

The Future Event Summary - November 17, 2019

The future is not something we can predict, but our hopes and dreams for the future help us direct our activities now and prioritize the choices we must make now, as what we do today is laying a foundation, or not, for the future. Our hopes and dreams about the future can also open us up to new ideas and new possibilities which we may not yet have considered. In Christianity the past, present, and future always work in relation with each other. We live out ancient truths and practices while passing them along to the generations which will follow us. God assures us that God has plans for us, plans for a future with hope, and it is up to us to discern those plans. Jesus reminds us in several parables that the new and the old must coexist.

48 people gathered in the parish hall, grouped into 11 tables.

Each person filled out an “Envision Your Spiritual / Religious Future Worksheet;” the parish cannot dream, as a whole, if its parishioners aren’t clear about their own personal hopes and dreams for their future; this exercise answered the question: **What kind of a church, group, community, and society do I want to be a part of?** Individuals kept their own sheets, but responses that were shared with the whole group included:

- the senses of touch, taste, and smell are lacking in our current experience
- group Bible Study
- focus on our own journey; not our children’s or others’
- mission changes with age
- contemplative / mystic spirituality

In table groups we discussed: **Where do you see GHTC in five years?**

Responses included:

- a larger, growing church, with more visitors
- more vision and programming for younger generations & families
- less-formal worship services, more accessible to non-Episcopalians, and to children & youth
- more inclusive, welcoming, caring, diversity, positive atmosphere, and openness
to new groups
- more integrated into the community around us; seamless w/VCU; use park; partner with other churches
- to be meaningful to all populations will require change and adapting to changing needs

We continued in table groups to discuss, based on the answers from the question above, these questions.

What concrete actions might the parish begin making now to take steps toward your five year hopes and dreams? Responses included:

- be kind to each other and demonstrate we care
- opportunities to gather parishioners who attend different services
- re-evaluate service times; combine services; mix styles of music
- staff member and clergy focused on youth
- be more visible to our immediate community; more roles outside of “church;” offer space to outside groups

What activities are going on now that could help grow into this dream?

Responses included:

- children’s chapel and choirs
- breakfast
- Circles, Dental Trip, Red Door, VCU/ECM
- tailored communications
- Sunday Forums & Adult Education

What activities, that are not going on now, would need to be started, in order to grow into this dream? Responses included:

- Bible Study
- promote our visibility with outside speakers, signature event in park, music as outreach, and social activities
- connecting youth with our community
- offer ESL, signing, literacy, meditation, hymn sing
- targeted outreach to non-attending members

What is needed to carry out this dream in terms of additional buildings, activities, technologies, kinds and ages and numbers of people within the church, or interactions beyond the church? Responses included:

- weekday parking
- collaborate with other organizations
- more use of technology
- make it more obvious we are a church, not overshadowed by the cathedral
- partner with other churches for a park event; use the park as an asset

What among these need to be acquired? Responses included:

- parking
- more social media presence and use of technology, including capture of video and audio of worship services
- assessment of community needs to give us direction

Other things that may need to be considered? Responses included:

- empower people who are here to get involved
- tend to each other
- cut through the noise of busy & complicated lives
- Sunday School during a combined 8:45/11:00 worship service