

Re-Imagining Pilgrim's Ministry

The Pilgrim Lutheran Church 2014-2017 Strategic Plan

Introduction, Process and Information Sources

In autumn 2013, the Vestry formed a Strategic Planning Task Force to guide a process to create a new, four-year Strategic Plan for Pilgrim Lutheran Church. Starting with a review of the items from Pilgrim's Long Range Visioning Plan approved in 2005, the Task Force reviewed progress against that 2005 Plan, ultimately determining that the major goals of that plan were either achieved or no longer actionable, although some goals remain incomplete. The Task Force also reviewed Pilgrim's Mission and Core Values to ensure that the Mission and Core Values continue to reflect Pilgrim and its role in the world.

The Task Force gathered information from the following sources as the first stage of drafting a new plan.

1. Input from the congregation on Pilgrim's current strengths through a variety of survey methods;
2. Opinions and ideas from the congregation regarding the actions they feel Pilgrim is called to undertake in the next four years;
3. Demographic information about Pilgrim's members and the community in which we live, including publicly available data, surveys from the Pilgrim community and internal Pilgrim information sources;
4. Consultation with the Vestry at several points along the way; and
5. Analysis of Pilgrim's current ministry and the groups who perform this ministry.

The Strategic Planning Task Force consisted of the following Pilgrim members: Pastor Carol Tomer, Stephanie Fay, Jean Hay, Natalie Hokanson, Katia McDonough, Matt O'Toole, Kristo Sween. Dr. Kathy Thomforde provided leadership and expertise.

Pilgrim's Vestry adopted the plan on May 20, 2014.

Pilgrim's Mission

The Strategic Plan must support Pilgrim's Mission. The Strategic Plan must provide clear direction on key initiatives that will enable Pilgrim to better embody the unique vision of who we are as stated in our Mission Statement. Thus, the first stage in developing this plan was a re-examination of our Mission Statement, "A home for hungry minds and souls." After review, comment from congregants, and reflection and discussion by the Task Force, the Vestry updated the Pilgrim Mission Statement to read as follows:

MISSION: *Pilgrim Lutheran Church is an inclusive Christian worshipping community that seeks, nurtures, and empowers hungry minds and souls to live generously in response to God's love.*

Since “A home for hungry minds and souls” is more of a descriptor or tagline for Pilgrim – and will continue to be used -- the above mission statement expands on that tagline to add more depth and meaning.

Pilgrim’s Values

The Strategic Plan must be a living embodiment of Pilgrim’s Core Values. After review of our Core Values, comment from congregants, and reflection and discussion by the Task Force, the Vestry updated the Pilgrim Core Values to read as follows:

VALUES:

Worshipping and Singing Together—We are a community of worship, centered in the grace of God and in our liturgical, scriptural, sacramental, and musical inheritances, joyfully received and re-visioned for our context.

Growing in Faith—We nurture faith through home, church, and daily life, and dare to ask tough questions and challenge assumptions, because the reformation of the church that Martin Luther sparked began with a heated debate on a university campus.

Living Sustainably and Doing Justice—We seek to be a community of solidarity and service, living out the countercultural values of the gospel, grounded in moral courage and love for one another, our wider communities, and the whole creation.

Robust Care and Celebration—If one rejoices, we all rejoice together; if one suffers, we all suffer together (1 Corinthians 12:26). The gospel calls us beyond rugged American individualism to meeting Christ incarnationally in the one body of Christ.

Outreach and Welcome—The gospel calls us to inclusive and intentional avenues of invitation. We meet the suffering and risen Christ in the stranger.

Shared Ministry—Each of us is a minister, living out our baptismal vocation of loving the neighbor in a variety of ways both within and beyond the ministry of Pilgrim.

Creativity—In service to the unique community context in which we have been planted, we focus on imagination, inspiration, inventiveness, and the arts.

Context for the Strategic Plan

Analysis of the data collected during the strategic planning process revealed three broad underlying tensions that characterize the current context at Pilgrim. Consideration of these tensions informed the identification of strategic priorities and will have an impact on implementation of the plan. The three tensions are as follows:

1. Stressful “busyness” versus the desire for greater engagement in church life
2. Use of staff leadership versus leadership through shared ministry
3. The goal of caring for ourselves versus caring for the needs of others

In addition, it is important to emphasize that these four strategic priorities do not represent a complete and comprehensive listing of Pilgrim’s ministries and activities for the next four years. These four priorities represent areas that will receive special focus and regular monitoring for

progress in this planning cycle. The priorities that follow are not presented in order of importance.

The Plan

PRIORITY #1: DEEPEN AND REIMAGINE OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD AND ONE ANOTHER THROUGH WORSHIP

Pilgrim's worship services, both Sunday morning and evening, are a clear strength for Pilgrim. Worship is a compelling and uniting part of the Pilgrim faith experience. In worship we meet Christ and each other, challenge ourselves, and deepen our faith. Pilgrim must leverage this strength in order to continue nourishing hungry minds and souls of all ages. *Responsibility of the pastor along with the WME Committee.*

Strategies:

1. Foster the evolution of Sunday morning worship as the central gathering for Pilgrims and the gateway for those we've been expecting.
 - a. The Worship, Music and Evangelism Committee has already established two goals.
 - Increase the number of worshippers
 - Develop a plan for consistent procedures related to visitors
 - b. Implement further activities to enhance and enrich morning worship, including
 - Form a task force to study the use of language in worship
 - Conclude research and reflection and develop recommendations on the optimal number and timing of the worship services, especially whether we should have one service or two, during some of part of the year.
 - Deepen child-friendly worship, including involving children and youth in worship roles and appealing to multiple senses in worship.

2. Foster the evolution of Sunday evening worship services as core to our identity and evangelism.
 - a. Create a structure to sustain the offering of these evening services into the future.
 - b. Build community and deepen commitment among the evening service worshippers
 - c. Explore creative possibilities and make recommendations to expand the potential of evening worship.

PRIORITY #2: NURTURE YOUNG PILGRIMS AND THEIR FAMILIES

Children, youth and their families and circles of support are vital to the future of Pilgrim, Christianity and the world at large. Our growing (and young) congregation needs robust programming for children, youth and their families. Pilgrim is called to nurture the development of young people who are committed to the Christian life and who are prepared to serve the needs of our world. *Responsibility of appropriate staff and the Children's and Youth Committees.*

Strategies:

1. Develop leadership resources for a sustainable and safe children's program.
Implement the following initiatives to serve the needs of our youngest members:
 - a. Build community among Sunday School teachers to promote continuity and support.
 - b. Recruit expanded lay leadership for The Lambs program (children from birth to 3 years and their caregivers)
 - c. Complete and promote the new policy on Child Safety and Protection.

2. Develop youth programming to ensure a continuum of offerings from early childhood through young adults.
As a home for hungry minds and souls, we feel it is essential that we encourage doubts and questions as well as provide support, guidance and witness at times when many youth distance themselves from the church.
 - a. Explore and develop cooperative youth and family ministry experiences with other Lutheran congregations in the area.
 - b. Recruit and retain more lay leaders and mentors for Pilgrim youth.
 - c. Develop separate ministries for middle school youth and for high school youth.

3. Ensure that our ministry extends into the young adult years with outreach to Millennials (young adults born 1980 – 2000).

PRIORITY #3: ENGAGE PILGRIMS IN MINISTRY

Shared Ministry is one of Pilgrim's Core Values, indicating the desire to engage all Pilgrims in the life of our church and its varied ministries while also recognizing the opportunities for ministry in daily life. In response to God's love for each of us, we are called to use our gifts and talents for the benefit of others. We seek to be more intentional about inviting Pilgrims of all ages in all life stages to experience the positive and life-giving aspects of shared ministry. *The Director of Shared Ministries and Faith Formation has staff responsibility, along with the Vestry.*

Strategies:

1. Develop and implement an annual issue-based theme to allow for greater understanding, engagement and action by all members of our Pilgrim community.

The Vestry will, in consultation with staff and the congregation, select an issue-based theme for each year to focus our study, prayer and action. This will allow Pilgrims to learn more about the selected issue (i.e. homelessness, hunger, peacemaking, etc.) and to more fully discern where the Spirit is calling us to action. Issues may be domestic or global in nature. Pilgrim's relationship with our partner congregation in Luganga, Tanzania could be addressed in one of the yearly themes.
2. Review and renew the current structure of groups within Pilgrim with the goals of greater effectiveness in ministry and more efficient use of staff and volunteer resources.
 - a. Review all existing groups to identify possibilities for coordination and/or consolidation.
 - b. Simplify the current structure of governance to reduce demands on staff and volunteers while not compromising results.
 - c. Build upon the work of the Pilgrim Lutheran Engagement Task Force in 2012.
 - d. Develop a "dreaming team" to work on the incubation of new, innovative, or long-term ideas.
3. Make engaging in shared ministry a meaningful, fulfilling aspect of all faith journeys.
 - a. Expand our time and talent assessment and conduct it on a regular basis.
 - b. Identify and equip Pilgrim leaders, so that those who lead our ministries are fed and enriched in their roles.
 - c. Invite all Pilgrims to participate and lead in alignment with their gifts and abilities.
 - d. Make greater use of technology in communication and in connecting Pilgrims with similar interests.

PRIORITY #4: CULTIVATE GENEROSITY

We want to encourage generosity as a joyful response to God's abundant love for us, not out of a sense of guilt or obligation. Our future vision for Pilgrim depends upon adequate resources for implementation. *Responsibility of the Vestry at present.*

Strategies:

1. Address the "revenue gap" in the coming year with the objective of ending the use of undesignated funds for core ministry and mission.
2. Acknowledge and encourage generosity as a spiritual practice to enrich the lives of all Pilgrims. Provide tools and support for this practice.
3. Recognize and honor the generosity of Pilgrims, whether it is in the form of time, talent or treasure. Cultivate thankfulness and awe at the abundance in our lives and community.
4. Tell stories about Pilgrim's ministry. Lift Pilgrim's ministry to the same level of commitment that capital campaigns receive.
5. Create a group with the specific responsibility to cultivate generosity through year-round engagement.

Implementation of our Strategic Priorities

In the coming months, those responsible for implementing each of the four strategic priorities will meet to discuss these strategies. We welcome the engagement of all Pilgrims to help make this four-year plan successful