

Together

Sharing Christ

Vol. 29, No. 3

September 2009

Special Issue

This issue of Together Sharing Christ is solely dedicated to the Reflection Process on the parish Mission Statement.

As explained in the Parish Council's letter (distributed as a church bulletin insert on September 18-19 and reprinted here), this is the next, crucial step in our preparation for Father Lawrence's 2013 retirement.

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Check out St. Vincent's Website at www.stvchurch.org

Note: The reflection questions are also posted on the website

LETTER TO THE PARISH COMMUNITY ON THE FUTURE OF ST VINCENT'S SEPTEMBER 2009
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Dear Parishioners,

This upcoming year will usher in the process of serious planning for the future of our church community. Fr. Dick has communicated his two-fold desire to retire from all parish administrative responsibilities in June 2013 but continue his spiritual leadership as senior priest.

The 2009-10 Parish Council has adopted a set of goals and a program to begin this process which needs to culminate in a detailed, comprehensive, and integrated proposal by next summer. The full program will be presented for discussion at the November 15 Town Meeting. In brief, we must

- “re-vision” our mission statement,
- develop a three year strategic plan that ensures we preserve our unique identity yet grow in spirit and numbers,
- identify what we need for effective administration, and an efficient transition.

The timeline is short. The first phase of this planning program must start today. We will begin to “re-vision” our mission statement. This phase requires broad participation, serious reflection, and thoughtful contributions from us all.

Our current mission statement, written many years ago, is printed *every week* on the bulletin. Surprised?

What is the point of a “mission statement”?

At its most basic in organizational language, the mission statement describes our overall purpose in two important ways:

- It will identify who we are and what makes us different from other church communities.
- It will include what we are called to be and do in a manner that allows us to measure our success in achieving our overall purpose.

Don't be put off by this very secular language. St. Augustine encouraged us to use knowledge where we found it for God's people and this kind of secular knowledge can be very useful for our purposes here.

Over the next few weeks, you'll receive weekly personal reflection exercises on the components of the mission statement. These are also available on the website and in the issue of *Together Sharing Christ* that is available today.

Read these. Think about them. Pray over them. Discuss them with your family, friends, or committee members. Reflect on what you hear and then pray some more.

In late-October and early November, prior to the Town Meeting, we'll conduct a series of focus groups at various times and as often as necessary to accommodate everyone who wants to participate. The focus group will use the technique of nominal group process which is exceptionally useful in producing priority lists in which every participant has an equal voice. Each group will be weighing the facets of our community identity that are most defining.

On November 15 at the Town Meeting, the priority lists from each focus group will be presented with a composite list for community reaction and discussion.

All the information and input from this broad community consultation will be given to an *Ad Hoc* Committee appointed by the Parish Council to review. This *Ad Hoc* Committee will submit a recommendation to the Council to endorse the existing mission statement for continuing validity or amend it to reflect better our current sense of community.

“Re-visioning” the mission statement is the critical first phase of the transition process. We need to know who we are, who we are called to become, and what we are called to do as the necessary first step in designing an administrative structure to support our community life and assist us in achieving our Gospel goals.

The Parish Council is honoring the long-standing tradition here at St Vincent's in lay-empowerment and consensus-building by adopting this broad consultation process. We have been given a wonderful gift of co-responsibility by a pastor with a singular vision and deep respect for the people of God.

Let's all commit ourselves to opening that gift up.

Reflect on the exercises!

Participate in the focus groups!

Come to the November 15 Town Meeting!

Your sisters and brothers need your wisdom.

The St Vincent de Paul Parish Council

St. Vincent's Mission / Vision Statement Reflection

What is this reflection packet and what's it for?

This packet presents us with a set of reflections for each of the next four weeks. These reflections will feed into a process which will produce one of the following outcomes: we will either 1) re-affirm our current Mission Statement, as is, with no changes or 2) rework our current statement making minor or major changes, depending on what our discussion produces. The ultimate aim is to have a Vision Statement on which to base our strategic planning—most immediately our next steps in preparing for the pastor's retirement.

Each week the reflection questions and process are the same. What changes is the topic. Each week will focus on a different paragraph in our current Mission Statement: four paragraphs, four weeks.

Why such a big deal about a Mission or Vision Statement?

Not just a work concept

Many of us are familiar with the term “mission statement.” We see examples plastered on the walls of the auto shop where we get our car engine tuned, the stores where we shop, the hospital where we visit a sick relative. Consequently, many people identify “mission statement” as a work or productivity tool.

But other voices urge us to see mission or vision statements in a broader perspective, as a spiritual practice for living life fully. In the view, personal, family, or organization mission statements can help us identify our core values and priorities. They help center and ground us, keeping us on track to what is most important to us. They can then be used to identify and evaluate more immediate goals—and the methods and activities directed toward them—from among the myriad competing demands that threaten to fragment our lives.

Values and vision

Some mission statements lack this values dimension: “We basically want to corner the market.” That's a very different approach than that of a printing company here in town. Their mission statement (which takes up over half a page) focuses on the environment they aim to create for their employees and the steps they intend to take to make sure employees are happy, fulfilled, appreciated and challenged to grow professionally! A final paragraph notes that they take it for granted that employees who are treated this way will give their absolute best to the company's customers.

These two possible understandings of “mission statement” have led some groups to prefer “vision statement.”

Once you've written it then what?

A Mission Statement which expresses the vision for a community should play an ongoing, dynamic role in the community's life. It becomes a valuable criteria for making decisions as new situations occur and a standard for individuals and groups within the community to use in evaluating their activities. In *Principle-Centered Leadership*, Stephen Covey encourages every sub-section of work organizations to write their own mission statement, detailing the way in which they will carry out the overall mission of the company. That means each regional branch, each outlet within the region, each department—down to the loading dock crew.

This is probably *way* more than we're interested in. Hopefully, however, this reflection process *will* get us thinking, reflecting, using our parish statement more often—even if we decide not to change a single syllable. (Be honest. How many of us could answer the question, “What does the St. V Mission Statement say?”—without sneaking a quick look at the bulletin?)

Wait a minute! Isn't the Mission of every Christian community the same – accept and live the gospel?

Certainly every person has a similar mission in life. Every family, every company, every printing company, and, yes, every Christian community shares an over-arching common purpose with every other group in its category. A genuine Mission/Vision Statement, however, should reflect the unique character of this particular individual, family, company, or church. It should be ***our*** statement, identifying who we are and what our priorities are.

In the Christian context, the uniqueness of a community's Mission Statement articulates the particular vocation of this community, led by the Spirit, to make its own contribution to the Body of Christ. The uniqueness we nourish and pursue is not for our own satisfaction, but a valuable witness we give in a diverse Church and world to one way of living the gospel message.

Pre-Reflection: Week of September 19-25

Before beginning this week's reflection (which begins on the next page and which will focus our thinking on one aspect of St. V's), you may want to take some time to reflect on your overall experience of St. Vincent's.

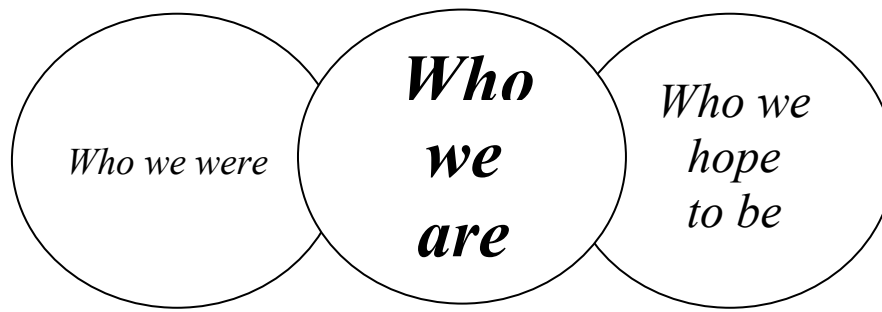
Why have you chosen to be part of this parish? What drew you here?

What have been the most meaningful aspects of your belonging to this community?

How have you grown or how do you expect to grow as a result of your belonging to this parish?

On the facing page, we look at a paragraph from our parish Mission Statement and put a focusing spotlight on its individual words and phrases. The reflection questions should help us consider not just the overall theme of the paragraph, but each of these individual phrases.

First: Am **I** clear on what is meant by each of these key words or phrases? (highlighted in gray)
Am I confident that we as a community share a common understanding of the term or phrase?



Who we were: This is the Vision of how, in the past, we saw ourselves and our purpose.

Who we are: How has each phrase made us who we are in the present? How does it continue to be who we are . . .

- In my personal life: Since coming to St. V's how have the values expressed in this statement and its phrases deepened in my life? changed my life outside St. V's?
- In our overall life as a parish: What concrete examples can I name which show our continuing efforts to make this truly who we are? Are there some phrases which no longer ring true as characteristic of us, or of what we seem to be striving for?
- In specific activities, committees and other groups in which I participate: In what ways do the values of this part of the Mission Statement influence how we work together and what we set as goals?

Who we hope to be:

Can I affirm this overall or theme as something which belongs in our Parish Statement?

Can I affirm this statement—as is—as something I embrace:

- allowing St. V's to nurture it in my own life (recognizing that how that happens will be different for each person)
- working in my own way to help the parish to keep this value vibrant and deepening
- accepting its values as a standard by which to evaluate the parish as a whole, the groups or committees to which I belong, and my own participation in parish life

or

Is there a particular wording or phrase which I feel should be changed? Why?

Is there anything which I feel should be added? Why?

You may want to make notes to bring with you to the focus groups which will prepare the report for our November 15 Town Meeting.

Reflection: Saturday/Sunday September 19/20—September 25

(Note: This paragraph was not placed first with any suggestion that its position in the parish statement should be changed. It is the shortest paragraph and there is a lot of introductory material to read this week. Consequently it seemed better to have the actual reflection focus on the shortest part of the statement.)

The purpose of St. Vincent de Paul Church is . . .

**To share lively and enlivening liturgies and other celebrations
which will strengthen in ourselves and communicate to others
our awareness of God's word and
our communion as God's people;**

to share lively and enlivening liturgies

to share lively and enlivening . . . other celebrations

liturgies and other celebrations which will strengthen in ourselves our awareness
of God's word

liturgies and other celebrations which will strengthen in ourselves . . . our
communion as God's people

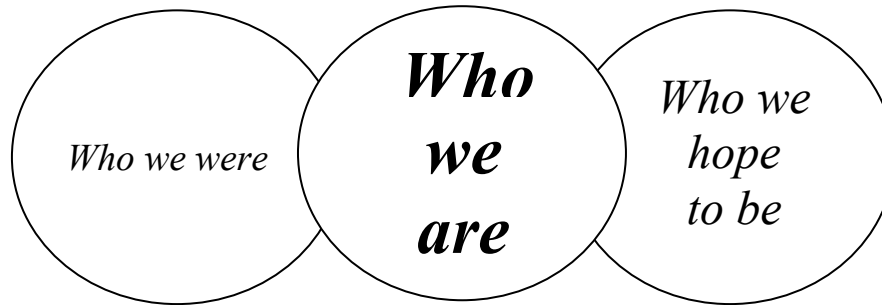
liturgies and other celebrations which will . . . communicate to others our
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liturgies and other celebrations which will . . . communicate to others . . . our
communion as God's people

If you have a short quote or passage (Bible, Vatican II or other Church document, religious book) which for you captures the essence of this theme, please let Anne Maura English know. These will be included in an October 17 edition of Together Sharing Christ for our reflection the final week of this process.

On the facing page, we look at a paragraph from our parish Mission Statement and put a focusing spotlight on its individual words and phrases. The reflection questions should help us consider not just the overall theme of the paragraph, but each of these individual phrases.

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Who we were: This is the Vision of how, in the past, we saw ourselves and our purpose.

Who we are: How has each phrase made us who we are in the present? How does it continue to be who we are . . .

- In my personal life: Since coming to St. V's how have the values expressed in this statement and its phrases deepened in my life? changed my life outside St. V's?
- In our overall life as a parish: What concrete examples can I name which show our continuing efforts to make this truly who we are? Are there some phrases which no longer ring true as characteristic of us, or of what we seem to be striving for?
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- accepting its values as a standard by which to evaluate the parish as a whole, the groups or committees to which I belong, and my own participation in parish life

or

Is there a particular wording or phrase which I feel should be changed? Why?

Is there anything which I feel should be added? Why?

You may want to make notes to bring with you to the focus groups which will prepare the report for our November 15 Town Meeting.

Reflection: Saturday/Sunday September 26/27—October 2

The purpose of St. Vincent de Paul Church is . . .

To be and increasingly become a community of diverse groups and persons

**of those who live here,
those who work here,
and those who lived here years ago.**

**of the poor,
the disaffected,
and the exiled,
gathered together by God**

To be and increasingly become a community of diverse groups and persons

. . . a community . . . of those who live here,

. . . a community . . . of those who work here,

. . . a community . . . of those who lived here years ago.

. . . a community . . . of the poor,

. . . a community . . . of the disaffected,

. . . a community . . . of the exiled,

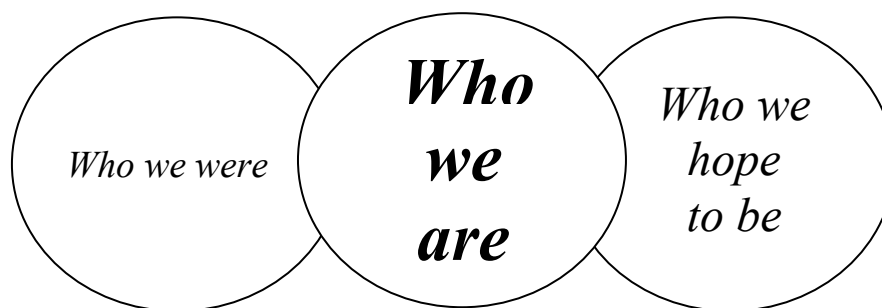
gathered together by God

If you have a short quote or passage (Bible, Vatican II or other Church document, religious book) which for you captures the essence of this theme, please let Anne Maura English know.

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First: Am **I** clear on what is meant by each of these key words or phrases? (highlighted in gray)
Am I confident that we as a community share a common understanding of the term or phrase?



Who we were: This is the Vision of how, in the past, we saw ourselves and our purpose.

Who we are: How has each phrase made us who we are in the present? How does it continue to be who we are . . .

- In my personal life: Since coming to St. V's how have the values expressed in this statement and its phrases deepened in my life? changed my life outside St. V's?
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You may want to make notes to bring with you to the focus groups which will prepare the report for our November 15 Town Meeting.

Reflection: Saturday/Sunday October 3/4—October 9

The purpose of St. Vincent de Paul Church is . . .

**To grow and to help each other grow in our discovery
of Jesus as a person,
as the expression of God's love,
as the source of life and meaning, and
of themselves as children of God,
worthwhile in themselves, and
beloved of our Father;**

To grow and to help each other grow in our discovery of Jesus as a person,

grow in our discovery of Jesus as the expression of God's love,

grow in our discovery of Jesus as the source of life and meaning,

grow in our discovery of themselves as children of God,

grow in our discovery of themselves as children of God worthwhile in themselves,

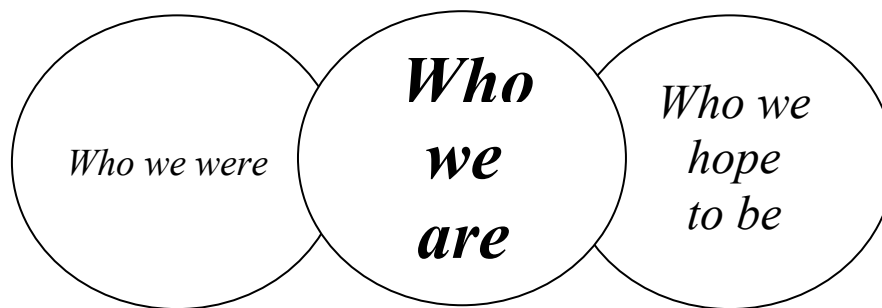
grow in our discovery of themselves as children of God beloved of our Father;

If you have a short quote or passage (Bible, Vatican II or other Church document, religious book) which for you captures the essence of this theme, please let Anne Maura English know. These will be included in an October 17 edition of Together Sharing Christ for our reflection the

final week of this process.

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You may want to make notes to bring with you to the focus groups which will prepare the report for our November 15 Town Meeting.

Reflection: Saturday/Sunday October 10/11—October 16

**To serve each other and those we meet,
 those who live in our parish neighborhood and
 those who live in the larger communities of
 which we are a part,
 by working, as individuals and as a parish community,
 to establish and increase freedom, justice, and love.**

To serve each other . . . by working to establish and increase freedom, justice, and love.

To serve . . . those we meet . . . by working to establish and increase freedom, justice
 and love

To serve . . . those who live in our parish neighborhood . . . by working to establish and increase freedom, justice and love.

To serve . . . those who live in the larger communities of which we are a part,
 by working to establish and increase freedom, justice, and love.

To serve . . . by working individually . . . to establish and increase freedom, justice, and love.

To serve . . . by working as a parish community . . . to establish and increase freedom, justice, and love.

*If you have a short quote or passage (Bible, Vatican II or other Church document, religious book) which for you captures the essence of this theme, please let Anne Maura English know. **It will be needed by Tuesday, October 13** in order to be included in an October 17 edition of Together Sharing Christ for our reflection the final week of this process.*

Sharing Our Input

Focus Groups : Saturday/Sunday October 17/18—October 23

As I look over any notes I jotted down in the reflections for the past few weeks,

- Are there questions I have about terms or phrases?
- What things or values do I consider most important in making St. Vincent's the church it is and is becoming?

What arrangements have I made to share my input with a Focus Group?

Town Meeting: Sunday November 15

- Results of the Focus Groups
- Does the current Mission Statement capture as well as it could the Vision of St. V's that has emerged in our Focus Groups?