

**Steps Along the Path 2017-2020:
An Action Plan for St. Michael's Episcopal Church**

As Approved by St. Michael's Vestry, May 21, 2017

“For we walk by faith, not by sight.”

Purpose of Action Plan: To define St. Michael's strategic vision, identify goals and steps for realizing that vision, and prioritize actions to guide Vestry and other parish-wide decision-making.

Guiding St. Michael's Walk of Faith: Under each goal, actions are listed in order of priority for St. Michael's walk of faith, although many actions will likely be interdependent in implementation. A parish-wide survey informed this prioritization as well as the plan as a whole. Actions are expected to be further defined, specified, and changed in their implementation. We at St. Michael's have a history of embracing change together with our Episcopal traditions, and we know a walk of faith will not only renew us but change who we are and where we want to go.

Mission of St. Michael's: To provide a nurturing spiritual community in Christ Jesus, as the foundation from which we strive to go forth and serve God by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Goal: Worship God and Nurture Our Spirit

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.”

Steps:

- A. Inspire the worship of God in all parishioners.
- B. Support worship services that strive to embrace God fully—with mind, body, and spirit.
- C. Invite parishioners to discover and deepen their individual walks of faith; support parishioners as they follow in Christ's steps, open to the Spirit.

Actions, as prioritized:

- 1. Continue to develop a sustainable children and youth ministry, including: building on the inclusive, participatory, and God-discovery practices of Children's Chapel; bolstering Sunday School staffing and curriculum planning; integrating children and youth even more comprehensively into Sunday services; offering explorations outside of St. Michael's; and partnering with local churches.

2. Establish a Worship Committee to assist the Rector and staff in coordinating and further expanding lay participation and in assessing comprehensively needs and changes. Increase our pool of trained Lectors, Lay Eucharistic Ministers, Acolytes, Ushers, Altar Guild members, and Nursing Home Ministry members, continuing our diverse, inclusive, and intergenerational participation.
3. Reinvigorate adult faith formation and spiritual exploration opportunities, such as adult education, small discussion groups, and guest speakers, taking advantage of social media when helpful (possibilities: virtual groups, speakers via Skype).
4. Enhance music in worship, including: strengthening our traditional practices, assessing the suitability of diversifying selections and styles, and assessing interest in weekly music playlists for digital platforms.
5. Establish a regular fellowship opportunity for families with children (possibilities: regular service opportunity in which children may participate, monthly Friday night game nights).
6. Assess needs and opportunities for broadening access to worship services and other St. Michael's activities, possibly including: car pools, Uber accounts, and sermons-as-podcasts (e.g., the work of our St. Clare's Society).
7. Establish a weeknight evensong, contemplative prayer group (e.g., Taize prayer), meditation, or alternative contemporary form of worship. Regularly share information about alternative services at nearby Episcopal churches and explore joint services, broadening and bringing together the Episcopal community in Arlington.

Goal: Love Our Neighbors as Ourselves

“You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

Steps:

- A. Welcome and engage neighbors who are around the corner and around the world.
- B. Support other organizations that love their and our neighbors.
- C. Broaden our recognition and understanding of who our neighbors are.
- D. Partner with other faith communities in their loving ministries.

Actions, as prioritized:

1. Continue our outreach and mission ministries with, and support for, vulnerable and underrepresented groups—the homeless, the poor, the persecuted, and those groups whom Christians have excluded in the past. Make our outreach and mission ministries more visible to the parish, including the unifying vision behind our many efforts.
2. Continue to strengthen our welcoming ministry, in which we welcome everyone—without exception—to St. Michael's, and provide follow-up after the first visit (one possibility: homemade loaf of bread). Make clear that St. Michael's is a spiritual home for parishioners of diverse identities and religious backgrounds and recognize that some parishioners are with us for a short stay and others for a lifetime.

3. Reach out to, welcome, and be supportive of our near neighbors, in our pursuit to be a good neighbor. Host and/or participate in neighborhood activities (possibilities: continue our Harvest Festival and our Vacation Bible School, volunteer at Westover Easter Egg Hunt, run an activity at another neighborhood gathering, host another Boy Scout or Girl Scout troop).
4. Develop regular relationships, involving the parish as a whole, with another house of worship, especially with a local Synagogue, Islamic Center, or Mosque.
5. Develop opportunities for spiritual growth through personal relationships that support outreach and mission ministries.

GOAL: Cultivate and Share Generously God’s Abundance

“God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work.”

Steps:

- A. Identify and give our time, talent, and treasure.
- B. Encourage all to give generously, in recognition of God’s abundance.
- C. Prudently care for the resources that God has entrusted to us.

Actions, as prioritized:

1. Strengthen our ability to organize and support parishioners around ministries for which they are passionate; ensure robust parishioner support to sustain core ministries.
2. Grow St. Michael’s membership sustainably and in keeping with our mission.
3. Continue our strong annual stewardship campaign practices.
4. Further synergize and streamline how we communicate who we are and what we do (e.g., in our weekly bulletin, the Guardian, our e-mails, our church website, our church Facebook page, our postings on NextDoor, etc.)
5. Continue our active commitment to environmentally sustainable policies and grounds keeping (e.g., Care of Creation); broaden involvement with regular clean-up days and/or clinics.
6. Continue to integrate strategic planning into Vestry and parish-wide decision-making, with the Vestry (and/or its Vision and Planning Committee) assessing progress, re-evaluating this plan and updating yearly as appropriate, and reporting progress to the parish.