted from the work of *Discovery Source*, a not-for-profit organization.

Understanding the idea of an outcome and its purpose is critical to the progress of this strategic plan. We have chosen to focus on the accomplishment of outcomes, linked to the Vision Statements, as the iterative way to move the church forward. We believe the decision-making bodies of St. Paul's should focus their work over the next three to five years on initiatives that will help to fulfill these Vision Statements. The St. Paul's family should be encouraged to focus on how they, as individuals, can also move the Vision Statements forward. This will require a campaign to highlight the Vision Statements to the congregation and point out that they are a natural progression from our Values and Mission Statement.

Committees and staff members within the church will need to examine their organizational responsibilities and determine what they have to do to support the Vision Statements in their ministry area. Each ministry must be able to clearly answer the question: "what outcomes can we affect to ensure that the Vision Statements are realized?" This document contains a few examples of outcomes that we have identified through the last 18 months, but for the strategic plan to have any lasting effect, the committees of the

church will have to continually identify outcomes they need to work towards. Here are a few examples of outcomes that we have identified as needing to be addressed:

Vision Statement #1: Connect each person at St. Paul's with an opportunity to be part of a community where they feel valued, cared for and that their presence matters.

- We must examine St. Paul's shift from a largely lay-led church to one that is more staff-led. What has caused this shift? What is the most effective leadership for St. Paul's at this moment in time?
- We need to establish a methodology so that people who cannot come to worship services or educational opportunities at St. Paul's still feel connected to the church.
- We must intentionally seek ways to connect people using the new social interaction tools that are pervasive in society.
- We must ensure that those who choose to leave St. Paul's do so because they have moved physically or theologically; not because they no longer feel welcome or important.

Vision Statement #2: Connect each person at St. Paul's with an opportunity to question and to learn about Scripture, our world, our community, and God's love regardless of where they are in their spiritual journey.

- Our educational opportunities must connect with people regardless of where they are on their spiritual journey. We must provide a multi-faceted program that meets the needs of our wide range of members, from new church attendees to seminary graduates.
- We must ensure that our educational opportunities are appropriately balanced to live out the **Seek** portion of our Mission: touching on Scripture, our community, and our world.
- We must improve our ability to connect people with small groups; this is a larger outcome for the church, but can be started successfully in our educational offerings.

Vision Statement #3: Connect each person at St. Paul's with an opportunity to serve others in their own unique way and know that their contribution is important.

- St Paul's and its people must make a difference in the Lenexa/Kansas City area through improved servant leadership.
- We must examine our definition of service, ensuring that we provide everyone with the opportunities they need to serve. This may be in our traditional venues, such as Crosslines, but it also may mean identifying new ways to serve through prayer, personal connection ministries, or other yet unidentified means.

Connections: St. Paul's needs to be more intentional in working towards focused goals, such as the Vision Statements of this document. We, as a church and family, have moved along for a number of years without clear goals beyond wanting to build a larger facility and our progressive theology. Our actions need to be consciously attuned to the Vision Statements for the next few years, moving us towards a closer church adherence to our Mission Statement and strengthening the foundation we need to stay a strong church family. This will require a level of accountability from our committees that we have not asked for in the past. New ideas that flow from the Vision Statements, naturally creating outcomes that we wish to accomplish, must be made the responsibility of committees and staff to show that we are accomplishing the purpose of the ministry. As part of this accountability, progress must be measured and reported to our governing bodies (e.g. Administrative Board). Committees and staff members should formally acknowledge a responsibility to connect their work to the Vision Statements and identify outcomes that will lead to the desired results.

Evidence: If we are going to measure and report progress on outcomes or connection to the Vision Statements, we must know what evidence will show progress. We have provided a roadmap guide to help to aid all the groups in the church in this venture called the Strategic Planning Guide. It is found at Appendix A of the Strategic Plan, and will be made available in digital format on the church website.

Implementation: While Incubator Group has laid out a few outcomes identified for consideration, each committee should spend a period of examination looking for outcomes

that are needed in their area of responsibility. The recommended outcomes in this document are just a starting point for the immediate future. Over the next few years, it should become a normal part of committee and staff life to identify changes that need to be made and create outcome statements to move towards those changes. One of the major factors in successfully implementing a strategic plan is to ensure that the church's resources are focused on the right areas and actions. For example, the Finance Committee is responsible for planning St. Paul's financial future. The Staff/Parish Committee is focused on the human resources portion of the church life. The Trustees have the responsibility for our grounds and physical structures. All of these groups make decisions on things that St. Paul's must have to just keep the doors open and maintain our daily routine. They also make decisions that are related to moving the church forward and establishing a direction. Using the Vision Statements as a guide for this direction, these groups will have the responsibility for examining their actions as stewards of St. Paul's resources. Other committees seeking resources should include in their rationale how the initiatives they wish to undertake connect to the Vision Statements. The Strategic Planning Guide is the recommended method for doing this and should be provided to the Finance Committee as part of any funding request for a new initiative. We have a limited amount of treasure to dedicate to the work of St. Paul's; we must make sure we focus it in directions that support our Vision.

Review: Churches often move along in their day-to-day business and fail to focus on longer-term goals unless these deal with construction. One of the reasons this happens is that such voluntary organizations often lack accountability or fail to examine how well they

perform against their goals. The Incubator Group believes this is generally true of St. Paul's. We believe the idea of an "autopsy without blame" or "after action review" must become part of the process in St. Paul's for examining how well we are doing in our activities. In order to move towards this increased level of accountability from our committees and staff, we must create a review process through which St. Paul's can evaluate progress towards the church's goals. Committees should report back to the appropriate major committee on initiatives they have undertaken and how existing programs connect to the Vision Statements. Staff should do the same with their supervisors. Evaluating the work of committees and staff against their support for these statements is critical to focus the work of our volunteers in the appropriate direction. The Administrative Board must establish a policy for such a review process and implement it immediately after acceptance of this report.

Renew: St. Paul's waited five years before beginning to build on the work of the last strategic plan. That is simply too long, as the context in which the church exists changes far more quickly than that. Based on the timeframe of this report and the payoff cycle of our building loan, we recommend that another strategic planning effort begin work in 2016. The method to create that strategic plan will have to be determined by the Administrative Board, but we believe it should always begin with a reexamination of St. Paul's Values and Mission Statement. If these statements endure, as we hope they will, what is then needed is an analysis of the current context of the church and the world around it (internal and external context). These three things, values, mission, and context, should lead to new vision statements that can be used as the basis for future strategic plans. The members of

the Incubator Group wanted to provide feedback on the use of the Incubator process as a tool for strategic planning. This nearly two years of work has brought all of us very close together. Because of that, this group has been very open and honest during our discussions. We have probably said things out loud that could not have been said in a forum that just met five or six times. This is a decided advantage in such a planning process, because often things do not get said in a church setting because of Christian politeness. However, sometimes these things need to be said and discussed for the church to move forward in a positive way. This openness within the group also means that a certain level of confidentiality must be involved, a fact that may be an issue for the church. It was an issue during our time in Incubator, because some people were distrustful of what was happening within the group behind closed doors. The best way to deal with this issue is to ensure that a broad cross-section of the church is involved in the planning group, providing representation for all voices in the congregation. The downside of an Incubator-style approach is that, to gain the type of closeness that leads to this honesty, it takes a long time. If the church wants to create a new strategic plan in a short amount of time, then a different approach must be taken. If the church can invest a year in such a planning effort, then a better product will probably come out of a group more like St. Paul's Incubator.

Recommendations: The Incubator Group will disband once it presents this report to the Church. Members of the Incubator have agreed, if committees have a desire for assistance, to offer their time in consultation with any group that would like additional clarification on what we saw in our analysis and what we mean in regards to outcomes and accountability.

Specific recommendations from the Incubator include:

- Consider hiring a consultant to work with the staff and lay leadership in the context of St. Paul's growing membership. This links back to the outcome identified concerning lay-led vs. a staff-led environment.
- Write position descriptions for key volunteer positions in order to ensure that responsibilities are totally understood by all parties.
- Develop a St. Paul's Education Master Plan, focused on providing appropriate opportunities in a wide variety of venues and to all three of our target areas.
- Create a more coordinated effort towards small group ministry. This is mentioned in Vision Statement #2, but it is more than just education. It is our perception that this has slipped in priority during the past few years and a renewal would provide a way to connect people to St. Paul's in more than just Sunday morning worship. This is yet another example of an outcome in support of one of the Vision Statements.
- Establish a long-term effort to train and develop lay leadership at St. Paul's. Possibly create something along the lines of a St. Paul's Leadership Academy, where we use the large amount of talent in our congregation to grow new generations of leaders for our church and our community. This could include training programs for adults and young adults.

Conclusion: Our recommendations conclude the body of this report. We have tried to establish a direction for St. Paul's journey over the next few years and a methodology for improving our effectiveness along that journey. We believe that whenever committees or individuals begin to plan their actions in support of St. Paul's in the coming years, they should do so in the context of the three Vision Statements identified from our Values, our Mission, and our current context.

One final reminder: Our most critical focus as we look to the future should be an examination of what we do in relation to our Mission. The **Love, Seek, Serve** trilogy is the basis for our mission. As groups and individuals we should continually ask ourselves if we are serving God and others in the best way for them or if instead we are doing it in the best way for ourselves. Are we providing the opportunities for people to **Seek** and **Serve**? Are we, as a body and as individuals, living out the **Love** portion of the Mission Statement? If we constantly check our direction against our mission, we will accomplish our Vision.