



## Saint George's

Friday, 17 June 2016

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

This past Wednesday, our Vestry voted on the draft Collaborative Ministry Covenant between St. George's and Church of the Ascension, Lexington Park. We are pleased to announce that in a unanimous decision our Vestry adopted the covenant. We give thanks that Ascension's Vestry has come to similar conclusion.

The Covenant (*below*) outlines a broad framework by which more intentional institutional collaboration between these two congregations can grow. The Covenant envisions a collaborative future yet provides sufficient structure so that our unique and separate parish identities will be maintained. It is, as well, an invitation to ensure that this church remains set on God's mission – restoring all people to unity with God and each other in Christ, as the Prayer Book teaches.

Now, the work of outlining the details of our collaborative future, identifying the issues, and addressing your many excellent questions (*below*) begins. We anticipate that the Joint Executive Committee, as described in the Covenant, will meet frequently and regularly over the summer to determine what our priests currently do, what we *want* our priest to do, and what we can mutually *afford* our priest to do. Because much of what clergy do is not necessarily a priestly function, we will address fundamental questions about empowering and equipping greater degrees of lay ministry as we craft a position description and equitable balance between the two parishes. From the position description, we can refine the scope of that potential clergy-person's call. We will seek to do the same for our shared administrative needs. Finally, we will identify a timeline along which these transitions might occur. Bob Ertter, as Senior Warden, and Mike Mead will serve as St. George's representatives on the Joint Executive Committee.

It is good to wonder, again, *why* this is happening, in the first place. As you can see from the questions we've already received (*below*), this is an ongoing and important conversation. Due to untold and profound cultural, indeed spiritual shifts in our world today, St. George's is facing hard choices to ensure that there remains a lively Episcopal presence in Valley Lee, let alone in St. Mary's County. We must make some possibly scary changes to strengthen our church and continue our mission to the community. This Covenant represents a big change. It also represents a desire to follow God in a more life-giving and vibrant future.

It is the intention of the Vestry to make each of these transitions as smooth and as transparent as possible. We ask for your feedback and insights, so that we can mutually shape our collaborative future. Above all, we commend this work to your prayers and expressions of devotion, both for this community and the mission to which God in Christ calls us boldly.

Yours in Christ,

Bob Ertter  
*Senior Warden*

Jennifer Thomas  
*Junior Warden*

Greg Syler  
*Rector*

## **Collaborative Ministry Covenant of Church of the Ascension, Lexington Park and St. Georges Church, Valley Lee**

### **Preamble**

We, Church of the Ascension, Patuxent Parish and St. Georges Church, William and Mary Parish, with the support of the Diocese of Washington, DC, do hereby commit to collaborate in sharing our resources, including but not limited to clergy, administrative staff, lay persons, and volunteers to more effectively meet the needs of our parishes, our parishioners, and the larger communities of which we are a part. After years of research, reflection, discussion, and mutual support, representatives of each of our parishes have joined to propose the following means for sustenance, growth, and development of our separate parishes and our shared mission in Christ.

Together, as we envision a sharing future, we can build a collaborative relationship that allows each parish not only to meet its current needs but to grow in service, outreach, and membership through a ministry of shared resources and deeper ties between our two parish families. We envision neither the merger of the two parishes nor the creation of a third entity to govern or oversee the affairs of the separate churches. Representatives from our individual vestries, working together, will in effect be the linked arms of our separate church bodies lending strength to one another in leading this joint venture.

The need to try new approaches has also underscored for us the need to craft this covenant with a light hand so as to preserve the utmost flexibility in the arrangements we propose.

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WILLIAM AND MARY PARISH IN THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF WASHINGTON  
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## **Mission**

To provide for a collaborative ministry with the sharing of liturgical resources, support staff, and activities as the parishes may from time to time identify to further the health and vitality of each parish in accomplishing our mission in Christ.

## **Commitment**

Each parish by its assent to this Covenant agrees to continue its participation for a minimum of three years and to give at least one-year notice to the other to terminate or substantially alter the terms of the relationship.

Each parish shall contribute to a collaborative ministry budget in proportion to the respective service received. This budget addresses the cost of the clergy's total compensation package as well as other costs associated with the administration and operation of the liturgical mission to be divided proportionally.

## **Joint Executive Committee**

*Responsibilities:* Joint Executive Committee shall identify mutual needs, opportunities, and challenges of collaborating and will develop a plan to accomplish this sharing. They shall also budget for, receive, administer, and account to both parish vestries for the funds needed for the support of collaborative ministries salaries, programs, and other shared expenses. With the consent of the two parish vestries, the Rector is responsible to the Joint Executive Committee, who shall oversee his work and coordinate as needed with each parish vestry. The Joint Executive Committee shall also consider and from time to time recommend such changes to this covenant as is deemed to be in the best interest of the parishes and the continued vitality of the covenant. The group shall address and respond to such

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concerns as may from time to time be raised with it by the independent vestries or parish members.

*Membership and Attendance:* Representatives from our individual vestries, working together, will in effect be the linked arms of both separate church bodies lending strength to one another and overseeing all areas of collaboration. Two representatives (the senior warden and one other) from each parish vestry and the Rector shall comprise a committee to address matters related to collaboration. The two members shall be designated by each vestry to serve a two-year term to represent the will of their respective vestries. Ideally and to foster wider participation, no member should serve more than one consecutive term.

*Officers:* The two parish senior wardens shall be responsible for jointly calling and presiding at meetings of the Joint Executive Committee, communicating with members and coordinating with the Rector. The presiders shall, at the initial and subsequent meetings (and with the advice and counsel of the Rector as needed), designate which of them shall bear the principal responsibility for carrying out particular tasks. Joint Executive Committee representatives shall designate one of its members to serve as clerk and may request the two parish treasurers to attend meetings to provide input on financial matters related to collaboration.

*Meetings:* Joint Executive Committee meetings shall take place at least quarterly to set and oversee the collaborative ministry budget, to agree on programs, and to review the progress under the Covenant. As may be deemed necessary, the chairpersons and the Rector may also call other meetings as needed.

*Decisions:* The majority of the membership shall constitute a quorum for Joint Vestry meeting decisions. The group shall endeavor to make decisions through consensus, but may reach decisions through majority vote except where such decisions may expressly require input and/or approval of both parish vestries.

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## **Collaborative Ministry Model**

*Rector:* The Rector shall be selected and appointed by the two parish vestries and shall be a full-time employee responsible to the two separate vestries through their Joint Vestry Representatives. The Rector will bear primary responsibility for coordinating additional clergy, administrative staffs and resources to meet liturgical and other customary needs of each parish.

*Worship Services:* It is the present intention to maintain two Sunday services at each parish with one full-time rector and additional clergy/lay staff as determined by the vestries. It is important that clergy have a meaningful presence in both parishes each Sunday thereby ensuring that no parish feels less supported or less important. Clergy should have a rotating schedule with time available after each service in order to interact with parishioners for community and relationship building.

*Clergy Coverage on Holy Days:* Holy Days which fall on week days will be observed through joint services with locations and times to be determined. Easter and Christmas services will be held in each parish at times to be determined.

*Rector Coverage during the week:* The Rector shall spend administrative and pastoral care time during the week at both parishes with a goal of equal sharing of time and services. The Rector should have maximum flexibility to manage this time according to the needs of each parish in any given week.

## **Amendments**

This document may be amended by the vote of no less than two thirds of the vestry members of both parishes. Any proposed amendment must be made

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available to the general membership within each parish at least one month before any such vote.

Members of the Collaborative Ministries Covenant Committee

Eric Delk (Church of the Ascension)

Mary Larson (St. Georges)

Tom McCarthy (Church of the Ascension)

Mike Mead (St. Georges)

Mary Ann Murray (St. Georges)

Karol Wolgemuth (Church of the Ascension)

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**ST. GEORGE'S PARISH MEETING CONCERNING  
COLLABORATIVE MINISTRY COVENANT  
JUNE 1, 2016**

**PARTICIPANTS RESPONSES TO FOUR QUESTIONS**

***1. What are your assumptions about what it means to be two yoked parishes?  
What are these based on?***

Overview of Responses

The general assumptions leading to the covenant were set out in the introductory remarks. No one appears to question those assumptions. Focus is on the nature of the process with emphasis on careful assessment, exploring options, maintaining flexibility, and effective communication with everyone in the church family.

Specific comments [somewhat abbreviated; in order of sharing]

- Driving force should be a "requirements analysis": what are clergy, staff, and lay members are doing? what we need to do? what we want to do?
- Look at all facets of ministry: clergy, staff, lay
- Look at duties of minister and staff
- What activities could lay members take on
- Look at "lay-leader" models
- Key is exploring options
- Keep goals in mind
- Don't pick one thing and say "that's it"
- Need to be able to undo any decisions
- Key is being willing to experiment
- Look at everything, comprehensive
- Important to have a trial period, assessment vs. goals
- Need metrics to evaluate outcomes
- Committee to explore different types of services
- Yoking will bring increased energy and decrease burdens
- No more business as usual
- Will need/expect concessions to live within limits

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- Greater lay involvement

## ***2. What fears do you have about living into the covenant***

### Overview of Responses

The covenant is structured to lay out broad goals and a process for assessment and decision-making. It is deliberately devoid of specific details. The uncertainty in the timeline and range of possible outcomes inherent in the exploratory nature of this process could negatively affect the spiritual and financial well being of St. George's.

### Specific comments [somewhat abbreviated; in order of sharing]

- People may feel confused/insecure if we don't have clear path and timeline
- Need to explain why – see reasons in black and white
- We will lose people
- Negativity from the people we lose
- Clear communications or we may lose people
- More stress on rector, especially at holidays
- Will need additional clergy
- Issue may divide the congregation
- Fear of change; change is faster now and affecting the church
- St. George's may lose its identity, history and character
- Fracturing of church family
- Process will take too long
- Need timely communications to prevent people from feeling out of the loop
- Problem with email system

## ***3. What is the most important aspect about your current church experience that you cannot/will not live without?***

### Overview of Responses

It's all about spiritual support to parishioners offered by the pastor and the church family

### Specific comments [somewhat abbreviated; in order of sharing]

- My priest leading the service
- Want as good an interaction as I have with Father Greg
- Need to have my spiritual needs met
- Support of/by/with my church family, who are welcoming and accepting
- Being open and friendly to parishioners

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- Services and activities for youths
- Young people need priest with whom to talk and feel comfortable
- Regular availability of a priest, Father Greg's presence
- Regular communion

#### ***4. In your opinion, what would help us create a dynamic, worshipping community?***

##### Overview of Responses

Recognizing the dual importance of a strong feeling of spirituality within the church and a meaningful connection to the community at large. The group took issue with the question, as it implies there is not currently a dynamic, worshipping community. Many liked better asking about creating a *more* dynamic, worshipping community.

##### Specific comments [somewhat abbreviated; in order of sharing]

- Continuing to feel spiritually uplifted and inspired with new insights each time I leave
- Feeling that I have missed out whenever I don't go
- Feeling better about ourselves because of our church community
- Asking "what about me" to help identify what individual church family members need from the church
- Want to feel spiritually uplifted
- Importance of music in the service, music opens the heart
- Priest can't do everything; congregation needs greater role in ministry
- Lay leadership could help get more people involved in the church
- Seeing others take on leadership roles could give confidence to those who may be/are reluctant
- Stronger (evening) programs to support ~~young~~, working families
- Greater opportunities for fellowship for those who work full time
- Youth energy, the energy youth bring
- Effective use of technology: emails, web site, etc. [youths could be helpful]
- Electronic communication given to lay volunteer to free up Father Greg
- Opening the church to other groups who might be hesitant to meet at a church
- Bring "Thirsty Theology" into the church
- Greater outreach by congregation to expand the church mission into the community, programs that help others
- Prayer teams and visitation by lay people, keeping priest in the loop for follow-up

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Date: June 2, 2016  
 From: Mike Mead  
 To: Fr. Greg, Bob Ertter, Jen Thomas, members of the Vestry  
 Subject: Covenant Listening Session, 3X5 Cards

The following is a **verbatim** listing of questions and statements gathered from the congregation present at the meeting last night. With regards to questions I have provided my best answer and in the case of statements or ideas I have simply listed them for the value therein.

## Questions

1. What value does the Covenant provide now? When building a house you don't need a contract to establish a budget, set priorities, etc. You need a contract when you decided what to do and you're ready to do it.

The Covenant isn't providing any value yet as it hasn't been approved by the two vestries. However, the process of creating the Covenant has been beneficial for both vestries as it has helped foster a trusting environment on which to build future collaborative programs and processes for the good of both churches and their congregations. True, you don't need a contract to discuss common issues between two people, organizations, or churches. However, after years of effort spanning changing vestries it was decided that a more formal document acknowledging a pledge between the two churches to work together for the common good would assist in maintaining focus and commitment to the process.

2. If Ascension needs a Pastor, could one or two Deacons be sufficient for services and other congregation needs?

Although ordained Deacons can provide broad service to a congregation they cannot take the Priest's role, i.e. they cannot Absolve, Bless, or Consecrate. Deacons are assigned by the Bishop to assist but they cannot be in charge of a congregation or community of faith. So, if Ascension needs a Pastor/Priest/Rector, a Deacon cannot perform that function. Ultimately, this is a question for Ascension to answer.

3. Considering the 30 day clause to withdraw from the Covenant, what will be done about employment contracts? Say for a Rector who has a one year of longer contract.

There is not a thirty day clause to withdraw from the Covenant. It is one year: "Each parish by its assent to this Covenant agrees to continue its participation for a minimum of three years and to give at least one-year notice to the other to terminate or substantially alter the terms of the agreement." A notice of thirty days is required if the vestry wishes in any way to amend the document. If we enter into the Covenant with

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Ascension and we agree to a shared clergy arrangement there will be a clause of some sort in the clergypersons' / clergyperson's Letter of Agreement(s) that would call for renegotiation of the contract in the event of a withdrawal of one or both of the church bodies from the Covenant.

4. Would we have services at both churches every Sunday or alternate Sundays from one church to another?  
Church service schedules and locations would be worked out by the vestries and the Joint Executive Committee from St. George's and Ascension.
5. What about the Altar Guilds?  
Altar Guilds will continue to be handled by the separate congregations and vestries. However, there may be opportunities for savings based on buying for two churches instead of one.
6. Two paid musicians?  
A decision to use two separate paid musicians or one shared musician, or some other arrangement for music programs would be a decision for each congregation and vestry. However, there is nothing to prevent the two parishes from using the same musician services with payment coming from the individual church budgets or if agreed upon by the Joint Executive Committee, a collaborative budget set up for the purpose of paying for shared services.
7. How would fund raising be handled?  
Fundraising would continue to be handled by the separate parishes. However, there may be opportunities to collaborate on a particular fund raising activity with both churches involved in the planning and sharing of returns.
8. Would we have a combined Worship Committee?  
We could, but only if both churches agreed to this approach.
9. Evening Meetings or services and traffic at and through Great Mills?  
Too early to answer this question but any meetings at either church would be planned around traffic and work schedules as much as possible.
10. Combined parish administrative duties?  
Not decided yet as we haven't looked at the total of both church's requirements. But this is clearly an area where there may be a cost savings by combining or sharing administrative staff or using volunteers.

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11. Where will Sunday school be held and at what time?  
 Not decided yet. However, the decision to have separate or joint Sunday school would be based on facilities, number and location of students, staff, etc. These details will be discussed and worked out after approval of the Covenant and work by the vestries and Joint Executive Committee.
12. Will Priest be visible to children for Chapel?  
 Yes.
13. Combined website and newsletter?  
 This is possible if it makes sense and both churches agree. However, in the short term it might be more advantageous if we collaboratively find volunteers that are skilled in social media to assist both churches.
14. Where and when will Sunday services take place?  
 Please see answer to Question 4.
15. Will the Priest alternate Sundays at each church or will the services be held joining at each church?  
 The number and type of Clergy necessary to meet the needs of the two parishes will be determined following an analysis of joint pastoral duty requirements. Until then it would be premature to answer this question.
16. What will happen to the Administrative staff? Shared or independent?  
 Please see answer to Question 10.
17. What will happen to Altar Guild?  
 Please see answer to Question 5.
18. What will happen to Sunday school teachers?  
 Please see answer to Question 11.
19. What will happen to Church musicians and music programs?  
 Please see answer to Question 6.
20. Can a Deacon conduct a service if the Eucharist is blessed by Priest?  
 Yes, and please see answer to Question 2.

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21. Will it be necessary to change services (time, day)?

Please see answers to Questions 4 and 15.

22. What help can lay persons be for Clergy and Staff?

Not only will opportunities abound for lay persons to help but this assistance will be vital and necessary for a collaborative model to work most efficiently. Examples are, assistance with administrative duties, visitation for shut-ins, Lay Eucharistic Ministry, website maintenance, social media and communication, etc., etc.

23. Can the timeline be published for all members to view?

Yes. Following the approval of the Covenant by both vestries the first order of business will be to develop a timeline and planning document.

24. How are you seeking growth in both churches?

There are different types of growth in the Christian life, but perhaps this question is dealing with at least two categories of growth: spiritual growth and numerical growth. Spiritual growth, being the most important in our walk with Christ, is accomplished when people intentionally go about deepening their relationships with God, neighbor, and self. This is best accomplished when the burdens and demands of the structure of the church institution are significantly reduced, possibly by adopting a new institutional model which would at least cut in half those demands and burdens. According to that same new model, the causes for celebration as well as resources by which we can better engage our communities with the Gospel of Jesus would be significantly increased. Thus, numerical growth is always the anticipated fruit of spiritual growth, even as it will require strenuous, serious and intentional labor. When Christian congregations are engaged more in ministry and mission with their community, while at the same time focusing less on fear, institutional self-preservation and/or survival, there emerges a very real possibility for true numerical growth.

25. What is the end result, financial or growth?

Hopefully, both, as you can't have financial stability without growth. Nor can you have growth without the financial stability necessary to keep talented clergy offering programs supportive of the needs of the congregation and community. With both goals in mind we are embarking on this initiative joined with like minded, Christ loving Christians from our sister church. If we are successful, the end result will be that both churches will be successful.



26. Does alternating Sundays pose a problem to each parish's demographic population as far as services are concerned?

Please see answers to Questions 4, 14, and 15.

27. Can any layperson distribute consecrated host/wine? If not, what training is required?

This is a possibility, but requires the consultation and permission of the diocesan bishop. Further, some form of training would need to be developed. This issue was raised via Resolution A044 of the 2015 General Convention, which states: "Resolved, The House of Deputies concurring, That the 78th General Convention direct the bishop exercising ecclesiastical authority in each Diocese to discern and implement ways in which small congregations within their Diocese who are without benefit of clergy may receive Communion on a regular basis."

28. Is this decision primarily for financial means?

No, not primarily. Although the financial realities of both church's situations have been an important facet of this ongoing initiative it is important to not lose sight of the fact that we are here to spread the Good News of Jesus Christ through ministry, outreach and good works. In order to accomplish these things we have reached out to other churches with similar missions, backgrounds, and problems so that we might collaborate and look for creative ways to make best use of our resources.

29. What is the ultimate result of the merger? What are you trying to achieve?

First and foremost, this is NOT a merger. It is a formal partnership committing us to work together for an agreed upon period of time to try and collaboratively solve jointly experienced problems as well as share best practices and where it makes sense, liturgical, support staff, and administrative resources. Both churches retain separate vestries, financial resources, budgets, and ultimate responsibility for their respective parishes.

30. How would or could we use Deacons or Layreaders or supply Priests?

Please see answers to Questions 2, 15, and 20. Further, Deacons and Supply Priests could be provided by the Diocese to assist in the liturgical mission as necessary and as the Bishop sees fit.

31. How would a parishioner request pastoral care of a certain individual?

The same as always, by calling your Priest, Senior or Junior Warden.



32. How would the music program, which is quite different presently, be resolved? Paid musicians?

Please see answers to Questions 6 and 19.

33. How would the funds for maintenance and improvement of buildings and grounds be allocated?

The same as always. Each church is responsible for the upkeep of its facilities and for providing the funds required. The allocation of each church's B&G funds continues to be the purview of the recommendations of the B&G committees and decisions by the separate vestries.

34. Analysis of membership at Ascension and St. George's for past 7 years: has there been an increase or decrease?

The past seven years, from 2008 to 2014 (2014 being the last year in which records of both congregations are public), there has been an overall numerical increase at St. George's, and a decrease at Ascension. St. George's Average Sunday Attendance (ASA) increased 22% from 2008's 74 to 2014's 91. St. George's total pledge and plate offerings went up 54% in that same time period, from \$96,499 to \$149,371. (In 2015, by the way, St. George's ASA was 86; pledge and plate, \$180,233.) In those same years, Ascension's ASA dropped 12%, from 92 in 2008 to 2014's 81. Their total pledge and plate giving went down 11%, from \$186,122 (2008) to \$164,311 (2014). According to the Episcopal Church's annual parochial report, membership is defined as "Total Baptized Members," which is not always the most descriptive number in terms of participation and engagement. Between 2008 and 2014 St. George's "membership" increased from 220 to 264; Ascension's decreased from 318 to 267.

35. Analysis of pledging at Ascension and St. George's for past 7 years: has there been an increase or decrease?

At St. George's, regular giving has been increasing over the past seven years. A more intentional focus on Christian discipleship and practices of stewardship, including the reasons why Christians strive to become generous financial contributors to the church, has led to significant increases in financial giving and support. As noted above, Sunday morning offerings of pledge giving and plate contributions increased 54%.

Unfortunately, however, the overall number of people who regularly contribute is relatively low – 84 'households' regularly give to St. George's using the envelopes provided to them – which means that the steady increase is not enough to offset the deficit. Further, with 61% of the total dollars donated given by only 27% of the people using envelopes there is significant risk if we lose those donators.

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36. If yoking takes effect, will Ascension pay ½ of all expenses associated with Greg, (including rectory costs)? If an additional priest is hired, how does this help with expenses?

The costs of clergy, shared administrative costs, and St. George's Rectory (if, that is, Greg chooses to take the post) will likely be shared on a pro-rated basis based on the amount of time used by each parish. That is, if we use 50% and Ascension uses 50% we will pay equal shares. If one parish uses more time and administrative costs then that parish will pay its pro-rated share. To answer the second part of the question: Before additional clergy will be hired we will do an analysis of the total hours spent doing pastoral duties at St. George's and Ascension. Some of the duties currently being performed by both clergy could possibly be performed by volunteers (e.g. Social media, etc.) or non-paid clergy (Deacons). Once this is done the total requirement for pastoral duties will be split on a pro-rated basis and analyzed to determine if a cost savings will be realized.

37. How much input will the parishioners have when it is time to make the decision to yoke or not?

Parishioners have a voice from beginning to end. The vestry, being the elected representatives who bear fiduciary oversight of the respective parishes, will ultimately make the decision; however, a significant part of said vestry responsibility is listening to the vision of the entire community as well as taking the necessary steps to respond to God's call.

38. If Ascension's membership is declining, how will yoking improve these numbers?

Yoking is a possible solution to share assets and missions in a way that will, it is hoped, revitalize both congregations as well as help defray costs of operation. As we go through the process of working out the details, both vestries will have to determine if it make sense to continue down a particular path. If it doesn't make sense in both categories of performing God's mission in a financially viable way we will of course reassess the arrangement.

39. Why doesn't Ascension hire a part time priest?

That is certainly one possible action that Ascension might take, but it does little to solve the overall problems that we face, alone or together. The fact is that Fr. Greg isn't going to be here forever so any action that Ascension takes in the short term doesn't help us in the long term. The other fact is that even as St. George's giving, membership and participation have grown over the past several years, we are still operating with a deficit budget and, depending on market performance, may not be able to use our Endowment to help underwrite some of the major costs of operating this parish. In other words,

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yoking isn't only for Ascension's benefit. If either Ascension and/or St. George's discern God's call to remain separate and independent parishes, St. George's, itself, will be facing very serious and worrisome financial conversations in the next six months. Yoking is simply a partnership between two separate parishes looking at possible creative solutions to the problem of small churches finding permanent rectors, continuing to do God's work, and survive the realities of the current economic situation and social change.

40. When looking at St. George's finances, is everything being done to curtail expenses?

The vestry and parish leadership are exceedingly careful about internal financial activities, and we think we've done everything we can, but part of this process is to look deeply into every possibility. For starters, it is difficult to apply blanket approaches to financial solvency because the interconnectedness between financial viability and missional vitality is so inherently complex. First, one of the biggest problems we face are non-discretionary costs. In St. George's overall financial picture, discretionary costs make up a relatively small portion of the budget. Although every attempt is made and will continue to be made to ensure sound financial decisions which lead to more streamlined operational costs, that approach does not address the imbalance of non-discretionary costs against revenue. Second, expenses are carefully maintained. From 2008 to 2015, expenses increased barely 4% -- whereas in that same time period (see above) overall giving increased 54%. Further, controllable expenses are being controlled. Total utility costs for all three buildings, for instance, increased 6% from 2007 to 2014 -- a total dollar increase of \$1,223. Compare St. George's 6% increase to the overall 20% increase in the price of kilowatt-hour of energy (KWH) in Maryland in that same time period, however, and it is clear that our investment in more sustainable energy solutions has actually been saving us money. Third, there are always opportunities to curtail expenses. However, decisions to do so must be weighed against the needs of the Church. Every action has a consequence, sometimes good and sometimes bad, often unintended until after the action has been taken. Consider, if you will, the following: in 2015, parishioners gave a total of \$180,233, whereas St. George's total investment in measurable, literal good in our community and world in that same year was \$253,697 -- a 40% increase of *impact over investment*. Now ask yourself the following question: Which line item(s) in our budget, or which restricted account(s) can we reduce without negatively impacting our mission and ministry? Or: which line item(s) in our budget, or which restricted account(s) are driving that impact? Because every financial action has a consequence, the vestry and parish leadership are exceedingly careful about blanket approaches to financial solvency at the potential risk of missional vitality.

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### Recommendations/Ideas/Concerns:

1. Train and support prayer teams and lay people for home visitations.
2. Sharing paid music staff for a savings if possible. Build our music program.
3. Make sure there are two Sunday services at each church.
4. Increase involvement of members of the vestry to share responsibility of the running of the parish and increasing lay ministry.
5. One suggestion on services is that we keep 0800 and 1030 at each site and we flip-flop which is Eucharist and morning prayer, i.e., Week 1: SGEC 0800 is Eucharist, COA 1030 is Eucharist. Week 2: SGEC 1030 is Eucharist, COA 0800 is Eucharist. Holidays we need a pitch hitter or one service of each.
6. I have a concern regarding the use of just one Priest. I'm afraid of burn-out for that person. Not sure volunteers taking on non-Priest duties will wash successfully.
7. As we proceed thru the different "experiments" I believe we need a definite process for feedback from the parishioners, such as surveys. The results would be invaluable to evaluate the concerns for distribution to all concerned. I believe this would provide good communication.
8. It is important to know how a Priest spends his/her time during the course of the week. Perhaps a Priest could do this for us. Write down how he/she spends their time.
9. If a Pastor spends so much time at each church it may place stress on our pastor(s). The demands of each church may be greater than anticipated.

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