

ST. JAMES ANGLICAN SWOT REPORT

Prepared by Charlene Gordon, 18 April 2010

1.0 Opening Comments

We are living in uncertain, chaotic times where past success is no longer a guarantee of future achievement. If we only improve what we have been doing, we will die. No congregation can afford to do church as it always has been done and expect to be around by 2050. We cannot be joyful, attractive communities if our congregations are divided and conflicted so we will need to respect our differences without ever allowing them to become disruptive. Churches today need to be clearly focused, intentional in practice, and “purpose-driven”.

The Reverend Dr. Gary Nicolosi

2.0 Goals of St. James Anglican Church

- To define St. James’ vision and mission for the upcoming decade
- To develop and embrace a three year Strategic Plan

3.0 Recent Planning Activities

- 2008 workshops with Bishop Ed Leidel to identify a parish vision
- Bokdan Demographic Report
- 2009 parishioner questionnaire

In addition, two town hall meetings plus interviews with staff and individual parishioners were held between March 3 and April 12, 2010. These discussions focussed on the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats as related to St. James.

4.0 What Was Heard During the SWOT Town Hall Meetings & Interviews

Strengths

- Very strong Church community – willing volunteers, committed, talent galore
- Good community and people outreach
- Many special study/interest opportunities – contemplative community, education series, chancel guild, choir, outreach, liturgy
- Dedicated staff
- Social activities – sale, lunch after church, social hour after service
- Eucharist at every service – the presence of God becomes real
- Clergy that have strong academic as well as theological backgrounds

Weaknesses

- Lack of youth participation, problem bringing and keeping young families into the Church
- Chronic budget deficit – building expenses, shrinking congregation
- Weak communications – also poor connection between 8:30 and 10:30 people
- Would like more modern music in services
- Too much emphasis on music – it doesn't always need to be the centre of worship
- Difficult building – awkward parish hall & lower level, one floor kitchen, poor parking, expensive repairs
- Weak administrative support –old computer technology, office manager struggles with databases and word processing output
- Aging volunteers – excess workload can lead to burnout
- Lack of regular performance reviews for staff
- More management training for senior staff

Opportunities

- More frequent youth-led services for all young people – young adult appropriate music/worship, E-learning comics regarding Anglican traditions, etc.
- Offer a more modern service – perhaps once a month to start – with modern music
- Time services to support young families – When people come to have babies baptized, encourage and welcome them –develop a ‘welcome mat’ program to reach those feeling isolated within “family” of the church
- Invite congregation to participate in youth activities e.g. bake sale –proceeds to youth group
- Contact absent parishioners personally by phone – e.g. parishioners absent for 1 month
- Consider how the building responds to our needs and/or what changes need to be made
- Make better use of the facility to realize more income from the community
- Remove fixed pews and provide flexible seating
- Offer more education in Anglican basics – opportunities for Bible study – use of different liturgies, need more explanation re: Anglican traditions to demystify
- Hold family education sessions between morning services
- Once a month have a single service alternating BAS/BSP
- Have copies of communications for pick up at back of church – communication tree/phoning tree for non-computer parishioners
- Recruit more volunteers to share the workload and avoid burnout – hold an ‘opportunity fair’ to display all the areas available for involvement
- More celebration of Christian joy and praise – do a Power Point hymnfest
- Ask those who no longer attend/belong why they don't

- More parish awareness & involvement in major issues – better communications between lay and clergy
- Clarification of our Heritage building plans and financing – develop a capital campaign

Threats

- Expenses exceed income
- Sunday sports, shopping & other events involving young families (also grandparents)
- Other churches doing a better job of offering modern music, more social relevance
- Lots of young people work on Sundays
- Aging demographics

In reviewing the SWOT comments, the following strategic planning themes are emerging:

- a) Maintaining a strong and vital Church Community
- b) Maintaining a heritage church building
- c) Developing more Youth participation & leadership
- d) Balancing financial resources
- e) Enhancing operational efficiency

6.0 Recommendation

Develop a three–five year Strategic Plan that begins the process of change for St. James. Please see the Strategic Planning chart attached as a template for the Strategic Planning process.

I also recommend looking at this website– <http://www.stpeterseastlindfield.org.au/council/> – as an Anglican–based example of a church that is realizing many of the goals stated by St. James.