



# *The* Episcopal Diocese of Newark

*Equipping congregations... Empowering people... Engaging the world ...with the hope and justice of Jesus.*

## DIOCESAN MINISTRY PLAN OUTLINE

### **Diocesan Goal:**

For all congregations in the Diocese of Newark in response to God's call to mission to be vibrant, life-giving faith communities that proclaim the Gospel and make it relevant in their unique environment.

### **Intent of Ministry Plan**

Creating a ministry plan is a means of engaging in a dialogue with your congregation about how it might first examine and then begin to address exercising its ministry in seven vital areas. As a starting point, each congregation is invited to make a self-assessment using the diocesan vitality characteristics, ministry capacity questions, and issues explorations in order to examine its areas of ministry objectively. Topic issues to explore these ministry and mission areas as well as tools and resources to assist you in developing your ministry plan can be found in our Diocesan Covenant available on our website.

The ministry plan should be viewed as the product of the process outlined above in the context of the on-going diocesan covenant responsibility of each congregation to "develop a ministry plan with achievable measurable goals and objectives".

### **Church of the Good Shepherd, Fort Lee, NJ**

#### Introduction

Good Shepherd's congregation began reflecting on several of the issues contained in the Ministry Plan Outline in 2017 in anticipation of beginning the process of calling a priest. We looked at several areas: Parish Life and the Parish Life committee specifically, Worship/Liturgy/Music, and several specific events and seasons. Many comments were made about the spiritual revitalization that occurred within the congregation during period between priests.

As we entered into the Transition Process, the Vestry began compiling information for this Ministry and Mission Plan. We had approximately 50 parishioners attend these group meetings. The outcomes from those meeting as well as the reflections of the Vestry are listed below.

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

The mission of the Church of the Good Shepherd is to help each other experience the love of God, respond with compassion to the needs of our neighbors, recognize Christ in all people, embrace diversity and inclusivity, promote justice and love and spread the Word among our friends and neighbors throughout the Community.

### **I. MINISTRY AREA: EXTERNAL MINISTRY CONTEXTS**

*Where and to whom is our congregation called to minister?*

## **EXPECTATIONS**

1. Each congregation will actively seek information about its mission field (the area in which it is located).
2. Each congregation will consider information about the area in which they are located as they develop ministry activities.

## **MINISTRY PLAN QUESTIONS**

1. In what ways do you seek information about your community or neighborhood?  
Here are some examples of how we have reached out to the community in various ways:

- a. We are known throughout the community as care givers;
  - b. we are in constant contact with organizations discussing how best our services can be used;
  - c. we are in contact with surrounding buildings discussing how best we can serve their needs; and
  - d. we reach out to the mayor, council and local first responders to celebrate their contributions and seek additional ways to serve our community,
2. What have you learned from that information that is informing your approach to what you do as a congregation?
- a. Fort Lee, while growing, is a transient community, with diplomats and professional from other countries residing here temporarily; and
  - b. we are not the only church in the community that is struggling. A few churches have closed and others are facing the same financial and membership issues.
3. What do you believe God is calling you to do now in your community?
- a. First and foremost we are called to be God's presence in the community. We are called to seek and work for social justice, perform community outreach, be a place of stability and shelter (spiritually as well as literally), and respond to the mobility of the community by being stable and evangelical.
4. What is your congregation's plan to engage the community over the next 3 years?

The Church of the Good Shepherd will continue providing space for AA, community programs, and the arts (Park Players). The church will also continue supporting GreenFaith, environmental issues, Center for Food Action (CFA), North Porch, Holly Center, the Episcopal Relief and Development Corporation, Department of Environmental Protection and other local outreach programs. Conversations with the Mayor, council members and other community leaders will continue. First responders and other members of the community will continue to be recognized at special services and brunches. Pastoral care and animal blessings will also remain an integral part of GS activities. In this way, the Church of the Good Shepherd can be a positive role model and a spiritual lighthouse for the congregation and the surrounding communities.

## **II. MINISTRY AREA: CHRISTIAN IDENTITY, GIFTS, STRENGTHS AND CHALLENGES**

## ***What gifts has God given to us to do ministry?***

### **EXPECTATIONS**

1. Each congregation has big picture priorities that can be articulated by the person in the pew.
2. Each congregation can demonstrate measurable effort in attempting to address its priorities.
3. Each congregation regularly clarifies and articulates its strengths.
4. Each congregation regularly clarifies and articulates its challenges.
5. Each congregation understands its effect on and reputation in its community

### **MINISTRY PLAN QUESTIONS**

1. Does your congregation have a mission and/or vision statement?
  - a. Yes, as stated above. Good Shepherd is a diverse community of justice and mercy for all people; a healing sign that the things that divide us from each other shall be overcome in the oneness of God's love.
2. What are your top 4 priorities as a congregation?
  - a. Internal stability – growth leading to financial stability and the calling of a Rector;
  - b. Community Service- continue supporting the AA, CFA, Holley Center and North Porch communities; increasing outreach to others in need in our communities;
  - c. Evangelize- spreading the Word throughout our community to show God's love for all; and
  - d. Nurture our church family. Many of us came to and remain at Good Shepherd because it is a family. We will maintain and even strengthen these bonds through coffee/social hours after the respective services, Bible Study, Eucharistic visits, outreach to neighbors and Sunday worship.
3. What have you done in the last two years to live into those priorities?
  - a. Internal stability – we have attained control of our financial status internally and externally to live within our means, having avoided a deficit for two consecutive years. We have explored ways to be good stewards of our physical plant;

- b. Children and Youth – we have identified this as a priority, listing on our Facebook page the accomplishments. We have instituted Sunday School classes based on the Gospel. Our youth take an active part in our service, serving as subdeacons, acolytes, ushers, readers and leading in song;
  - c. Live into our mission – we have participated in Ashes-to-Go, participated in community events (parades, community nights at the movies, First Responder brunch, responded to community outreach calls (providing meals, funds), and made the annual Blessing of the Animals open to entire community;
  - d. Nurturing our family – Good Shepherd has two services, each with unique characteristics that meet the needs of those that attend that particular service. We sometimes worship together in combined services where we celebrate both our oneness in God and our diversity. This brings us to a better understanding of each other; and
  - e. Music program- Good Shepherd has thriving and growing music program, inclusive of those with diverse backgrounds. We encourage parishioners to choose favorite hymns chosen from the 1940, 1982 and Life Every Voice and Sings (LEVAS) hymnals.
4. What are your greatest congregational strengths to achieve those priorities?
- a. We have many great people who are committed to living out our mission in this community;
  - b. we are known as a welcoming community and those who come tend to stay; attendance at each service has increased;
  - c. the desire and energy to give of ourselves;
  - d. our diversity; and
  - e. our commitment to outreach is a significant part of our Mission and Ministry through our hosting numerous AA groups, CFA participation, GreenFaith participation, Holley Center North Porch and local outreach opportunities.
5. What are your greatest congregational challenges to achieve those priorities?
- a. Not having a Rector to lead, inspire and share in this ministry;
  - b. need better charismatic and evangelistic training;
  - c. lack of adequate advertising and presence on social media; and
  - d. limited funds for Mission and Ministry and outreach due to the need to maintain financial stability
6. For what is your congregation best known in your neighborhood? And how do; you know this?
- a. A welcoming community;
  - b. Diversity;
  - c. the place to come to for help;
  - d. inclusivity of all regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation, creed or religious background;
  - e. we know these things through word of mouth from parishioners who live and/or work in Fort Lee and surrounding communities;
  - f. interest in helping or working with the community; and

- g. we know this through feedback from the Mayor, Council, and other community leaders.

### **III. MINISTRY AREA: VISION/FUTURE GOALS/DREAMS**

*To what ministry is God calling us at this time?*

#### **EXPECTATIONS**

1. Each congregation identifies its unique purpose based on its understanding of God's dream for it.
2. Long term possibilities for the future will be derived from each congregation's unique overall mission and those possibilities will be revisited each year.

#### **MINISTRY PLAN QUESTIONS**

1. What do you think God wants from and for your congregation?
  - a. To serve God's people and our community, as described in our Mission Statement, by remaining and becoming even more active in the community providing nourishment, spiritual body and food, celebrating First Responders, maintain our open doors for all and an active Sunday School.
2. What possibilities does your congregation see for itself in 3 years? In 5 years?
  - a. In Parish meetings, we identified several hopes and dreams: Full time Rector, more members, strong youth program, instituting ESL program(s), becoming an Organic Food distribution center, advertising in yearbooks and other publications specific to youth to draw in the younger generation, Haunted Church on Halloween as an alternative to trick-or-treating, participate in the Diocesan listing of events, increase Pastoral Care commitment, increasing our friendly relationships with our community neighbors and becoming even more active in in the Central Bergen chapter of GreenFaith.
3. What plans do you have for identifying, nurturing and empowering future leaders for your congregation?
  - a. Continue lay preaching, lay ministry – extensive training, which is ongoing;
  - b. find a different way of linking people with their time/talent to a calling within the church;
  - c. identify gifts of the congregation and find a place where they will fit in the church.
4. What is the role of your congregation's youth now and in the future? What is your ministry to them?

- a. Our youth are active in Diocesan youth events. We have as many as 10 may attend Sunday School on any given Sunday, including four who serve as acolytes, readers, ushers, members of the choir and recently made commitments to become more engaged;
- b. keep asking the question: how do we serve our youth? We need to find out why more of our town's youth are not coming .... some ask what are the youth doing for us, rather than what can we do for our youth; and
- c. we need to find a way so that youth come on their own initiative. Our youth ministry must be intentional. Change the ways in which we reach out to local youth – social media, etc.

#### **IV. MINISTRY AREA: SYSTEMS FUNCTIONALITY (VIABILITY)**

*How well do we carry out the internal functions of our church in God's name?*

#### **EXPECTATIONS**

1. Congregations will meet all canonical responsibilities. For example:
  - a. Parochial reports will be turned in by March 1
  - b. audits will be turned in by September 1
  - c. diocesan pledges will be turned in by December 1
2. The trend for both the number of pledges and the total amount of pledges consistently increases over time.
3. Each congregation finds ways to discern members' gifts and seeks to engage all of its members in congregational priorities.
4. Each congregation consistently seeks to expand the number of people involved in leadership to engage in succession planning for leaders and to train and support its leaders.
5. Each congregation actively maintains safe, attractive, accessible buildings for ministry use.
6. Vestries regularly devote time to identifying and developing congregational ministries.
7. Each congregation regularly operates with balanced budgets.
8. Any excess of expenses over income will result from strategic decisions to invest in growth or ministry

## MINISTRY PLAN QUESTIONS

1. How do you identify members' individual gifts and engage them with your priorities?
  - a. During our annual Stewardship Campaign we stress that stewardship is not only about pledging money, but also about talent and time offered. We continually ask our parishioners what their talent is, not just during this campaign;
  - b. if we are aware of a specific talent that an individual has, that person is asked specifically whether she/he will take on a duty or project;
  - c. the parishioners are kept up-to-date during the weekly coffee hours; and
  - d. parishioners are thanked individually during the annual meeting for services performed during the year.
  
2. In what primary ways do you recruit, empower, and support people for leadership?
  - a. Projects are discussed at the annual meeting and volunteers requested;
  - b. needs are discussed throughout the year;.
  - c. invitation by Vestry, one-to-one outreach; and
  - d. the parishioners are kept up-to-date during the weekly coffee hours
  
3. What are the top 3 priorities / needs for your buildings?
  - a. Parishioners and building users keep watch for situations that may arise and these are handled before problems occur;
  - b. ongoing maintenance of boiler and drainage system to prevent occurrences; and
  - c. aging facilities
  
4. How does your congregation plan for repairs and capital needs?
  - a. Budget line for this;
  - b. funds have been set aside from a previous capital campaign to be used as required; and
  - c. parishioners and building users keep watch for situations that may arise and these are handled before problems occur
  
5. Is your congregation's budget in deficit? If so, how have you and how do you plan (in the next 3 years) to address this?

We are currently have a mild budget surplus and the projected budget for 2018 also has a mild budget surplus.

## V. MINISTRY AREA: CHURCH GROWTH / EVANGELISM CAPACITY

*How does God enable us to invite, form, and send out disciples?*

## EXPECTATIONS

1. Average Sunday Attendance (ASA) consistently increases over time.  
**Note:** ASA reflects increasing participation and growth.
2. The person in the pew can describe the unique characteristics of your congregation.
3. Each congregation assesses the reasons new members first visited in order to enhance its ability to attract new potential members.
4. Each congregation understands the reasons new members joined, in order to enhance its ability to build its membership.
5. Congregations understand the faith experience of their new members, so that they can best understand and respond to ministry opportunities.

## MINISTRY CAPACITY QUESTIONS

1. What has been the trend in your ASA (Average Sunday Attendance) in the last 10 years?  
Based on the Parochial Reports, it has increased from 40 to 45+.
2. Why did the people who most recently joined the congregation come to church the first time?
  - a. Animal Blessing;
  - b. electronic sign is inviting;
  - c. building and community events; and
  - d. invited by parishioners
3. Of those most recent members, why did they join?
  - a. Warmth of the parishioner;
  - b. coffee hour is very welcoming;
  - c. feeling of being needed by Good Shepherd; and
  - d. service is welcoming.
4. What percentage of people who joined in the last year are not Episcopalians?  
None
5. How are we actively engaged in evangelism?
  - a. We invite friends to attend;
  - b. contemporary music to draw in new, younger parishioners; and
  - c. use of modern liturgy
6. What role do our youth play in church growth and evangelism?
  - a. Some invite friends.

## **VI. MINISTRY AREA: STEWARDSHIP**

### ***How do we understand and practice stewardship of God's abundant goodness?***

1. Members of the congregation understand stewardship as their response to God's love and God's call to tend and care for the whole of creation, including ourselves, our possessions, and this earth.
2. Clergy and congregation practice simplicity of life and generosity in giving.
3. Congregation through the leadership of vestry and clergy are asked to support the ministry of the church with their time, talent, and treasure, especially through the practices of proportionate giving (or tithing) and witnessing to God's work in their own lives.

### **MINISTRY CAPACITY QUESTIONS**

1. Does your congregation practice year-around stewardship?
  - a. Yes, for time and talent
2. Does your vestry lead by example in its stewardship?
  - a. Yes, we all pledge as well as give of our time and talents
3. How does your congregation understand stewardship?

This is a work in progress – many think this is just about money. We stress that it is more than funding the budget to supporting ministry with time and talent, moving us in the direction of year-round stewardship.
4. How does your congregation educate and engage youth in the practice of stewardship?
  - a. This is discussed during the Sunday School curriculum, stressing time and talent rather than funding due to the ages of the participants;
  - b. this is also stressed with our confirmation candidates; and
  - c. once confirmed, the youth are encouraged to pledge and are included in the stewardship discussions.
5. Describe your present and future stewardship plans.
  - a. See 3 for present;
  - b. For the future:

Share with diocese what is done with pledges (Sunday School, AA, ETC)

Stress that giving is a way of getting and that giving shows caring for community, other groups, each other.

Stewardship is an Asset:

Noticing=Giving

Stewardship begins in home-heart-managing our assets- give, save, spend

## **VII. CAPACITY AREA: SPIRITUAL GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT**

***How do we as a community of faith nurture one another  
in the knowledge and love of Christ?***

### **EXPECTATIONS**

1. Each congregation creatively and authentically lives out the Baptismal promise to “continue the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers”.
2. Worship is both vibrant and fresh in expression and rooted in tradition with the result that people are energized and inspired for daily life.
3. Worship expresses the cultural diversity of the congregation and its neighboring communities.
4. The planning and leadership of worship and spiritual activities invites participation and engages the creativity of the entire congregation.
5. There is a regular and comprehensive review of worship and spiritual activities in all its facets, especially worship times, alternative services/venues, and liturgies.
6. Both clergy and laity are engaged in the ministry of pastoral care.
7. The vestry, clergy and congregation both corporately and individually have adopted a spiritual discipline and /or Rule of Life.

### **MINISTRY PLAN QUESTIONS**

1. How is worship/liturgy planned and reviewed in your congregation?

- a. Primarily planned by Parishioner Administrator (who is a deacon), Supply Clergy and minister of music;
  - b. input also from parishioners for music (favorite hymns and music) and suggestions; and
  - c. Vestry offers input and suggestions
  
2. How are liturgy participants (e.g., Altar Guild, choir, acolytes, lay readers) identified, recruited and trained?
  - a. Specific invitation for a project where talent is known;
  - b. signups at Homecoming and on Pledge cards; and
  - c. training is done by deacon and lay leaders on an as needed basis
  
3. What opportunities are provided for spiritual growth in your congregation?
 

Future plans for:

  - a. Worship (use of home groups for discussions, celebration of the Eucharist);
  - b. adult discussion group at/or coffee hour;
  - c. participating in service coffee hour;
  - d. involving more participation in Pastoral Care;
  - e. Wednesday Bible Study; and
  - f. Bilingual priests to serve those whose first language is not English
  
4. To what extent do youth participate in liturgical and spiritual formation activities?
  - a. Liturgy participation (acolytes, readers, sub-deacon, choir);
  - b. Youth Sunday (plan the service and take strategic roles including preaching the sermon); and
  - c. participation in Diocesan convention as Youth Delegates.
  
5. Are lay people significantly involved in your pastoral care and healing ministries?
  - a. Yes
  
6. Are there opportunities to do joint worship and spiritual formation with other congregations?
  - a. Invite others from the community to first responders' celebrations;
  - b. additional joint services with eight and ten o'clock services;
  - c. joint services and Coffee Hour with Joyful Church; and
  - d. get more involved at town events, including prayers