

Joint Parish Resource Committee

A Vision of the Future of the Fall River Episcopal Churches

We are called to be a vital Episcopal Church presence in worship and outreach in Fall River.

I. Exploring New Relationships:

The Fall River congregations are presently developing a relationship between the four parishes sharing in a monthly joint worship service. This has been well received among all congregations and is a good beginning in forging cooperative relations and friendships between the churches and parishioners. There is a desire among the churches to have the joint worship continue in the future beyond the currently scheduled services.

The Letter of Intent/Understanding addressed the possibility of parishes seeking to merge. At the present time, two of the four parishes (Church of the Ascension and St. John's /St. Stephen's) are ready to proceed to merge their parishes. The other two parishes (St. Luke's and St. Mark's) are not ready to pursue a merger. They have expressed an interest in remaining with the Joint Resource Committee as a merger is investigated and developed with the understanding that they would always be welcome to join in at a future date.

II. Search for a Rector:

The Joint Resources Committee has investigated and rejected the possibility of sharing a rector between existing parishes and a merging parish as a scenario that would serve the Fall River congregations at this time. In that regard, the parishes pursuing a merger will enter into a joint rector search for a full time rector to meet the needs of the new congregation. A search committee will be formed to proceed with the rector search.

Prior to beginning a search, a mission statement addressing the role of the new, merging parish in Fall River will be created. It will answer the questions "What do we want to do as this new parish?" and "Who do we want to be as the household of Christ?" This will all be necessary before a rector search can begin to bring us an enthusiastic, inspired rector with good leadership abilities, who would lead us in service with inspiration, humor and love.

III. Sharing Financial Resources:

The merging parishes will plan and design a new church building for the new congregation. The merging parishes will identify through an assessment of their present church buildings which structure would best serve the needs of the congregation until sale of any properties and funds from any sales will be realized prior to being able to

begin the purchase of land and building of a new church building.

Prior to merging, the parishes will need to investigate how existing trusts, endowments, all bank accounts and any other financial decisions will be handled. Committees will be formed from the merging parishes to address issues regarding bylaws, real estate matters, calling a rector, joint governance, joint financial planning and management, and a name for the “new” church.

Memorials from the current church buildings will also need to be investigated.

As a cost saving effort, the parishes will investigate having a business office for all Fall River Episcopal churches to handle the business dealings of the merging church and the already existing churches. This will lower operating expenses of all the churches, eliminate duplicate personnel and allow for centralizing the publishing of an all Fall River Episcopal newsletter.

IV. Outreach & Ministry:

An important part of a merging parish will be to maintain the outreach and ministry performed prior to a merger. Also, any new ministry that develops from the new congregation will be addressed and encouraged. Present ministry being served by one church will have the advantage of enlisting more volunteers from a merging congregation. These programs include, Ministry to the Seniors, Music Ministry, the Soup Kitchen, and the Thrift shop from the parishes investigating merging. The list of ministries would expand as each parish choosing to join into the merger brings their special ministries into the fold.

The Sunday School program would also experience an expansion for the merging parish.

And, in a joint effort with all the Fall River Episcopal churches, we will investigate and develop a youth program to serve the teen population of the congregations.

1 submitted by: Lisa, Donna, Jenny, Nancy, & Bob (3/23/07)

Joint Parish Resource Committee – Vision Sub-Committee

The Vision committee met on Wednesday, March 21, 2007 and began the process of drafting a plan for congregations to begin acting on ideas from the Letter of Intent/Understanding which was written by the full resource committee. Recommendations from Cn. Dexter Cheney were added on 4/02/07.