

**CHURCH OF THE HOLY FAMILY  
PARISH DIALOGUES AND SURVEYS  
April 2010  
Prepared by the Rector Search Committee**

As part of the process of preparing the Parish Profile—a document that states who we are at Church of the Holy Family, our vision for the next three-to-five years, and the attributes we seek in a rector—the Rector Search Committee conducted three parish-wide dialogues, distributed a parish-wide survey for those who did not attend a dialogue, and met in conversation with the EYC, acolytes, Sunday School, and clergy and staff.

As attendees of Church of the Holy Family and as members of God’s family striving to live into the calling of our name, the Rector Search Committee invited everyone to participate in the process of seeking a new rector.

The parish-wide dialogues were held on Tuesday, February 23, 7:00 – 9:00 p.m., Saturday, February 27, 9:30 – 11:30 a.m., and Sunday, February 28, 1:30 – 3:30 p.m. Child care was provided for those in fifth grade and younger. Each session was framed by the observance of a Prayer Book service and included the ringing of the Sanctus bells as a reminder of the Holy Spirit’s presence among us. All parishioners 16 years old and up were invited to join in one of the dialogues. Participants were asked to reflect on their time at Holy Family, to name those things they value most about Holy Family, and to indicate what they believe to be Holy Family’s most important accomplishments over the next three-to-five years. These sessions were indeed dialogues: discussions took place in small groups, and each table group included a facilitator from the Search Committee who reported out to the whole gathering. The facilitators kept all the notes generated during the dialogues and inputted them into a master database.

The EYC and acolyte dialogue was held on Sunday, February 28, 5:00 – 6:00 p.m. The EYC participants were asked the same three questions, and the facilitators added their comments into the database.

The chair of the Search Committee met with the clergy and staff on Tuesday, March 2, 6:00 – 7:00 p.m., in the same format. Their comments were also added to the database.

On Sunday, March 14, Search Committee facilitators conducted abbreviated dialogues with the Sunday School children, kindergarten through eighth grade. They were asked the first two questions, and their comments were included in the database.

The survey—asking the same questions as those posed during the dialogues—was made available to the parish between Thursday, March 4 and Monday, March 15. The survey was inserted into the March issue of *Family Affairs*, available in hard copy in the Narthex over two Sundays, and distributed electronically twice.

Participation was very strong and representative across the three liturgies:

Parish-wide dialogues: 107  
EYC and acolytes: 28  
Sunday School: 59  
Clergy and staff: 11  
Surveys: 29

There is some duplication in these numbers as a few individuals attended both staff and parishioner dialogues and some youth attended EYC and Sunday School dialogues. With nearly 400 people attending across a Sunday morning, participation of 234 is a strong sampling and a testament to parishioners' commitment to the search process and their eagerness to be involved.

### Findings

Every sticky note produced during these dialogues has been preserved physically and entered into an electronic database along with responses to the survey. This raw data is appended to the report.

The purposes of the dialogues and survey were to invite participation, to build our community's commitment to God and one another, to uncover specific examples of what we as a parish and as individuals value, and to articulate our yearnings for the future as we journey together as the family of God. There was no attempt at gaining consensus; the process was designed to identify themes.

The amount of raw data is daunting! Because of the somewhat abstract nature of the responses, the data cannot be sorted into conclusive categories; therefore, it must be assembled to reveal themes and trends. It is, however, extremely important that the data be reviewed in its entirety to get a more complete sense of the diversity of the responses.

The Committee summarizes the findings as follows:

- Parishioners have named clearly liturgy as the center of our lives. Liturgy is, of course, about the worship of God; God is the center of what we do and who we are at Holy Family. Services and events are frequently mentioned in context of observing the liturgical calendar. The services during Holy Week are cited over and over again as central to Holy Family's identity and practice as Episcopalians. Music is an important part of worship and of community.
- Parishioners are centered by the use of our parish name—Holy Family—as a description of our lives and worship together. Family describes fellowship, pastoral care, education and formation, outreach, and inreach. It is also a way to talk about the ways in which the parish functions and communicates—we have many highly functional family dynamics but also some that are less functional.
- Parishioners named our size as important, along with the recognition that we are not only a hospitable community but one that is determined to extend that hospitality more broadly and deeply so that we as a parish and as individuals might be transformed by those experiences. The gathering of children around the baptismal font is repeatedly mentioned as a sign of community. Hosting Anglican clergy from around the world has influenced many.

- Parishioners look not only inwardly but outwardly. Outreach is described as influencing people in many ways—transforming individuals, deepening faith, building community. It is an action and activity that has many faces at Holy Family. Significantly, parishioners describe outreach as something they currently value as well as something they yearn to experience more deeply.
- Parishioners are committed to the calling of a rector who will transform Holy Family and who is willing to be transformed by us through life and ministry together as priest and people.

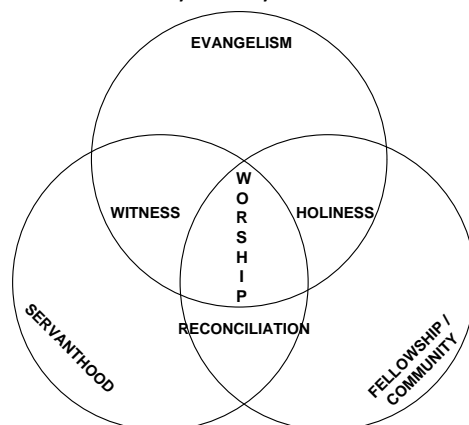
The model used to gather information is essentially appreciative, one that intentionally focuses on the best of our parish—when have we seen God in our midst, what do we value, and what do we want to accomplish as the family of God. It is not intended, however, to gloss over the challenges of being a community, of being a family. There are discussions yet to be had about the difficult issues that tear at the fabric of our lives as Christians, Anglicans, Episcopalians, and Holy Family parishioners. There is an identified need to be deliberate about having these discussions while maintaining our commitment to welcoming all. It is not, perhaps, enough to be welcoming and inclusive and to avoid the stressful topics of our day. Parishioners seek guidance, wisdom, and faithful observance of the tenets of our faith from our new rector.

After much discussion, the Rector Search Committee will consider sorting the data into the categories suggested by the Vision for Ministry, the five-year plan that was recently completed with the input of many parishioners over the last two years and which was accepted by the Vestry in December 2009.

The Vision for Ministry is centered on five themes:

1. The centrality of worship and fellowship
2. The pursuit of holiness
3. The necessity of witness and evangelism
4. The call of servanthood
5. The promise of reconciliation

Taking the five themes of Vision for Ministry and extracting the seven key words—worship, fellowship, holiness, witness, evangelism, servanthood, and reconciliation, the Committee developed a Venn diagram to demonstrate the overlapping nature of the activities that reflect these themes and as way to capture the integrated values and vision of Holy Family.



Following are each of the key words with descriptions and quotes garnered from the dialogues and surveys. The quotes are intended to capture the breadth of responses.

**Worship:** to be a congregation where the worship of God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—is foundational: baptizing, proclaiming the Word of God, and making Eucharist.

- Struck by Liturgy, exactly what I was looking for. A good way to please God.
- Emphasis on baptisms—that they are frequent and highly celebrated.
- Nurturing the next generation in Liturgical tradition.
- Prayer Book based liturgy done with lively spirit, respect and knowledge.
- Baptism is special at CHF. The font is central to our nave and our life as a parish.
- Our church makes the sacred both very important and very accessible.
- That the Eucharist table holds us together despite very diverse beliefs.
- Holy Family is known locally as the place to be during Holy Week.
- The service in which the newly released prisoner was baptized was very moving.
- The joyous nature of our church: baptisms, funerals, inclusion of children in worship.
- Holy Week. . . has lasting spiritual impact. . . “stay with me, remain here with me, watch and pray”. . . carries him all year long.
- God is present here for me.
- I have pictures of my baptism. I remember my little brother’s baptism.
- The worship experience is central to the life of the parish.
- Preaching that challenges and inspires and changes lives.
- Baptism by immersion around the font and loud “Amens”!
- Liturgy is central, with reverence.
- The Easter Vigil is our most important service.
- Liturgy means something; it’s not just words read out of the Prayer Book.
- Overnight vigil for the dead.

**Holiness:** to be a congregation where the reality of sin requires a robust embrace of mutual accountability, repentance, and forgiveness.

- My altar guild work has been Godly work for me. . . I often feel closer to God as I dust, wash, scrub, and polish. Then in preparation for the Eucharist, I am actually preparing a feast for my Holy Family.
- This is a very loving, caring and praying church for which I am very thankful, and feel blessed to have found.
- We walked into Holy Family on a Sunday after Christmas, and, as soon as our feet entered the Nave, we felt a great sense of holiness and awe. . . it felt like “the family of God,” as my 15-year-old daughter said.
- What brings us together makes us holy? We gather together because we expect to find Christ in our midst.
- I stayed because I found worship week in and week out was consistent, and I always leave feeling restored.

- Challenged to grow spiritually, to be involved, to “step-up” and fulfill your calling.
- Teaching me how to pray. This is ongoing. It started, but I keep learning.

Reconciliation: to be a congregation that lives and proclaims with confidence the peaceable Kingdom of God; to live in the promise of Christ’s coming in glory when all people are restored to God.

- Continue with the idea of increasing diversity of the congregation.
- Feast of Janani Luwum—time of reconciliation; affirmed connection with Christians throughout the world.
- A community that is tolerant.

Witness: to be a congregation where, by the mystery and power of the Risen Christ, the essential elements of Christianity are taught, practiced, and believed.

- I have never been in a church that offered more ways to get your hands dirty serving others. I quickly got roped into Yokefellows and Transition Ministry. Now, I count among my best friends felons and drug addicts and poor teenagers with babies. It’s exploded my rather safe middle-class existence. Our church is not that diverse (in terms of social class), but the opportunities for outreach have brought me face to face with the poor, the imprisoned, and the needy. And there I see Christ.
- There is someone at the building doing something every day. The doors are always open. But it doesn’t feel like a business. It’s not about job titles and programs. It’s about prayer and outreach.
- At an intergenerational event in the parish hall, there seemed to be a light shining there, showing how God was already at work among us and drawing us into a fuller life.
- The congregation lives its faith.
- Make sure each youth understands what it means to be a Christian and especially an Episcopalian.
- Training/mentoring of seminarians; place where people experience the call to ministry.

Evangelism: to be a congregation where, by the mystery and power of the Risen Christ, everyone might come within the saving embrace of the Cross.

- Carrying the mission of the church into the world.
- Not getting too comfortable or content with ourselves—being pushed a little outside our comfort zone.
- Size, in an era of megachurches, a “family size” church is a treat. When we run out of space, help plant another.
- Holy Family as an outpost of the Kingdom in worship and action.

Fellowship: to be a congregation that encourages one another in the hope of Christ.

- Our care of one another as a Holy Family.
- Visits from Bishop Ochola, Father Jonathan Obar, Pere Noe, Father William Mostert, Mother Paula McKenzie.

- I want my ashes to be buried here.
- When random people stopped me to welcome me as a newcomer from day 1.
- Two of the children had been baby Jesus in the Christmas slide show. They loved telling about that. The twins in the group had both been baby Jesus together. That was important to them.
- Our care for one another as a Holy Family.
- Sense of being part of the worldwide Anglican community.
- Expand our congregation—welcome seekers, let more people know our doors are open, joining with others.
- Incense and jeans.
- This community appreciates the uniqueness of each person.
- Incorporating children—so many ways.

Servanthood: to be a congregation where the last are first and the first are last; where true servanthood, in submission to the will of God, reveals the love of Christ.

- Variety of different ministries so every member of the congregation has something to participate in.
- We must continue to offer services to the parish that will nourish every individual, whoever they may be, and wherever they are on their spiritual journey.
- When the sexton took the trouble to call me at night to tell me he had found my purse.
- That other parents look after my children as their own.
- Unqualified acceptance of one another.
- Continue with the idea of increasing diversity of the congregation.

Facilities warrant a separate reference. Spaces that support and enhance the ministries of Holy Family are an important element in implementing the Vision for Ministry, and those space plans are described in detail in that document. Clearly comments from parishioners during the dialogues and in the survey support the facility recommendations and add weight to the vestry's commitment to begin this work. It is worthy of mention the gratitude that parishioners feel for a Nave that is available 24/7. There were a wide variety of comments supporting facilities improvements, particularly in context of expanding ministries, fellowship, and education.

- Expanding physical space to Holy Family creating more room, thereby creating more ministries and youth activities.
- Complete building—kitchen, parish hall, library renovation (use our building permit).
- Make the kitchen more usable since fellowship is part of every ministry.
- Space for quiet, contemplative prayer.
- Improved properties (more efficient and useful); maintain and sustain physical plant; work on parish hall.
- Finding ways to better use church space faithfully.

Reading through the desired-for accomplishments of the parish over the next three-to-five years, a number of themes emerge.

- A yearning for communion with God through worship and the sacraments.
- A yearning for fellowship/care giving with our family of God at Holy Family.
- A yearning for sharing our fellowship and resources through meaningful outreach.
- A yearning for more diversity within our family.
- A yearning to nurture children, youth, and adults in the history and traditions of the church and biblical texts.
- A yearning to make our facility work efficiently in both the physical design of the space and energy consumption.
- A yearning for a forum to share our differences in thinking about the issues facing the Episcopal Church.

### Conclusion

The dialogues and surveys were an effective method of drawing people into the discussion about the strengths and aspirations of the parish. The dialogues in particular served as important community-building exercises during this season of transition. The Committee is grateful for the authentic responses of the participants and for the trust that was demonstrated by each and every one who shared his or her experiences and hopes for the future.