

Our Challenges

This is the first in an on-going series of publications to prepare us for welcoming our new rector.

We will follow up this newsletter with discussion at coffee hour between the services this next Sunday, *March 13th*, or connect via Zoom (questions can be asked in the chat).

St Mary's is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81368548861?pwd=ZStOemdmSHhzYmU2YWpqRytDWElnUT09>

Meeting ID: 813 6854 8861

Passcode: 830294

In March of 2020 we met as a congregation to review the results of the Congregational Assessment (CAT) that was conducted the previous fall. Over 90% of the congregation at that time participated in the assessment. One-third of the members indicated they were satisfied with things as they were at St. Mary's. Other feedback indicated that some members desired a church with a higher level of vitality and that they were searching for a pathway to form a stronger church.

While we might have different outcomes in some areas of the CAT if it were offered today, the core values that guide who we are and what we aspire to be remain the same:

- We value our traditions but are open to change when provided a theological or liturgical basis for the change.
- We value scripture along with structure and stability.
- Our membership represents diverse perspectives; we don't all see things the same way.
- We value participation in activities beyond Sunday worship.
- We want to be more engaged with our neighbors.

At a practical level, our biggest challenge appears to be how to increase our membership. But for us to achieve that, we must first meet these challenges identified by the congregation in the CAT:

- Work together effectively to be a welcoming church in the community.
- Value and respect our diversity when addressing difficult issues.
- Expand our ministries to better serve the surrounding community.

Also, after five years of being without a priest and suffering a global pandemic, we have some additional challenges:

- We are still a church in recovery after clergy disappointments.
- Like all churches, we are going to have to create new ways to serve our purpose in a world that is now quite different than it was in January of 2020.

As part of the rector interview process, it was especially important that candidates got a clear understanding of who we are as a congregation and the goals we want to accomplish. The interview process was as much about a candidate determining if our call was a good fit for them, as it was our decision that they were right for our church. We want a new rector that isn't going to force us to accept their vision but is able *to meet us where we are and help us grow into what we desire to be.*

The next *Special Edition Messenger* will focus on how we identified our mission and vision. It will be published on March 21st, with the follow-up discussion on Sunday, March 27th, between services, or on zoom (link to come).