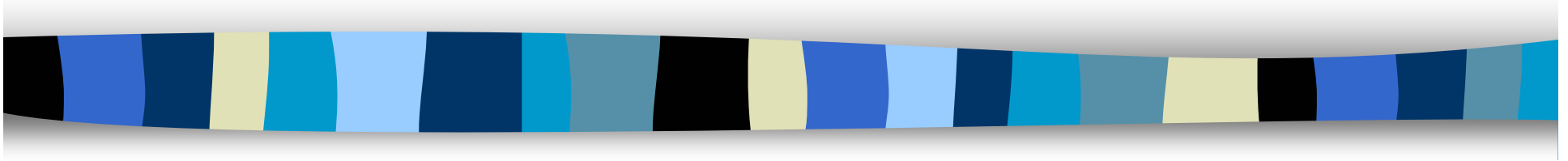


St. Matthew's Annual Meeting 2010



Report on the Vestry-Led
Discernment Process



A Culture of Discernment

“And this is my prayer, that your love may overflow more and more with knowledge and full insight to help you determine what is best, so that on the day of Christ you may be pure and blameless, having produced the harvest of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ for the glory and praise of God.”

Philippians 1:9-11

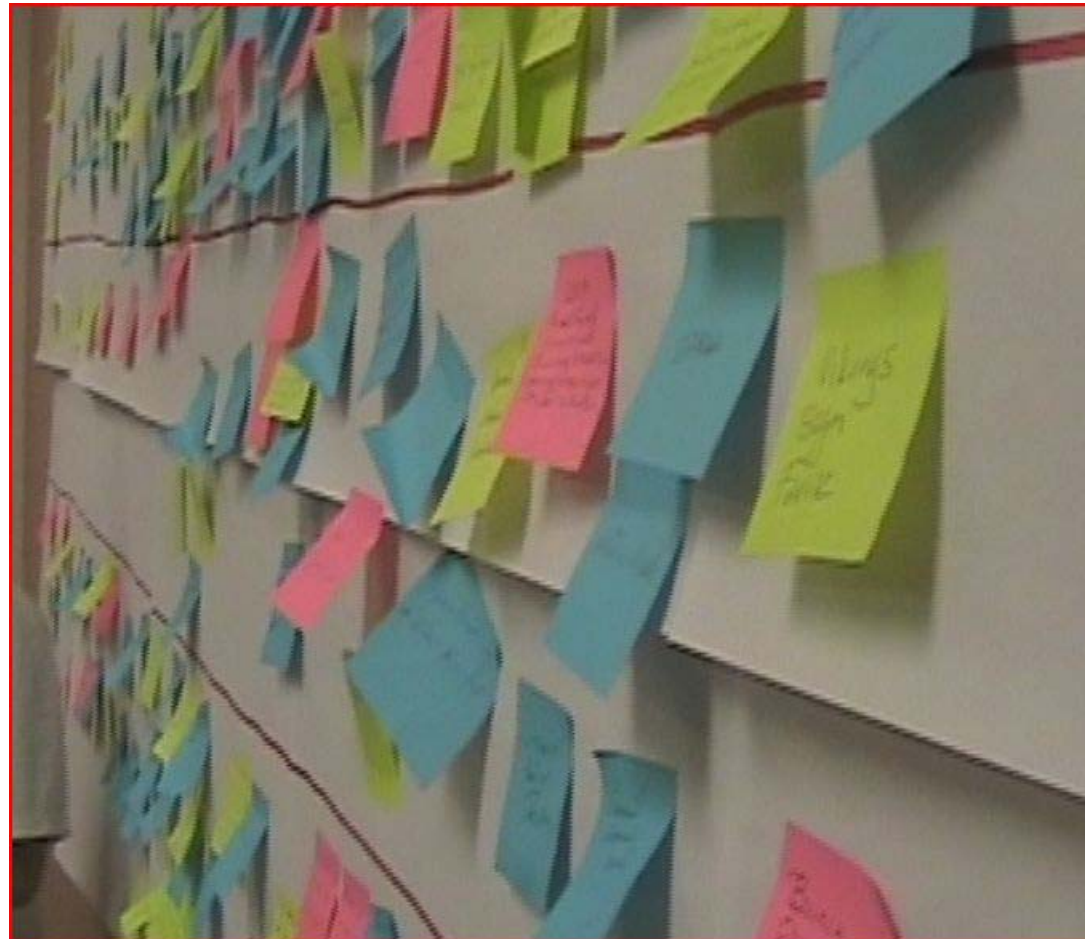
Wondering Together

“Without the power of a creative imagination, the will of God remains a noble ideal, expressed in sacred texts but not incarnate in the lives of contemporary believers.”

Ben Campbell Johnson



Imagining the Question

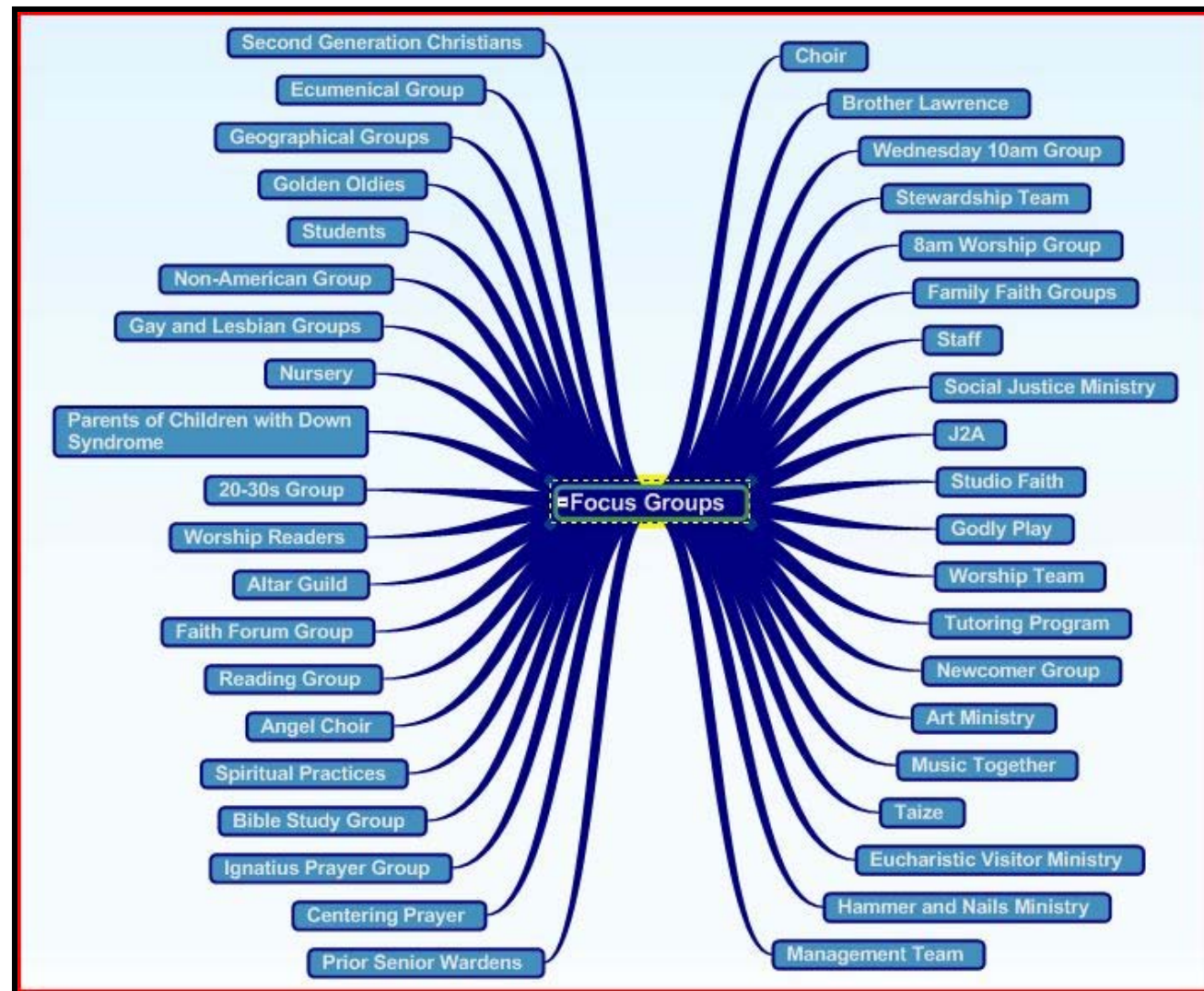




Imagining the Question

“When the people of St. Matthew’s
bring together our deepest desires
and our greatest gifts,
how do we imagine the future
God is bringing forth among us?”

Identifying Focus Groups





12 Focus Groups Chosen to Begin

Art Ministry

Brother Lawrence Guild

Family Faith Group

Godly Play Teachers

Past Senior Wardens

Social Justice Ministries

Staff

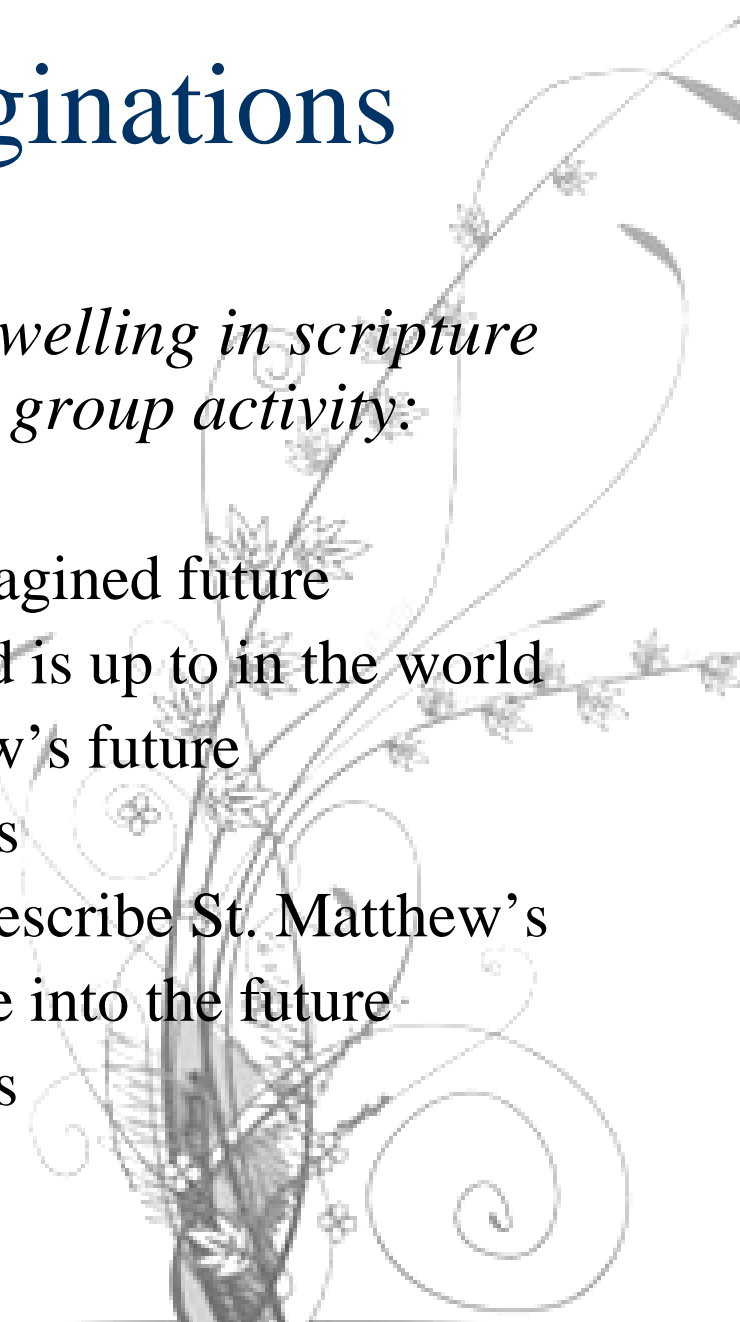
Worship Team

Open Invitation Groups (4)

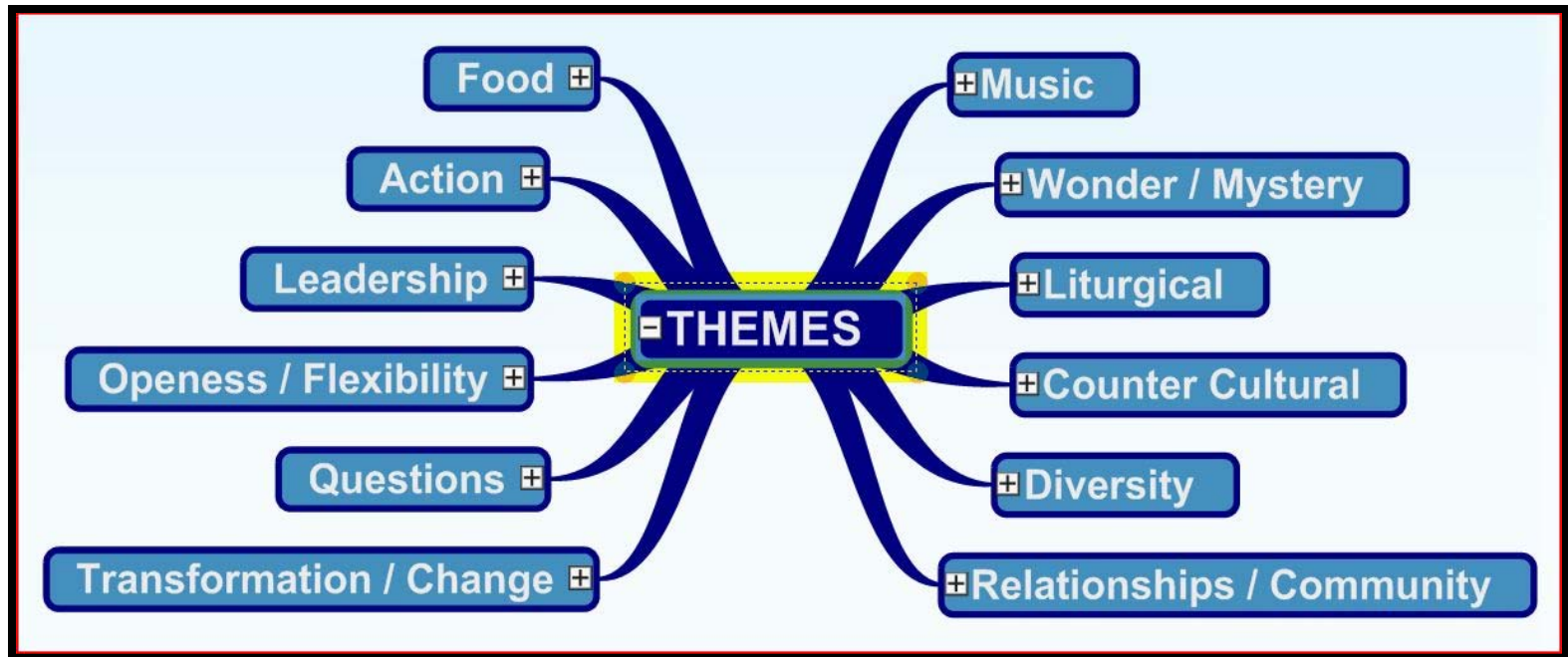


Engaging Our Imagination

Every focus group began with dwelling in scripture together, followed by a creative group activity:

- ◆ Building Lego models of our imagined future
 - ◆ Taking photographs of what God is up to in the world
 - ◆ Painting an image of St. Matthew's future
 - ◆ Sharing favorite children's books
 - ◆ Creating a menu of dishes that describe St. Matthew's
 - ◆ Visualizing a hot-air balloon ride into the future
 - ◆ Open wall (sticky note) exercises
- 

Emerging Themes



Relationships ♦ Diversity ♦ Openness
Eucharist ♦ Mystery ♦ Spiritual Practices
Continuity ♦ Change ♦ Abundance

Emerging Themes

Relationships ♦ Diversity ♦ Openness



Relationships ♦ Diversity ♦ Openness

“Relationship is very important, not ‘Lone Ranger’ ministry, but you’re trying to do things together...and there’s a wonderful openness in that.”

Worship Team group member

“I think God is there when you’re truly listening to another person.”

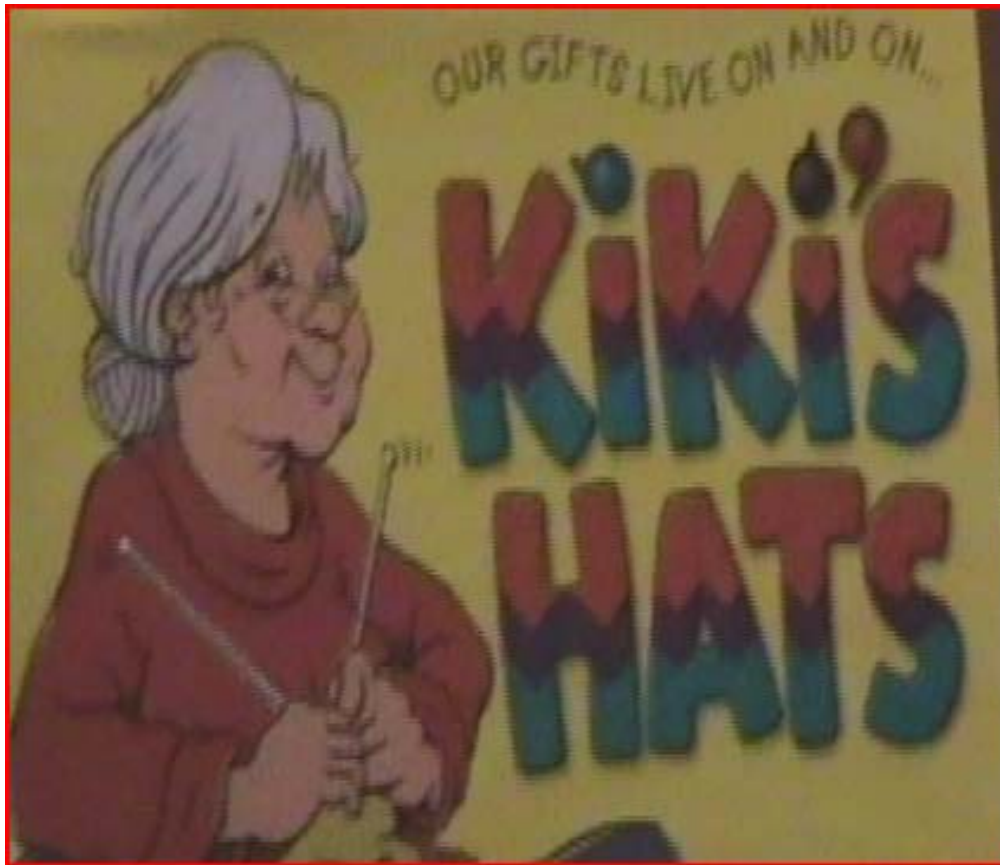
Staff focus group member

“Through hard and difficult times in this parish, they stayed together as a community.”

Past Senior Wardens group member



Relationships ♦ Diversity ♦ Openness



Cover of children's book shared by group member

“I wonder if the future God’s bringing forth is not more things ... maybe it’s less things, and more clarity and more depth.”

*Family Faith
group member*

Relationships ♦ Diversity ♦ Openness

“Diversity of all types...embracing it as part of a healthy ecosystem in science is one [example] – everybody has a niche and everybody is different and they all work together and they all fit together in it – if one group is gone, the whole thing falls apart ...diversity in biological terms is critical in a healthy system and for a community it’s the same.”

Open Invitation #3 group member



“One of the things I imagine for St. Matthew’s is expansion, celebrating diversity”; “...an expanding mission, expanding the outreach, expanding the number of people we impact.”

Godly Play group members

Relationships ♦ Diversity ♦ Openness

“When I sit in my spot in the back of the church, I see a lot of different heads and people and they are all different textures and colors...I like the way all of these different textures of plants look together...



any one of them in that quantity would be dull, and the mass of a whole congregation made up of people like me would be very dull. It's the fact that we are all different that makes it fun – that makes it interesting.”

Staff focus group member

Relationships ♦ Diversity ♦ Openness



“The windows are good, because you can get too insulated in a circle and never look out...you have a lot of openings to the outside world.”

Godly Play focus group member

Relationships ♦ Diversity ♦ Openness

“When the art is hung the people who aren’t in the art ministry see the art and it reaches out and sometimes goes out into the community. So, there are tendrils that come out and those are community members coming in, our stuff going out – reaching out and then there’s still some people outside...who need to be reached and we haven’t managed to connect with them yet.”

Art Ministry focus group member



Journey Inward ♦ Journey Outward



as Christians to incorporate outreach, advocacy and study into our spiritual faith.”

Social Justice Ministries web page

“As in Micah 6:8 –
‘Do justice, have mercy, and walk humbly with your God,’ we believe that it is our responsibility



Emerging Themes

Eucharist ♦ Mystery ♦ Spiritual Practices



“I love singing with the children, drawing with them, whatever. I love having the children there, comfortable in church. That was our first goal.”

Worship Team focus group member



Eucharist ♦ Mystery ♦ Spiritual Practices

“For me, and it was something very freeing when I finally internalized it, was the part where [we say] “and made us worthy to stand before you.”

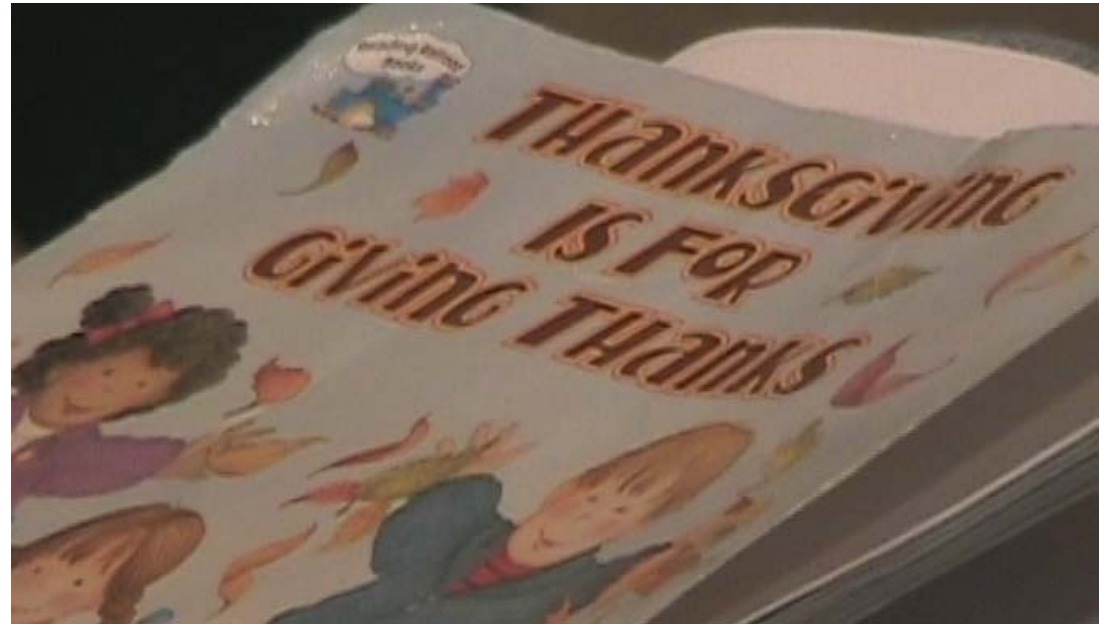
Having grown up in the church with the 1928 Book of Common Prayer – when you are used to “although we are *unworthy*.” That’s what’s been sticking you – your *unworthiness*. Yes, you’ve been redeemed, but the focus was on you are ‘unworthy’ rather than you are ‘*made worthy* to stand before God.’ Which is why, when I finally accepted that – that’s why I stand – even before it became customary in this parish, I stood.”

Worship Team focus group member



Eucharist ♦ Mystery ♦ Spiritual Practices

“It is too big a word right now [for a small child] but I was thinking that one day when she discovers that Eucharist means



thanksgiving or *Eucharisto* – *I give thanks* – that would be interesting – that’s a thanksgiving meal every Sunday!”

Family Faith group member

Eucharist ♦ **Mystery** ♦ Spiritual Practices



“Essentially what it is,
is a man reaching up –
maybe even as a scared
child might – or a
yearning to touch
God.”

*Art Ministry
focus group member*



Eucharist ♦ **Mystery** ♦ Spiritual Practices



Lego model representing St. Matthew's

B: This is my favorite part.

A: What's that?

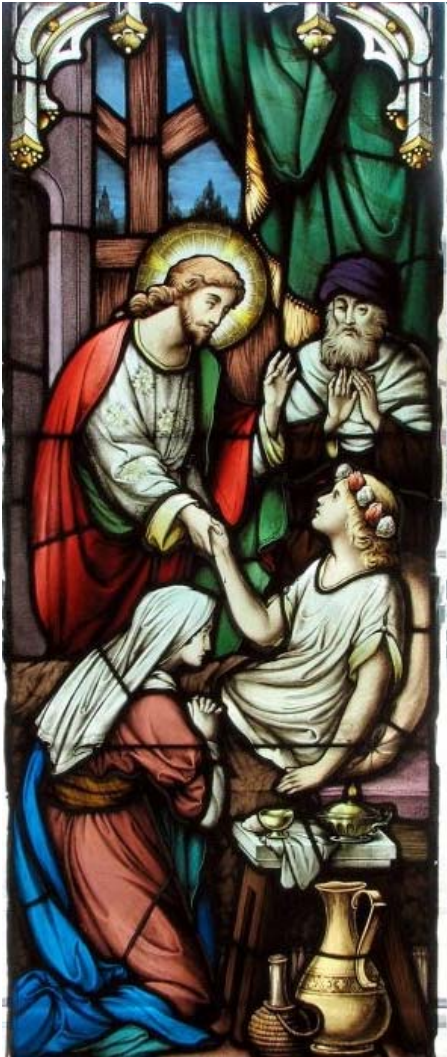
B: It's mystery. Things we don't understand...

A: I thought it's a dinosaur..."

[laughter]

*Open Invitation #3
focus group members*

Eucharist ♦ Mystery ♦ Spiritual Practices



“I think of the work that we are doing with the healing on Sundays and.... I just think that’s a very special thing about this place...This could be a very a very healing place for people.”

Worship Team group member



“I came here tonight with [healing] in mind...If I could hope that this church is about anything, it would be that for us – starting with us. I mean, because, forget about healing everybody else until we’re really healed ourselves. And then, open it up...”

Open Inv. #4 group member

Eucharist ♦ Mystery ♦ Spiritual Practices

B: With the Drop-In Dinners now, we're really kind of flying by the seat of our pants...I mean, it's been really fun. But it's kind of scary.

A:...When I was growing up...people just kind of drop in your house....Mother would always say, 'Just add water.'

B: ...I think then that whole idea about eating and being satisfied...it's not

just about food. But it's about spiritual growth.

A: Yeah, and fellowship.

B: Fellowship...That's something so different – ephemeral and yet real.

Brother Lawrence Guild members



Hospitality

Emerging Themes

Continuity ♦ Change ♦ Abundance



...imagination guides us
where God wants us to
go.” *Past Senior Wardens group*

“God is active.

Sometimes we want to turn
our heads and see
opportunities...



Continuity ♦ Change ♦ Abundance

A: “I’ve been in churches where people have been so upset when there’s the noise versus getting – like Jesus – the big picture – what a blessing to have the children – and that’s where the kingdom is, versus our perfect, perfect, scripted worship service...St. Matthew’s had one child, when the [X] family came here, there was one child in the church so...the children are where the kingdom is.”

B: I can’t even think of St. Matthew’s without kids.

Family Faith focus group members



Continuity ♦ Change ♦ Abundance

“We have some roots in
[our] history...some
mountains to climb...
new places to travel, the
branching out of...new
growth,
... and still with the
presence of God in the sky
and the heavens coming
down.”

*Art Ministry
focus group member*



Continuity ♦ **Change** ♦ Abundance



“This is...my vision of the Holy Spirit coming into our lives within the church and how all of our lives are connected together with the Holy Spirit. All those colors are all the people here in this church and on earth...

...I see this as the vision of St. Matthew’s that we allow that to happen and let [in] that creativity.”

Art Ministry group member

Continuity ♦ **Change** ♦ Abundance

A: ... We're moving, catching the wind. The Holy Spirit...we're ready to go where the Spirit moves us... 'the Holy Gust.'

B: I like the journey—that you're on the move. You're moving with the Spirit—journey or pilgrimage. I wonder, how do you decide—you can't get everything on a boat. How do you decide what you can take with you and what needs to be left behind?...I do like the trust implicit in the Ship, and I was thinking that the main body of our church is called the nave."



Lego model of St. Matthew's as a ship

Open Invitation #1 focus group members

Continuity ♦ Change ♦ Abundance



On the menu of dishes that describe St. Matthew's: Pomegranate Ice Cream

“Because it is very refreshing and it sort of surprises you...It is fabulous. It is one of those things that are so good. I’m astounded by the pomegranate and how wonderful it is...It’s just so beautiful and, you know, it’s like one of those things where you have to automatically give thanks... How beautiful. Those red jewels. I try to have them for Thanksgiving. To me, they’re that whole idea of thanksgiving. Blessing, bounty...It’s the beauty, too. God has given us all these wonderful things.”

*Brother Lawrence Guild
focus group member*



Continuity ♦ Change ♦ **Abundance**



“We were driving up to Bemidji and all of a sudden we went over this hill and there is this huge field...it went on forever! This huge field of sunflowers. And so we’re whizzing by in the car and I said, ‘Stop! I have to

take a picture, because that’s where God is.’ ... I just felt that it was abundance. I just had this feeling of ‘Wow!’ and praise and abundance.”

Staff focus group member

Living Into Our Identity



“He destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ...with all wisdom and insight he has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ, as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.”

Ephesians 1:5-10

An Ongoing Conversation

“Discernment and more discernment...”

...I think when we first did the discernment,
I thought ‘Okay, we’re done’

And then a few months later we
have to discern again. Why?

[laughter] Why do we need to
discern *more*? And then through
the process of discussion we learned
why we *do* need to continue to
discern—as we change we need to
discern more to see if we still are going
down the direction we want to go in.

And where God is leading us.”



Past Senior Wardens group member



Continuing the Discussion

How do you imagine we can live more fully into the three threads that describe our community today?

What questions will deepen our conversation?

Relationships ♦ Diversity ♦ Openness

Eucharist ♦ Mystery ♦ Spiritual Practices

Continuity ♦ Change ♦ Abundance

*All of your thoughts and questions will be
prayerfully considered by the Vestry.*