



FOLLOWING GOD ON THE JOURNEY

Prepared by: Trinity Vision Team

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TRINITY CHURCH NEWTOWN, CT**

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Introduction

Background

Trinity Episcopal Church is in its 3rd century of serving the community of Newtown CT. It has faithfully served this community during this long journey while also responding to the numerous changes taking place over time. This has led Trinity from time-to-time to engage in planning for its future. Most recently, it engaged in a process in the early 2000s when the church refocused its mission and vision to respond to the membership growth taking place by further expanding its ministry programs and staffing.

The Vestry, in the fall of 2012, was in process of revisiting its planning needs in light of the downturn of the economy in 2008, and the plateauing of membership growth and finances in relation to the slowing of growth in the larger community. However, the tragedy at Sandy Hook Elementary School occurred at this time, placing these plans on hold as Trinity redirected its ministry to respond to church and community needs for healing over the past year and a half.

Visioning 2015

The Vestry decided in 2014 to re-engage the issue of planning for its future. It interviewed a number of consultants recommended by Bishop Ian Douglas to possibly assist in this work, and finally settled on hiring Dr. Craig Van Gelder to help design and facilitate a visioning process. A diverse Vision Team made up of fourteen (14) persons was recruited to engage this task, being led by co-chairs Bart Geissinger and Laurie Trotto, and be staffed by Rector Kathie Adams-Shepherd.¹ The year-long process began in January 2015 and moved through the following stages:

- Orientation of Vision Team to Its Work (Jan.)
- Understanding Congregational Identity and Purpose (Feb. – Mar.)
 - Congregation focus groups, church history, past planning
- Understanding the Community We Serve (Apr. – May)
 - Community demographics and interviews with community leaders
- Understanding Congregational Life and Ministry (Jun. – Jul.)
 - Review ministries & programs, membership profile, staff, facilities, finances
- Summarizing Learnings and Sharing with Congregation for Input (Aug. – Sept.)
 - Construction of summary narrative shared with vestry and congregation
- Developing a Vision Framework for the Future (Oct.)
 - Introduction, Identity, Mission, Vision with Key Guidelines
- Developing a Ministry Design and Infrastructure (Nov. – Dec.)
 - Church ministries internal & external, staffing & leadership, facilities & finances

Moving Forward

Presentation of the vision document will be made to the Vestry and congregation in early 2016 with implementation to begin at that time. On-going evaluation will take place to continue to adjust the ministry plan as needed. Dr. Van Gelder will continue to be available for counsel and advice.

¹ A complete listing of all Vision Team members is available as Appendix A.

Trinity's Identity and Core Mission

Identity

Trinity has been in existence for over 280 years serving Newtown and the surrounding area. It is a well-established institution in the community and appears to have a good reputation among longer-term residents. Over this time, Trinity has been successful in adapting its life and ministry to serve within its ever changing context. Although it has "village church" roots, it has increasingly developed a more regional ministry.

There are a number of strengths embedded within the identity that Trinity has developed over its many years of ministry, including the following:

- ***Being an Episcopal Church in a Relevant Way:*** Trinity is an Episcopal church that has maintained and continues to steward a more traditional/liturgical style of ministry. It has, however, demonstrated capacity to change with the times in serving its larger community without compromising this part of its core identity.
- ***Ministry Approach that is Open and Respectful of Diversity:*** Trinity is a faith community that provides many opportunities to look outward to the larger community. This is an expression of the strong desire of Trinity's members to serve and to give while being open to and respectful of diversity. This is rooted in Trinity being a prayerful community.
- ***Responding to Suffering and Providing Healing:*** Trinity's ministry has a demonstrated track record of helping people heal when they are hurting and connect with God, believing that being a place of refuge is a profound way of walking with the larger community. Its ability to "walk with people through suffering" is a critical part of its core identity and is a great strength.
- ***Youth:*** Trinity places a strong emphasis on youth, nurturing their faith as well as including youth in parish leadership, programs, and worship. The youth are missed when not present. Trinity is committed to continuing to explore how best to steward this ministry strength.
- ***Location and Building:*** Trinity's location and church facilities are a core part of its historical identity and symbolize its presence and leadership within the larger community.

Despite these many proven strengths, we have learned in the visioning process that the world is changing. Family structures and priorities, the expectations that drew many of us to the regular practice of faith, have diminished significantly, even as our community and the wider culture are as much as ever in need of spiritual nourishment and healing. To move forward joyfully, to continue to love and support our neighbors and the world around us in meaningful ways, we need to be open, adaptive, and present to our community, as it exists today. Our Episcopal tradition is well equipped to meet people where they are in their lives. We need to be loving guardians of our traditions, while communicating to the world around us in new ways, and listening deeply to the response that comes back to us. We need to re-dedicate ourselves to a ministry of service, turning towards the pain, certain that by doing so God will continue to bring abundant joy into our lives.

Mission Statement

Note: A mission statement concisely states the biblical expectations for any and every congregation. This 2000 version of Trinity's mission will be further considered for review and possible change by the Vision Management Team (VMT).

Together as faithful stewards we are called to

Worship God joyfully,

Build a caring, faithful community in Christ,

Go forth in love to share the Gospel.

A Vision for the Next Chapter of Trinity's Life and Mission

We believe that the Spirit of God is leading Trinity into a next chapter of ministry that will require us to carefully steward our historical identity and Episcopal heritage as we seek to courageously engage and address the numerous changes now taking place within our congregational life and the larger community we seek to serve.

Key Guidelines for Pursuing this Vision

1. **Developing Long-Term Viability:** We are committed to developing a ministry approach that helps ensure the long-term viability of Trinity as an Episcopal congregation in this area.
2. **Stewarding Well Our Core Ministries:** We will attend to stewarding our core ministries well while we work to adapt them based on on-going evaluation to meet the changing needs within the church and the larger community we seek to serve.
3. **Living within Our Means:** We are committed to designing and implementing a ministry that lives within the resources which are available in relation to finances, staff, lay leadership/volunteers, and physical assets.
4. **Willingness to Risk and Experiment:** We are willing to engage in risk, experimentation, and on-going evaluation as we try new things to address the changes taking place within the church and the community we seek to serve.
5. **Balancing Inward and Outward:** We are committed to bringing more into balance the time and effort that we invest in engaging the community we seek to serve with those we invest in our inward ministries.
6. **Learning to Engage with Others:** We will actively engage persons in our larger community not presently served by the church in ways that listen to, walk with, and learn from them, as we bear witness to the good news of the gospel.
7. **Program Simplicity and Coherence:** We will attend to developing a program approach that is simplified from its present complexity and is aligned with our mission, vision, and resources; meaning we will need to say "no" to some of our present activities and ministries.
8. **Increasing Lay Leadership:** We will work to increase lay leadership within our ministry at all levels, with staff being involved primarily in recruiting, training, and empowering these persons to lead.
9. **Discerning God's Continued Leading:** We will continually and intentionally scan for places where God appears to be at work in our midst and within the larger community we serve. We will then act to align our ministry with these movements.
10. **Cultivating Partnerships:** We will actively develop partnerships with other groups, faith communities, and organizations which help promote the work of God in our context. We will also be willing to step up and lead when we feel called to do so.

Vision Implementation

Mission Goals

- **Appoint a Vision Management Team (VMT):** The Team will recommend to Vestry the names of 5 persons who will function on behalf of the Vestry to serve as an oversight group to manage the implementation of this vision document. This VMT will be responsible to:
 - Give oversight to and supervise all teams or persons working to implement this vision
 - Evaluate current ministries and programs on a regular basis to determine effectiveness and to identify what changes might be needed
 - Continue to scan the larger community being served to stay alert to changes taking place and needs which are emerging, and making adjustments in the ministry approach as needed
 - Assess implementation progress and make adjustments in the plan as needed, and will regularly report to Vestry work that is being done
 - Develop provisional transition job descriptions for all staff and clergy positions by June 30th
 - Develop and oversee a tracking process to monitor progress

Responsibility: Vestry with recommendations from Visioning Team

Time Table: Early January 2016

- **Identity Theme:** The VMT will develop an overall identity theme (motto or slogan) that captures and conveys what this visioning document is about, which they will recommend to the Vestry for approval. This identity theme should be short, easily conveyed, and memorable. Possible points to stress include: healing, reconciliation, inclusiveness, and open welcoming. This identity theme will be used to regularly invite the congregation to understand what the plan is about, and also will be used to re-introduce Trinity to the larger community.

Responsibility: Vision Management Team with Vestry approval

Time Table: Late January 2016

- **Declare That We Are in Transition as of February 1, 2016:** This declaration should be made in relation to presenting the vision document to the vestry and congregation. The emphasis should be on stewarding well our historic strengths and Episcopal traditions in relation to a changed context. There should be a focus on celebrating a new chapter, in beginning a new journey, in discovering new ways to participate in God's mission in our community and the larger world.

Responsibility: Vision Management Team

Time Table: January 2016

Church Ministry Approach

We need to address the complexity of our current ministry approach. Numerous new programs and activities have been added over time, but few have been evaluated for effectiveness and eliminated if no longer serving us well. Many of our programs and ministries are currently scaled to serve the church size we were a decade ago when we were experiencing significant growth, and are in need of being re-scaled in relation to staff time, required volunteers, and scheduling requirements. We need to stop engaging in big church practices where they no longer serve the congregation size we have become.

Mission Goals

1. **Ministries to Say “No” To:** Some of our ministry offerings have become obsolete and need to be eliminated. These include at least the following, and may also include others.
 - One of the services on Sunday morning
 - Café hosts
 - Music@Trinity
 - Lenten Refreshment
 - Advent Refreshment

2. **Ministries to Either Change/Revamp or to Eliminate**
 - Every member canvas for stewardship
 - Youth Work Camp
 - Make a concerted effort to work with Trinity Day School to integrate their program more fully into the life and ministry of Trinity, and seek to align this relationship with Trinity's new vision. Take an active role on the board, and appoint a Trinity member who can participate in TDS. If this effort is unsuccessful, then Trinity will reevaluate its relationship with TDS.
 - Sunday morning greeters—possibly combine with ushers
 - Children’s nursery—what is actually needed
 - Some Vestry Commissions—replace with vision implementation task groups
 - Some Committees—replace with vision implementation task groups
 - Same program design for yearly Christmas pageant
 - Complex church calendar—simplify

Responsibility: Vision Management Team recommends to Vestry and Vestry acts

Time Table: February 2016

Core Internal Ministries: Worship and Prayer

Worship is at the center of Trinity's identity. It is essential to engage in worship practices which promote excellence as well as relevance in stewarding our Episcopal heritage. Our current worship practices are scaled for a larger congregation than we are at present, and there is a lack of integration among all the committees and groups responsible for worship.

Mission Goals

- 1. Keeping Larger Community in View:** The format and style of worship at Trinity needs to keep the larger community in view, especially in creating pathways for persons to understand the Episcopal heritage and liturgical approach to worship. This needs to include developing capacity to embrace, appreciate, welcome, and celebrate differences embedded in racial, ethnic, and cultural diversities. Attention also needs to be given to increasing congregational participation in worship, especially in the area of music and congregational singing.
Responsibility: Worship, Prayer, and Music Task Group
Time Table: Priority
- 2. One Sunday AM Service:** Starting in 2016, Trinity will return to the practice of having only one Sunday AM worship service. The VMT will continue to monitor space needs and evaluate attendance and space on an ongoing basis.
Responsibility: Vision Management Team and Worship, Prayer, and Music Task Group
Time Table: [Priority] January 31, 2016
- 3. Consolidate and Integrate Worship Planning and Implementation:** In early 2016, the committees and groups responsible for planning and implementing the various aspects of worship will be restructured to allow for more integration of activities, as well as the utilization of fewer persons. Their mandate will be to plan and implement worship which is supportive of the vision of the church. They will experiment with redesigning worship planning so that different teams are assigned to plan for worship by different seasons of the year. These teams would be responsible for planning and staffing all functions related to the worship services.
Responsibility: Worship, Prayer, and Music Task Group
Time Table: [Priority]
- 4. Alternative Worship Service(s):** Starting in 2016, Trinity will experiment with offering an alternative worship service at a time other than Sunday AM, and with a different format, style, and possibly venue. The intent will be to focus more directly on engaging persons in the larger community that Trinity serves, by using creativity in crafting the liturgy for these services.
Responsibility: Worship, Prayer, and Music Task Group
Time Table:

5. **Prayer Opportunities and Practices Education:** Many in the congregation do not appear to be aware of the variety of prayer opportunities and practices which are already a part of Trinity's ministry. An educational campaign needs to be designed and implemented to address this.

Responsibility: Worship, Prayer, and Music Task Group

Time Table:

6. **Attending to Persons with Special Needs:** There needs to be a more focused effort given to making sure that the worship services of Trinity are fully accessible to all persons with any type of disability.

Responsibility: Worship, Prayer, and Music Task Group

Time Table:

7. **Greeters and Ushers:** There is a need at this time to combine the functions/roles of the Greeters and Ushers on Sunday morning.

Responsibility: Worship, Prayer, and Music Task Group

Time Table: [Priority]

Core Internal Ministries: Music

Music is integral to the life and ministry of Trinity and represents one of its core strengths, but the current music ministry is in need of some refocusing as well as restructuring. Trinity's choir program is strong and has maintained or increased participation levels and quality over many years. We will try to replicate this success in other ministries requiring volunteer leadership and participation going forward.

Mission Goals

- 1. Less Performance and More Lay Participation in Worship:** The current practice of utilizing professionals to enhance performance in worship will be scaled back with more emphasis being given to music which invites congregational participation. This will require Trinity to reduce professional costs and adjust staff workload accordingly.
Responsibility: Worship, Prayer, and Music Task Group
Time Table: [Priority]
- 2. Utilizing Creative and Accessible Music:** The selection of music for worship will incorporate contemporary selections which are innovative, fresh, and creative as well as some traditional music of the Episcopal tradition, all of which is more accessible for congregational participation.
Responsibility: Worship, Prayer, and Music Task Group
Time Table:
- 3. Using Music by Youth to Reach the Community.** Trinity has had success with youth involvement in music, such as Royal School of Church Music. This program or other programs that offer a similar structure and organization; producing beautiful music; friendships and fellowship; learning a valuable skill; high expectations; and having the results of efforts celebrated by the congregation on a regular basis needs to be expanded in seeking to serve youth in the larger community.
Responsibility: Worship, Prayer, and Music Task Group
Time Table:
- 4. Taize Service:** This ministry has been successful in serving a variety of persons within Trinity. Attention needs to be given to further opening up this service to the community. This should be done as an experiment on a provisional basis.
Responsibility: Worship, Prayer, and Music Task Group
Time Table:
- 5. Increase Lay Leadership in Music:** The music staff should focus extensively on recruiting, training, and empowering lay persons to take leadership roles in music planning and decision making, with staff increasingly shifting to a role of being a resource person.
Responsibility: Worship, Prayer, and Music Task Group
Time Table: [Priority]

Core Internal Ministries: Formation

Formation takes place at Trinity in three arenas—children and families, youth, and adults. It is important to understand the inter-relationships of these arenas as Trinity continues to refocus its ministry approach. The Task Team #2 which will be responsible for this will likely want to form three sub-teams to work in these areas, with coordination and collaboration between these sub-teams taking place on a regular basis.

Children and Families: Church School

Trinity has a history of specializing in ministry to children and this needs to continue into the future. However, the traditional church school approach to spiritually forming children may no longer be the best venue to accomplish this.

Mission Goals

1. **Revamp the Church School Ministry:** The traditional classroom-based program for church school is no longer as effective as it once was. There is a need to research the new approaches that are emerging which include at home as well as alternative venue formats. Several things to consider in this revamping:
 - Change the name of this ministry
 - Do not tie the timing necessarily to worship times
 - Keep parents with young children in mind
 - Identify alternative approaches now available and assess their viability for use by Trinity
 - Design a program approach that is less labor intensive
 - Develop a curriculum that is in line with the changing culture in being relevant for the children
 - Consider adding to the curriculum a service/outreach component that includes getting to know others who are different from Trinity's current members (for example, people who are other than white).

Responsibility: Formation Task Group: Children and Families Team

Time Table: [Priority]

2. **Start with the Parents with Children:** The revamping of the church school should begin with the task force having conversations with parents who have children, including: (a) persons attending who have children currently in the program; (b) persons attending who have children church school age but who are not currently in the program; (c) parents whose children access Trinity's programs, but who don't currently access Trinity's programs; and (d) persons in the community who have children church school age who are not presently part of any church.

Responsibility: Formation Task Group: Children and Families Team

Time Table: [Priority]

Youth (7th-12th)

An emphasis on serving youth has been an essential aspect of Trinity's ministry for many years. It is imperative to continue to review and revise this ministry, and the programs associated with it, in order to keep it relevant to current youth, while effectively integrating it within the whole ministry approach of Trinity.

Mission Goals

- 1. Revamp the Entire Youth Ministry:** The youth programs have been a vital part of Trinity's ministry for many years, but are now in need of being entirely revamped. Trinity is committed to investing in having a quality youth program, it is just not clear at this point what this would look like. Research should be conducted on programs from across denominations which are engaging with different designs.
Responsibility: Formation Task Group: Youth Team ²
Time Table: [Priority]
- 2. Start with the Youth, Then Co-Design New Ministry Approach:** The revamping of the youth ministry should begin by having extensive conversations with youth, both those who are already here in the church, as well as those who are not here, but are part of the larger community which Trinity seeks to serve. Based on these conversations, the task force would work with participating youth to co-design a new ministry approach.
Responsibility: Formation Task Group
Time Table: [Priority]
- 3. Cultivating Community around a Common Mission and Curriculum:** Trinity will develop a common mission for its youth ministry and will utilize this mission to help cultivate genuine community among the youth, and of the youth ministry with the larger church. This ministry will also develop a coherent curriculum that supports the redesigned ministry approach.
Responsibility: Formation Task Group: Youth Team
Time Table:
- 4. Reduce Fundraising Requirements:** The current practice of having multiple fundraising events to raise funds to support youth activities needs to be substantially reduced, with the ministry programs and activities being adjusted accordingly or funded in other ways.
Responsibility: Formation Task Group: Youth Team
Time Table:

² Persons serving on this Sub-Team Task Group should include volunteers at Trinity who have connected well with the youth in the past or present, as well as a few persons from the Visioning Team.

5. **Communication Network that Works:** The redesign of the ministry approach to youth needs to include the development of a communications strategy, and practices which relate to where youth are today in terms of the media they utilize.
Responsibility: Formation Task Group: Youth Team
Time Table:

6. **Staff Oversight:** Youth ministry requires intentional and qualified leadership. Lay leaders can provide for carrying out much of the ministry, but consideration should be given to employing a part-time person to provide oversight for it.
Responsibility: Formation Task Group: Youth Team
Time Table:

7. **Add Service Component:** Attention should be given to adding a service component that invites the youth into engagement with others in the community.
Responsibility: Formation Task Group: Youth Team
Time Table:

8. **Explore Partnering with Churches with Underserved Youth:** Identify what area churches do not have sufficient young people for their youth program, and explore the possibility of partnering with them in developing a shared youth ministry.
Responsibility: Formation Task Group: Youth Team
Time Table:

Adult Formation

Trinity needs to develop a more intentional approach to encourage the participation of adults in Christian formation.

- 1. Focus on Relationship Building:** Adult Christian Formation needs to be connected to and deeply rooted in the dynamics of relationship formation, but with other members within the church and persons in the larger community. There needs to be a balance maintained between social interaction and engagement with Christian content. Various relationship building and learning activities need to be designed and experimented with. The emphasis needs to be on experienced based learning—invite persons into new behaviors through experimenting.
Responsibility: Formation Task Group: Adult Team
Time Table:
- 2. Supporting Adult Relationship Building:** Some of the activities which are tried need to incorporate an educational component, such as helping persons live into different ways of understanding diversity and others. Some activities need to focus on incorporating a service component. All activities need to explore and incorporate the use of a variety of technologies and social media.
Responsibility: Formation Task Group: Adult Team
Time Table:
- 3. Developing an Intentional Small Group Ministry:** There are a wide variety of small group ministry approaches being used today by congregations to create a “small” church experience in relation to the “big” church experience of Sunday worship. Research needs to be conducted on what the current trends and practices are. Experiment with developing and implementing a small group ministry design for Trinity.
Responsibility: Formation Task Group: Adult Team
Time Table: [Priority]

Core Internal Ministries: Pastoral Care

Providing pastoral care has been and continues to be a real strength of Trinity's overall ministry approach.

Mission Goals

1. **Improve Organization and Administration:** This ministry area needs a different administrative organization that can provide for planning, coordination, and delivery of services.
Responsibility: Pastoral Care Task Group
Time Table: [Priority]

2. **Deepening and Strengthening this Ministry:** The revised administrative organization of this ministry should address the following issues:
 - Assessing the personnel costs of the current Stephen Ministry and determining what the right balance is between leadership needs in this program relative to the whole of the pastoral care ministry—how many is enough?
 - Expand the base of volunteers by developing more lay involvement in this ministry area
 - Make it explicitly clear to the congregation how this ministry area is organized and how one might become involved
 - Utilize new media technologies more creatively within the various programs and activities.Responsibility: Pastoral Care Task Group
Time Table:

3. **Connect with Outreach Ministries:** The administrative design developed will attend to connecting the variety of pastoral care programs and activities with the outreach ministries of the church in order to leverage the presence and connections of Trinity within the larger community it seeks to serve. Intentional follow-up needs to be made with contacts that are made through the provision of pastoral care services within the larger community. Attention needs to be given to serving persons who are in need of safe spaces to stay as well as the marginalized.
Responsibility: Pastoral Care Task Group
Implementation Time Table:

4. **Groups to Attend to Inside and Outside of Trinity:** There are a variety of human needs that should be attended to in providing pastoral care ministry to persons inside and outside of the church, which include:
 - Seniors and older adults
 - Families struggling financially
 - Persons with special needs
 - Those who are isolated or marginalizedResponsibility: Pastoral Care Task Group

Time Table:

5. **Extending Focus Outside of Trinity:** There needs to be an assessment of the actual costs involved in providing pastoral care to persons both inside and outside the church, especially in regard to Stephen Ministry. The average cost per person served needs to be reviewed in relation to the overall budget resources which are available.

Responsibility: Pastoral Care Task Group

Implementation Time Table:

6. **Lay-Trained and Led Pastoral Care:** Trinity needs to develop a more robust lay-led pastoral care delivery system that is not as intensive as Stephen Ministry, but which is able to address basic needs in the congregation and community.

Responsibility: Pastoral Care Task Group

Implementation Time Table: [Priority]

Core External Ministries: Serving Needs

Trinity has a history of working to meet needs within the larger community it seeks to serve, though these efforts have not been as integrated into a holistic ministry approach as they could be. In addition, much of this work has relied more on providing financial assistance directly or through partners than in developing supportive relationships to those in need.

Mission Goals

- 1. Less Check Writing and More Relationship Building:** Trinity will shift the focus of its outreach ministry of serving needs to stress the development of building relationships with those whose needs are being met. While some financial assistance will still be provided, there will be less emphasis on providing financial resources directly or through partners as the primary way of serving the community.
Responsibility: Outreach Task Group
Time Table:
- 2. Leveraging Existing Programs to Connect with Larger Community:** Trinity is involved in a variety of programs and activities, some of which have focused on persons who are outside of the church, but some of which focus on existing church members. The following programs and activities will be administratively organized to make connections with those in need in the larger community with a view towards leveraging them to build relationships with community residents:
 - Dorothy Day
 - Moral Monday
 - Men's Breakfast
 - Chapel on the Green
 - Pastoral Care programs and activities
 - Children's music programs and activities
 - Companion Church
 - Micro Lending
 - Stephen MinistryResponsibility: Outreach Task Group
Time Table:
- 3. Serving Community Needs:** There are a variety of ways in which Trinity can serve persons in its larger community. These include the following and need to be incorporated into the on-going ministry of the church.
 - Provide place of refuge to those in need of safety
 - Help persons/families struggling financiallyResponsibility: Outreach Task Group
Time Table:
- 4. Step Up to More Intentional Leadership Role in the Community:** The Commission on Outreach will be responsible to take the lead in helping Trinity become more actively engaged within the larger community it seeks to serve, especially through convening

and hosting visible activities as well as partnering with others and participating in shared or joint initiatives. The goal is to work our way back into a role of leadership within Newtown.

Responsibility: Outreach Task Group

Time Table: [Priority]

5. **Being Part of Trinity Is Being Part of Outreach:** The Commission on Outreach will help to cultivate a culture within Trinity where being a part of Trinity means that one is also a part of engaging in outreach within the larger community. It is important to provide Trinity members with opportunities to engage in service in the larger community.
Responsibility: Outreach Task Group
Time Table: [Priority]
6. **Sharing Information about Episcopal Church in CT Pledge:** The Vestry will regularly update and inform the congregation regarding how the pledge to the Episcopal Church in CT is being used in order to help cultivate a larger awareness of the congregation's involvement in mission and ministry.
Responsibility: Outreach Task Group
Time Table: [Priority]
7. **Clarify Role of Ben's Lighthouse for Congregation:** The Commission on Outreach will take the leadership in helping to educate the congregation regarding the current status of Ben's Lighthouse and the relationship of Trinity to this ministry. This ministry has incorporated as an independent 501-c-3 organization where there are several designed board seats for Trinity members and where Trinity also offers space for this ministry to use.
Responsibility: Vision Management Team
Time Table: [Priority]

Core External Ministries: Engaging

Trinity needs to cultivate more of a focus on engaging those who live within the larger community it seeks to serve by learning to listen to, walk with, and learn from them in developing relationships as it discerns how better to participate in God's mission within this context. The focus needs to be on bearing witness to and enacting aspects of the Kingdom of God within our community. One key to doing this is to engage in experiments where the focus is on "behaving our way into new thinking."

Mission Goals

- 1. Cultivating a Culture of Taking Risks and Experimenting:** The task force on outreach will be responsible for cultivating an outreach emphasis where taking risks and try new things through experimenting becomes the norm. Attention will be given to orienting the congregation on the dynamics of "action learning."
Responsibility: Vision Management Team and Outreach Task Group
Time Table: [Priority]
- 2. Continuous Scan of Context for God's Presence and Activity:** The task force will be responsible for continuously scanning the larger community for evidences of the work of God's Spirit, and then design experiments to engage ministry in these areas.
Responsibility: Vision Management Team
Time Table: [Priority]
- 3. Focus on Relationship Building:** The focus of the experiments developed to engage persons in the larger context will be on building relationships where those involved from Trinity focus on listening to, walking with, and learning from these persons as they also winsomely share the gospel as good news.
Responsibility: Outreach Task Group
Time Table:
- 4. Learning to Inter-Relate with Diversity:** The task force will devote intentional focus on designing experiments which bring members from Trinity into conversation with those who represent the "other" within the larger community—ethnicity, social class, etc. The primary focus will be on developing and building relationships with these persons, rather than on trying to meet needs, though engaging in addressing some needs may become part of a shared partnership over time.
Responsibility: Outreach Task Group
Time Table:
- 5. Address Community Issues:** Engage relationally with community residents through convening and hosting conversations which can lead to healing, reconciliation and also result in action toward resolutions. Some of these issues include:
 - Non-traditional families
 - Justice issues
 - Gun Violence in Our Society

- **Mental Health in Our Society**

Responsibility: Outreach Task Group

Time Table:

6. **Vocational Ministry of All God's People:** An intentional effort needs to be made to help all of Trinity's members understand how their vocations are also a vehicle for ministry in relation to the Kingdom of God. This initiative should provide opportunities for persons to experiment with their vocations in learning how to relate them to God's mission. Feedback on this initiative will be provided to the congregation on an ongoing basis.

Responsibility: Outreach Task Group

Time Table:

7. **Developing Partnerships:** Trinity needs to cultivate and develop a variety of partnerships with other organizations and churches in the area in seeking to deepen and broaden its participation in the mission of God.

Responsibility: Vision Management Team and Outreach Task Group

Time Table:

8. **Ecumenical and Interfaith Relationships:** Trinity needs to develop and participate in a variety of ecumenical and interfaith relationships within the community in seeking to more fully live into participating in God's mission within its larger community.

Responsibility: Vision Management Team and Outreach Task Group

Time Table:

9. **Trinity Living Locally while Thinking Globally:** Trinity needs to consistently make connections between its local ministry and larger global trends, allowing these larger trends to help shape local decisions and resource utilization.

Responsibility: Outreach Task Group

Time Table:

Infrastructure: Leadership—Staffing and Lay Volunteer

It is critical to design and implement a staffing model that is scaled to the existing program and which is also feasible within the existing budget. Increased emphasis needs to be placed on developing and utilizing lay leadership across all the ministries of the church.

Mission Goals

1. **Develop Robust Volunteer Deployment Process:** Trinity needs to develop a volunteer deployment system that is capable of recruiting, equipping, deploying, supporting, supervising, and assessing volunteers working across the system in all the various ministries. Issues to be attended to in designing and implementing this system include the following:
 - Conducting research on churches which have such systems
 - Emphasis on lay leadership in ministry roles with staff support
 - Deploying volunteers around their passions where they can serve as champions for a particular ministry
 - Working to deploy persons in relationship to their gifts, skills, and interests

Responsibility: Vision Management Team

Time Table: [Priority]

2. **Staff Positions Scaled to Program Size that Fit Future Ministry Needs:** As the volunteer deployment process begins to ramp up and the overall ministry begins to be scaled to fit the present size of the congregation, then assessment needs to be given to the actual staffing needs of Trinity. The revamping of church school and youth ministry along with changes in worship will factor into this assessment. Current staff will continue in their roles through the first half of 2016 with the understanding that these changes are taking place, and that future needs are in process of being determined. Current staff will be consulted with during these processes of revamping and changing the scale of ministry, but the leadership will be with the designated task force. All staff positions in the redesigned ministry approach will have newly framed job descriptions.

Responsibility: Vision Management Team working with Worship, Prayer, and Music and Formation Task Teams

Time Table: Fall 2016

3. **Engage in Experiments:** The Vision Management Team and various Task Teams will utilize a series of experiments going forward to trying to work out the best scaling and fit for both programs and staffing. In conducting these experiments, they need to develop a clear tracking system with clear measurement metrics in order to be able to assess consistently and fairly.

Responsibility: Vision Management Team

Time Table: [Priority]

Infrastructure: Organization and Structure

The organization and structure of Trinity need to support its ministry. It is important to continuously assess the value and viability of structure in the life of the church.

1. **Cultivating a Supportive Organizational Culture:** Organizational culture is basically a by product of the policies, practices, and on-going decision making of an organization.

Characteristics of the culture which Trinity seeks to cultivate include the following:

- Being nimble, flexible, and adaptive
- Allowing for, even promoting, risk and experimenting that learns from failure
- Learning to thrive in the midst of uncertainty and ambiguity
- Celebrates successes and stresses wins as they take place
- Strengthening communication throughout the system utilizing a variety of technologies
- Simplifying the church calendar so that it is readily understandable

The Vision Management Team will take the lead on helping to shape these practices but all the Task Teams and Commissions need to work to support this change in culture.

Responsibility: Vision Management Team

Time Table:

2. **Restructure Vestry:** Vestry is in the process of engaging in some restructuring. The Vision Team recommends that the following aspects of structure be considered:

- Focus on flattening the organization
- Consider eliminating some commissions and turn the work over to task teams
- Practice more permission giving to the various task teams and commissions that remain
- Shift work increasingly to vision and leadership activities, attending less to administration and management which can be delegated to task teams and commissions that remain
- Work closely and collaboratively with Vision Management Team

Responsibility: Vestry

Time Table: [Priority]

3. **Task Team and Commission Mandates:** The various task teams that are created along with the remaining commissions need to have clearly defined mandates regarding what they are responsible for doing. The focus should be on empowering these groups to do their work, and holding them accountable for agreed-upon results.

Responsibility: Vestry and Vision Management Team

Time Table: January 2016 [Priority]

Infrastructure: Properties and Facilities

Trinity has substantial assets in regard to property and facilities. It needs to attend carefully to stewarding these assets for use in ministry.

- 1. Review Properties for Consideration to Sell:** The Rectory and Curate House should be reviewed as to whether the church should continue to hold these properties or should consider their sale. Sale of the Rectory would entail financial commitments for a Rector. A Housing Allowance may be an alternative.
Responsibility: Finance Commission
Time Table:
- 2. Update Capital Improvement Review List:** There is a need to develop a current version of the capital improvement list of projects, and for a prioritized timetable for required improvements to be developed. Consideration should be given to the development and implementation of a capital campaign to address the more immediate and/or substantial needs.
Responsibility: Finance Commission
Time Table:
- 3. Add Face-Lift to the Church Facility:** Consideration needs to be giving to refreshing the look of Trinity as it proceeds to implement this vision plan. This could involve any number of ways of making the church more visible within the community to get people's attention, especially out front along the major thoroughfare, e.g. signage, banner, etc.
Responsibility: Vision Management Team and Property Commission
Time Table: [Priority]
- 4. Sharing the Use of Facilities:** Trinity needs to explore what community organizations and groups might have need for and who might be interested in using the Trinity facilities. The focus of any such use should be on making relational connections with community residents/leaders and also promoting a more substantial participation in the mission of God.
Responsibility: Outreach Task Group and Vision Management Team
Time Table:

Infrastructure: Finances

Trinity has struggled in recent years to live within its budget. This visioning process has focused on developing an approach of living within our means. The church's ministry and staffing need to be scaled accordingly.

1. **Revamp Stewardship Concept and Approach:** The traditional system of trying to build a budget, and then fund it, is no longer working. A substantially changed approach is required, one that steps back to think both theologically as well as philosophically about the whole issue of stewardship. Issues that need to be attended to in doing this work include the following:
 - Attend to generational differences as to why and how people give
 - Research various approaches of other congregations who have developed creative new ways to promote stewardship
 - Focus on promoting ministry—projects and people, when inviting people to give rather than giving to a budget
 - Work to change the narrative from one of “scarcity” to one of “abundance”
 - Plan to adjust staffing costs in relation to redesigned ministry approach

Responsibility: Vestry convenes task group of passionate and qualified persons and collaborates with Vision Management Team

Time Table: [Priority]

2. **Living within Our Means:** Vestry and Vision Management Team work to craft and promote this narrative and to also operationalize it in the actual financial commitments of the church

Responsibility: Vestry and Vision Management Team

Time Table:

Relating to the Larger Church

Trinity Episcopal Church is a member congregation with the Episcopal Church of Connecticut and the National Episcopal Church. It seeks to participate well within this structure and steward well its Episcopal identity.

1. **Relating to the Episcopal Church of Connecticut (ECCT):** This regional body no longer uses the word “diocese” to identify itself, but rather uses the word “church.” This is intended to convey an intent of partnership with congregations in taking a shared journey together into a changing future. It has pursued the development of a new vision document and strategic plan for its ministry, which follows in the wake of the recent initiative at the national level to engage in revising and updating its life and ministry (known as the TREC report). The narrative that needs to be conveyed is that the National Church led to engage in change, the ECCT followed this leadership and developed its now new mission design, and now Trinity is following suit with its own vision plan.
2. **Located in a New Region:** The ECCT recently reorganized with Trinity now being assigned to a new region. This presents an opportunity to build new partnerships and to network in new ways with others.
3. **Take the wider church into account:** Leverage the work done by the ECCT and the national church as we go forward.



Appendix A

VISIONING TEAM MEMBERS

Bart Geissinger, Co-chair

Laureen Trotto, Co-chair

Rick Chamiec-Case, Communications

Forry Weatherby, Vestry Representative

Cindy Anderau, Vestry Representative

Emily Toby, Youth Representative

Pastor Kathleen Adams-Shepherd

Anne McWhirter

Sue Roman

Ben Toby

Catherine Filiato

Erin Lutz

Jon Wanzer

Matthew Day

Dr. Craig VanGelder, Consultant