

Congregation Focus Groups

1. Attraction to Trinity: Trinity has a demonstrated track record over the past several decades of attracting people and enfolding them into its life and ministry. The youth and music programs were the main draw, hands down. Members feel that Trinity is welcoming without being pushy; and that it is a comforting, open minded, stable community, with diverse faith backgrounds being represented. Trinity welcomes families with children and offers lots of choices to plug into. The traditional liturgy and sermons were also big draws.

Implications: As long as there are new persons moving into the community who are searching for this type of church, it is likely that Trinity will continue to show membership growth. But the slowing down of area growth in the past decade has resulted as well in a slowdown in membership growth. A more focused program design and ministry approach is now required.

2. Trinity Strengths: Trinity is perceived to be a safe, non-judgmental, caring community that is “there” for people in tough times. It is a diverse, accepting, respectful congregation that perceives itself as a leader in the larger community. Pastor Kathie’s pastoral abilities and her sermons and her accessibility were mentioned numerous times as real strengths. Many noted our music and youth ministry programs, also our ability to work well together and focus on hope, not fear.

Implications: How can Trinity continue to best “leverage” its strengths in attracting others and enfolding them into the life and ministry of the church; especially those who are outside of the church who live within the service area?

3. Ministry Program/Leadership: Trinity has a robust program offering, but the general feeling is that we may be trying to do too much considering our current limited resources; financial, paid staff and volunteers available to us. There is a general feeling that our youth and church school program is not what it used to be and there is a strong concern, perhaps an urgency that we are losing our youth and questions regarding whether or not to have a paid youth staff person. In addition, it was felt that our church school program needs to have a curriculum review, and we need to evaluate if we are providing the kind of programs our youth and our community need. Concerning worship and liturgy, some felt we should consider exploration of contemporary, Christian music and where/how it might fit into our services. Many people suggested we reconsider returning to one principal Eucharist service on Sunday morning.

Implications: It is time for Trinity to take a hard look at its current programs and ministries and to assess which are working and how well such are working. This

assessment needs to be utilized to redesign the overall approach and style that Trinity utilizes in its programs and ministries.

4. Trinity Leadership: Trinity has very high expectations for leadership, both elected and staff and members feel that we have set the bar very high. At the same time, we are not able or are unwilling to pay for it. In addition, there is concern about HR issues and how these are handled in the church. What is the rector's role, are we clear about job descriptions and expectations?

Implications: Trinity's current program and ministry offerings are not sustainable with the present staff and voluntary leadership. Either additional staffing is required or program and ministry reduction needs to be implemented. In addition, personnel policies for staff need to be clearly established and managed.

5. Change/Eliminate: There is a general feeling that we "do too much" but there is no clear answer as to what we should eliminate. There was broad discussion about change with the following representing common themes:

- Change our Stewardship program- doesn't feel good
- Communication- too much, too long, too hard to find the info you need
- Access to building- lack of handicapped accessibility, non-welcoming parking lot, church is cold in winter
- Sanctuary behavior- mixed expectations, lack of reverence-quiet
- Youth- need cohesive leadership (what "was" vs. what "is now") need stability
- Consider alternative music options/styles
- Should we consider sharing our resources/programs with other parishes throughout the diocese

Implications: It is clear that time is overdue for Trinity to make some hard "choices" regarding the scope and scale of its program and ministry offerings, but it is also clear that there are diverse expectations among the membership as to what these choices should be. This means that it will not be possible to make hard choices without there likely being some hurt feelings or disgruntled persons among the membership. It is critical that fear of such not "close down" the Visioning Team's taking the lead and acting on this in its report to Vestry.

6. New Ministry/Initiatives: There are mixed feelings around whether we should add more or should consolidate/focus on existing program offerings. Also it is clear that parishioners need to better understand what it is that we currently offer. With so much

programming we create competition between Sunday forums and other events, we need to consider running multiple things at the same time and allow people to choose instead of making the calendar so complex. However, there appears to be a pattern “make it more convenient for me and my schedule” as it relates to programs, days, times, etc. There was a helpful discussion about needing to create more opportunities to socialize, especially in the Sunday venue.

Implications: If Trinity does scale back its program and ministry offerings (as noted above), the focus needs to be not so much on just “what” is offered, but also on “how” it is offered in terms of the need to bring members into increased interaction with one another and deeper relationships.