

A Vision for Prince George Winyah Episcopal Church

I. Introduction

The vestry and staff of Prince George Winyah Episcopal Church (PGWEC) embarked on a visioning process in November 2010. Church member Peter Mitchell conducted SWOT Analyses (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) with the staff, vestry, parents of youth, Prime Timers (70+), and 40/50/60s. The vestry and staff reviewed and refined the SWOT analyses at a planning retreat on January 29, 2011 and formulated a general vision for PGWEC calling us (1) to grow in our maturity as disciples of Jesus Christ; (2) to become more effective in leading people to faith in Christ; (3) to become a church that sends out disciples of Christ into ministry; and (4) to embody Christ more visibly in our community. With this general vision, the staff developed a vision statement and a strategic plan with five emphases: *Learning, Loving, Worshiping, Serving, and Proclaiming*. The vision statement and strategic plan were reviewed, edited and approved by the vestry at its July, 2011 meetings. Our Vision includes a summary of the major findings of the SWOT analyses, a summary of the vestry retreat, the vision statement, and the strategic plan to implement the vision statement.

II. SWOT Findings

A. Four Major Strengths

1. Theologically-grounded, intellectual, Bible-based, Christ-centered staff with a passionate commitment to strengthening the Christian faith of the congregation and modeling Christ in daily living
2. Parishioners with financial resources, who are generous, gracious, warm and welcoming, who desire to serve, are responsive to the needs of fellow parishioners, especially in times of crisis, who show an “indwelling of the Holy Spirit,” joy, plus long-term financial health
3. Inspiring worship and teaching (excellent sermons, wonderful music, effective use of Prayer Book), historical presence in spreading the “word of God”
4. Programs and ministries such as youth and music, as well as educational and social programming, pastoral ministry

B. Four Major Areas for Improvement

1. Lack of outreach ministry in the community and a perception of not being engaged except giving money, a desire to revitalize PGWEC’s vision, and for more passion and risk-taking, a “go-for-it” attitude, and to overcome natural resistance to change
2. Desire to engage majority of the congregation more actively in the life of the church and spiritual growth, especially young families (with many demands on their time) and newcomers (who need to be integrated into the church); desire to improve communication about people in need and to find ways to bridge the “3 congregations” (8, 9, and 11 am).
3. Inadequate facilities and financial challenges – Use of space, especially among preschool, youth, church; facility limitations and cost of upkeep; plus even the beauty of the church is intimidating; coupled with concern (especially of past and present vestry members) over the debt and impact of the economy on PGWEC
4. Congregation wants to do more: clergy are great, but in the end it must be congregation that commits itself to ministry, Key is discipleship – be the church in the world by the way we translate the preaching and teaching in the way we live our lives. Biggest need is the process to make disciples of all congregants, to excite the passion, to engage all in spiritual growth and ministry, coming to church more and serving more in the community; need someone to coordinate ministry within and outside congregation

C. Four Most Promising Opportunities for Ministry in Georgetown and Waccamaw Neck

1. Preschool, after school and youth ministry based upon well-grounded theology and as a way to serve young families, also special emphasis on education and music as a way to share expertise and to engage our youth in peer tutoring; youth are key to the future

2. Partner with Mitney Project or a church in the West End making use of PGWEC's strengths, all in the context of spreading the Gospel. Because the congregation's expertise includes those who are talented with tools as well as those who are not, but enjoy working on projects, PGWEC could be engaged in renovating houses in the West End, as well as helping on new houses being built by Habitat
3. Focus on economic problems and the elderly, explore the concept of applying the professional talents of the congregation (lawyers, physicians and nurses, bankers and financial industry experts, educators, social workers, etc.) in ways that emphasize skills that some churches don't possess in solving problems and providing personal ministry – again, always in the context of spreading the Gospel
4. First step: review the 50+ suggestions and prioritize them into a few initiatives that could begin soon (implement in 6-12 months), second wave (implement in 1-2 years), and hold (select promising ideas that could be implemented in 2-4 years). Make sure all outreach is Gospel-based and Scripturally sound

D. Four Most Potentially Damaging Threats to successful ministry for PGWEC

1. The TEC and Diocese of SC disagreements that could adversely impact our ministry. This threat can be viewed EITHER as a source of tension and dissention OR as an opportunity for the Diocese and churches like Prince George to reaffirm and revitalize their mission and ministry rather than focus on differences. Doing God's will and having a vision for spreading the Gospel and sharing God's grace is the best response to tension, and in the process, we will be a stronger congregation and a more faithful church
2. The economy and its impact on giving, on ministry and on outreach to our community
3. "Busy-ness" or pace of life, lack of patience, feeling overwhelmed by everything we are facing, coupled with the lower priority of God and religion and the decline of family values all tends to move the church to the periphery of life
4. Wal-Mart Syndrome (bigger is better), coupled with the sound-bite superficiality of today's society makes it difficult to teach/ preach the more thoughtful message of Christ

III. Summary of Vestry Retreat

There was a pervasive sense that many good things are happening at Prince George, that there is much to be thankful for, and yet there is a genuine desire to be an even stronger church both in spiritual growth and outreach ministry. One phrase that captured the alignment of strengths to ethos was "transform ourselves first and then transform our church and its outreach ministry." By strengthening the faith and allowing the Holy Spirit more presence, more control, the congregation will be equipped for Christ-centered outreach ministry, whether it be short-term mission trips or a long-term local project. By seeking what God is doing and joining Him in it, modeling after Jesus, following the leading of the Holy Spirit, we will become the Christians we desire to be in thought, word, and deed. The following words or phrases were listed as capturing what is special about our church: *Comforting, warm, loving, family oriented, intellectual, Bible-based, Christ centered, traditional, safe, and historic*. In discussing these words, several people noted that "Churched, but not familiar with Christ" is an audience to target for evangelizing. The strengths of Prince George are aligned well with Christians seeking a church with depth of thought and willing to probe deeply into Scripture. As we transform ourselves, we can also invite friends and neighbors who are seeking an intellectually stimulating and Bible-based focus to join our church.

We concluded by identifying words or phrases that would describe the vision we hope to pursue and the church we hope to become. The following ideas resonated with the group as completing the phrase "The vision of Prince George is to be a church that *embodies Christ, really knows and follows Jesus, releases people into ministry especially with youth, and grows the Kingdom of God*. There was a common recognition that despite good intentions, we have fallen short of being the "Christian church" that the Lord calls us to be, although probably every church would or should say that. We allow the demands of the world to divert us from the commands of Jesus and the calling of the Holy Spirit. Still, there seemed to be a heartfelt desire to become the Christian church that is described in the Bible.

IV. The Vision Statement:

Our vision is to be a Bible-based, Christ-centered, Anglican tradition congregation that earnestly seeks (1) to grow in our maturity as disciples of Jesus Christ; (2) to become more effective in leading people to faith in Christ; (3) to become a church that sends out disciples of Christ into ministry; and (4) to embody Christ more visibly in our community. To fulfill this vision, Prince George will focus on five areas – *Learning, Loving, Worshiping, Serving, and Proclaiming Jesus.*

Five Emphases:

1. *A Learning Church:* Prince George is committed to in-depth study of scripture, Christian theology, and church doctrine as foundational to all we do as a Bible-based congregation
2. *A Loving Church:* We are committed to loving one another with God's love, to praying for one another, to helping one another in times of need and to celebrating with one another in times of joy.
3. *A Worshiping Church:* Prince George is committed to growing in our passion, discipleship, joy and intimacy with the Lord through times of corporate worship and individual devotions.
4. *Serving Church:* Prince George is committed to giving our financial and personal resources to help needy or vulnerable people in our community and beyond our state and nation, always in the context of sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ
5. *A Proclaiming Church:* Prince George is committed to proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ in word and deed as we witness to God's grace and love and Christ's redeeming sacrifice to one another, to friends and neighbors, and to people we encounter in ministry.

V. Strategic Plan: Translating the Five Emphases into Plans of Action

Within five years, we hope to see the following major initiatives become operational as the presence of the Holy Spirit empowers the staff and congregation to embody Christ in word, thought, and deed. To prepare for the vision to unfold, a core group of 12 members of the congregation will participate in the first of annual immersion experiences of study, prayer, service, and proclaiming the Gospel. These annual immersion experiences will equip active laypersons to serve with the staff both in implementing the initiatives below and in fostering a more pervasive indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the congregation.

1. *A Learning Church:* Prince George is committed to in-depth study of scripture, Christian theology, and church doctrine as foundational to all we do as a Bible-based congregation
 - a. Bible Study (men, women, couples)
 - b. Sunday Adult Education Programs
 - c. Episcopal Church Women (ECW) programs
 - d. Weekday Book Study (men, women, couples)
 - e. Youth groups and Tweeners Groups
 - f. Children's Sunday School
 - g. Vacation Bible Study
 - h. Home Prayer and Discussion Groups
 - i. Dioceses Conferences (men, women, families)
 - j. Immersion programs for in-depth study and discipleship
2. *A Loving Church:* We are committed to loving one another with God's love, to praying for one another, to helping one another in times of need and to celebrating with one another in times of joy.
 - a. A broad variety of Fellowship Dinners at Church
 - b. Small group monthly dinners at homes
 - c. Home prayer and discussion groups
 - d. Monthly Breakfast between 9AM and 11 AM Service
 - e. Prime Timers (70+) monthly luncheon
 - f. Shepherd's Ministry or Outreach ministry to congregation members in need or crisis
 - g. Funeral Guild Ministry (providing food and support to congregation members who lose a loved one)
 - h. Men's quarterly Steak Dinner
 - i. Women's quarterly heavy hors d'oeuvres evening event

3. *A Worshiping Church:* Prince George is committed to growing in our passion, discipleship, joy and intimacy with the Lord through times of corporate worship and individual devotions.
 - a. An evening service which includes increased opportunity for worship in song, prayer, including prayer teams, the operation of the gifts of the Spirit, and fellowship
 - b. Instruction, encouragement and prayer for increased participation in worship on Sunday mornings, including most singing – and for private devotional practice
 - c. Development of an “every Sunday” worship culture/ethos
4. *Serving Church:* Prince George is committed to giving our financial and personal resources to help needy or vulnerable people in our community and beyond our state and nation, always in the context of sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ (examples below are illustrative of potential outreach ministries):
 - a. Continued financial support of several outreach ministries in our community and the Diocese of South Carolina
 - b. Local project or partner with local organization in a consistent outreach project with a potential focus on the West End neighborhood
 - c. Outreach ministry to youth such as a mentoring program at Prince George or possibly a Tara Hall Men’s Ministry (a group of men spend one night a month eating with the boys at Tara Hall followed by Bible study and mentoring)
 - d. Men’s Fix-Up Ministry (monthly Saturday Habitat-type fix up of houses in the area)
 - e. Mission projects (team goes outside the area – including out-of-the country – on a service ministry)
5. *A Proclaiming Church:* Prince George is committed to proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ in word and deed as we witness to God’s grace and love and Christ’s redeeming sacrifice, to one other, to friends and neighbors, and to people we encounter in ministry (examples below are illustrative of potential proclaiming ministry).
 - a. Concerted effort by staff and congregation to invite friends and neighbors to attend worship or Bible study or social functions as evangelism outreach
 - b. All outreach ministry and service projects will include witnessing to God’s grace and proclaiming the Gospel
 - c. Offering a worship service beyond our sanctuary, perhaps at Morningside Home or a downtown location
 - d. Adding a proclaiming element to the Plantation Tours

Because of their expertise and special education and training, the staff will become the driving force behind emphases 1 (Learning Church), 3 (Worshipping Church), and 5 (Proclaiming Church). Members of the congregation will become the driving force behind emphases 2 (Loving Church) and 4 (Serving Church). The annual group of 12 lay members will provide some of the leadership for emphases 2 and 4, but it will be essential to have at least 7 members of the congregation commit to the following leadership roles:

1. Coordinator of Volunteers – a person to work at least one day a week to coordinate the efforts of volunteers and to communicate volunteer ministries to the staff and the congregation
2. Coordinator of “Loving” ministries – a person to work at least 2 days per month to coordinate fellowship dinners, supper clubs, monthly age groups gatherings (20-40,40-70, 70+ Prime Timers), men’s quarterly steak dinners, and women’s quarterly hors d’oeuvres events)
3. Coordinator of “Serving” ministries – a person to work at least 2 days per month to coordinate continued financial support, local projects, outreach ministry, and mission trips outside the area
4. Coordinator of Shepherd’s Ministry – a person to work at least 1 day a month to coordinate the Shepherd’s Ministry including updating the Shepherd Teams, recruiting leadership, developing ways to communicate when parishioners are in crisis or need
5. Coordinator of Funeral Guild Ministry – a person to work at least 1 day a month to coordinate the work of the Funeral Guild Ministry and be the point of contact for the congregation
6. Coordinator of local service project – a person to work at least 1 day a month to coordinate the special local service project and be the point of contact for the congregation
7. Coordinator of outreach ministry – a person to work at least 1 day a month to coordinate the specific outreach ministry and be the point of contact for the congregation