

Possible Futures for the Parish

Discuss these “possible futures” in your small group. Which most appeals to you? Which would be “healthiest” for this parish to open itself to?

The choices are based on the parish’s stated desire for some membership growth.

There is not a “right” answer. You may find that the choices help you in creating an additional “future”.

A Possible Future

1. The parish stays largely as it is. Incremental change and improvements continue to take place. The parish attracts the percentage of people in the area who are easily drawn to the Episcopal Church. We lose any who are troubled by the normal small church dynamics; and/or who find the way we do the Eucharist too different from what they are used to experiencing in other places. We slowly attract new members as the area's population increases. We advertise in the newspaper, in leaflets, by word of mouth, stressing the positive characteristics of a small parish and in particular this parish (e.g., hospitality, singing, caring, does a lot for the community; Informed, thoughtful, intelligent members, enthusiastic, friendly, informal, flexible, welcoming; warm; relaxed, sense of community, etc.) We hold up our differences from the norm.

2. As in the above #1. Except we work at harmonizing how we celebrate the Eucharist with the ways it’s typically done in other Episcopal Churches. We eliminate losing people who are put off by the differences. On the other hand, we might lose any who are attracted by those differences.

3. As in the above #2. Except we devote significant human and financial resources to develop one or two features of parish life that would be more common in a larger parish. For example, we create a church school program for children; develop a choir; and/or establish the best adult education program in the region. We increase membership a bit more than would be true in #2

Indicate the degree to which you think this would be a satisfactory approach.

What do you like about it? What concerns you? How might you modify it?

Low			High	
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Low			High	
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Low			High	
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4. As in the above #3 except we get our own space (rent, buy, or build).

Low				High
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5. A more radical departure from our existing approach, but one we have the resources to pursue might look like this. We focus our internal life & programs, and our external advertising --

- On aspects of Episcopal spirituality – beauty, open mindedness, embracing the world, etc.
- On environmental, feminist and community oriented values; attention to relationships and friendships; seeking a simpler life style; openness to mystery and wonder.
- We maintain the existing characteristics of - hospitality, singing, caring, does a lot for the community; informed, thoughtful, intelligent members, enthusiastic, friendly, informal, flexible, welcoming; warm; relaxed, sense of community, etc.

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We get our own space (rent, buy, or build). We work at creating a climate in the space that fits the above characteristics, possibly including traditional church music, jazz & Taize; religious art in the space done by local artists (Eucharistic vestments, hangings, etc.) We offer significant programs and ministries for adults and children around those themes. We actively work at “marketing” the parish; who we are & what we offer.

6. As in the above #5 except we give more attention to increasing our use of technology, e.g., a parish web site, using e-mail as a regular method of whole parish communication, etc. Likely to increase the sense of welcome for younger people.

Low				High
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