

# Strategic Planning Newsletter No.1

Dear Friends,

I hope that this letter finds you all well, and that Lent has been a good time for you, and your preparation for the Easter mysteries. I wanted to write to you all after the Vestry Meeting to bring you up to date with the Strategic Planning Process.

## Background

While many of you may remember what we have done in the past, due to the large number of relatively new people I thought I would bring us all up to date with our journey thus far.

In 2005, just after I arrived in December 2004, we conducted a Healthy Churches Check and a Strategic Planning Session over two Saturdays in May. The Healthy Churches Check comes out of the UK looking at 25 Growing Churches in the Diocese of Durham. The seven marks are:

1. Energized by Faith
2. Outward-looking focus
3. Seeks to find what God wants
4. Faces the cost of change and growth
5. Operates as a community
6. Makes room for all
7. Does a few things and does them well.

About 60 people were in attendance on that first Saturday and together we scored our church. During the week the team I had assembled analysed that information and that informed our direction for the next Saturday that looked at the Strategic Plan for the parish. The resulting document can be found here. [http://stjohnsgordon.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/St John the Evangelist - Strategic Plan 2005.pdf](http://stjohnsgordon.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/St_John_the_Evangelist_-_Strategic_Plan_2005.pdf).

In 2007 we revisited the Healthy Churches Check and found that we had turned the parish around. It wasn't perfect, but we were getting much better in the areas we were deficient in.

About five years later we had a Future Directions Group, <http://stjohnsgordon.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Future-Directions-Final-Report.pdf> which looked at a whole host of issues within the parish, and in about 2017 we had a small group in the Upper Room led by Bishop Michael to have a look at the Strategic Plan with fresh eyes. So, about every 5 years we have revisited the plan in some form or another with varying levels of success in implementing them.

## National Church Life Survey

In all of this we have had two NCLS surveys, (2006 and 2016). These help clarify some of the issues within the parish, and highlight areas we might have missed in the Strategic Plan. However, I think it is fair to say that we have not integrated that information well in our Strategic Plan thinking. I want that to change.

**7<sup>th</sup> APRIL 2019**

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## Present

At the Vestry Meeting of 2018 a request was made to have a Strategic Planning Session again. I agree we need another session. However, there is an awful lot of information that is already at our disposal in all that we have already done. I do not want to keep “reinventing the wheel.” I have, therefore, asked Mr. Stephen Woodhill to look at all our information we have gathered together since I have been here, and to consolidate it. Stephen is the CEO of the “Group of 100” which looks after the top 100 CFOs in the country. He is an experienced strategic thinker and planner. With his “fresh eyes” I am hoping we can come to the parish with some sort of plan that the whole of the parish can interact with and come to some common mind.

## Way Ahead

However, I think, before we get to that point, I would like to revisit the Healthy Churches Check. It is a while since this has been done, and I think it is apposite that we do this before we launch into any full-on strategic plan. The Healthy Churches Check will be a further guide to the parish’s thinking on how well we are travelling at the moment with respect to the seven marks identified above. Where we feel we are not doing so well will naturally be the focal point for any strategic plan we come up with.

So I would like to do a Healthy Churches Check on Saturday the 1<sup>st</sup> of June 2019 from 10am-3pm. I ask you all to mark this date in your diary, and plan to be there. The more there are on the day the more helpful the HCC will be. In the interim, I will be issuing a weekly Newsletter entitled “Strategic Newsletter 2019.” This is number one in that series. This will contain information on the HCC to prime you all for the day. This gives me eight Sundays including this one to give some information about each of the marks, and other preparatory material. I will be uploading each of these newsletters to the website in a Strategic Plan Blog as I did with the Organ Project.

I do hope that you will take the opportunity to engage in this process and to make your contribution on the 1<sup>st</sup> of June.

With every blessing to you all,

Fr. Keith