



ST. MATTHEW'S  
EPISCOPAL CHURCH

**VISION  
IMPLEMENTATION  
TEAM  
REPORT**

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# BACKGROUND

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In early 2020, a group of church members began the work of casting a new vision for St. Matthew's. This work was driven by two factors. One is the Colledgeville grant that Kelly, Benjamin, and Charles Halton have been a part of that centers around our "call." The Communities of Calling Grant states "God calls both members of our community individually and our community as a whole." The question to answer was what is God calling St. Matthew's to next?

Secondly, in 2015, the Vestry set three five-year goals. Those were

- Increase Congregational Commitment
- Focus & strengthen our Outreach Ministry
- Increase membership by 15% by 2020

These goals were accomplished; it was time for the church to set new goals. In September 2020, "Sharing Our Story" was presented to the congregation in which the history of St. Matthew's Church and its impact on the Louisville community was shared. Following the presentation, church members engaged in listening groups in which they discussed the following questions

- What drew you to St. Matthew's (why did you join)?
- If St. Matthew's Church is to be serving as Christ's hands out in our community, what would you want our church to be doing?
- What are you doing currently within the walls of our church that you are passionate about or what are we not doing that you would like to see us do?

When the Vestry met for a Vision Summit in October, the feedback received from the church laid the foundation for their work. The mission of St. Matthew's was affirmed, core values were named, and new three-year goals were determined.



Our mission as St. Matthew's Church is to be a caring, inclusive community, centered in the Eucharist and grounded in the Gospel, so that we can reach out as Christ's hands to the world.

# CORE VALUES

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**Spiritual Growth:** We cultivate strong relationships with God through study, dialogue, and worship and we are a supportive place for individuals and families to grow as Christians together.

**Social Justice:** We work to repair unjust structural systems (political, educational, housing, economic, judicial, environmental, healthcare, and immigration) in our community.

**Active Involvement:** We encourage full participation (worship, formation, service) from the entire membership of St. Matthew's.

**Serving Others:** We live out our Christian faith by service and charitable acts to our parish, families, and community.

**Intellectually Curious:** We learn with critical reflection and encourage different points of view.

**Welcoming:** We foster a hospitable environment that embraces diversity in all its dimensions.

**Partnerships:** We engage in partnerships with other faith communities outside of our congregation to share God's work in the world.

# 2023 GOALS

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## 01 — GOAL

Bring about community healing regarding social justice through prayer, relationships, and action with a particular focus on racial and environmental justice.



## 02 — GOAL

Create a culture of radical welcome and deep connection.



## 03 — GOAL

Implement the long-term plan for investing in the skill-sharing classes.

# 2021 PROGRESS

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The Vision Implementation Team began their work in shepherding the 2021-2023 goals in February 2021. The first task was to create 2021 benchmarks for each goal that will help St. Matthew's make progress to the three-year goal. Below is a reporting of progress towards achieving those benchmarks as well as the next steps to be taken.

## Goal #1

**2021 Benchmark:** Assess the current work the parish is engaged in with organizations in West Louisville and determine areas of need. Write a game plan that includes a timeline for increasing engagement to deepen community healing.

**Progress:** All the social justice work that St. Matthew's has been engaged in since 2015 was recorded in a spreadsheet and analyzed. St. Matthew's addresses social needs in 4 areas: gaining knowledge (weather report and knowing the risk of flood), responding to emergencies (pulling people out of the water), taking care of physical needs (providing shelter and food, rebuilding homes, etc.), or changing the systems (fixing the dam). While heavy in the areas of gaining knowledge, responding to emergencies, and taking care of physical needs, it was determined that there is more work to be done in changing the systems.

**2021 Benchmark:** Develop an overarching social justice plan (beginning with telling St. Matthew's Church's history of participation in behaviors and structures of racial injustice, and participation in behaviors and structures of racial justice and healing) which results in our church members embracing a cohesive mission for righting the wrongs in our world.

**Progress:** The first step in this work was to capture St. Matthew's Church's history in participation of behaviors and structures of both racial injustice and healing. In order to move towards healing our community, we must own our part and understand where we have been and what we have done as a church to bring about racial justice. With the diligent and faithful work of Lee Fletcher, this history is recorded in a document titled *Racial Relations - St. Matthew's*.

## NEXT STEPS

To help determine who will lead this charge, what an overarching social justice plan looks like, and how the work will be done is going to take more time. To begin this work, St. Matthew's will be forming a Sacred Ground Circle (to increase awareness of the need for and stronger motivation to bring about changes in systems of racial injustice) and exploring a partnership with Kentucky Interfaith Power and Light (to begin the work of addressing environmental injustices).

### About Sacred Ground Circles

(<https://www.episcopalchurch.org/sacred-ground/about/>)

- Sacred Ground is a sensitive, prayerful resource that creates space for difficult but respectful and transformative dialogue on race and racism.

# 2021 PROGRESS

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- It invites participants to walk back through history in order to peel away the layers that brought us to today, reflecting on family histories and stories, as well as important narratives that shape the collective American story.
- It holds as a guiding star the vision of beloved community – where all people are honored and protected and nurtured as beloved children of God, where we weep at one another's pain and seek one another's flourishing.
- The first circle at St. Matthew's will meet for 10 sessions to engage with the films, videos, written materials, and each other – a study group essentially.

**About Kentucky Interfaith Power and Light** (<https://www.kentuckyipl.org/>)

- Kentucky IPL is a community of congregations, faith-based organizations, and individuals of faith responding to climate change as an ethical and moral issue, through advocacy, education, energy conservation, energy efficiency, stewardship, and the use and promotion of clean, renewable energy.

## Goal #2

**2021 Benchmark:** Establish a Task Force (2-3 people + clergy) to assess current practices of welcome and create a game plan for transforming the greeter ministry. Also consider educating and equipping the congregation in ways of radical welcome.

**Progress:** As the VIT dug into this work and received more feedback from church members, it was recognized that it would be more beneficial to focus on transforming the parish's welcome ministry instead of just focusing on the greeter ministry. The greeter ministry is strong and has the appropriate systems in place to function well. So the last part of the original goal "by transforming the greeter ministry" was dropped from the three-year goal. This was presented to and approved by the Vestry. A chairperson has been identified and recruited to lead this charge.

## NEXT STEPS

Additional members will be recruited for this ministry and they will work to create an environment of radical welcome through education and new initiatives.

## Goal #3

**2021 Benchmark:** Assist the Communities of Calling Initiative in implementing this component of Year 2 of Community Discernment: "Lift up and celebrate callings that are being pursued by members of our community by expanding our skill-sharing classes to include instructors from the congregation as well as nonmembers from the local community."

Progress: This benchmark was achieved. Church members conducted skill-sharing classes in 2021 which were well attended given the restrictions of in-person gatherings. A few church members have been recruited to extend invitations to community members to teach skill-sharing classes at St. Matthew's.

## NEXT STEPS

The Vision Implementation Team will be determining the next steps for this goal at their January 2022 meeting. Energies will focus on continuing to implement the Communities of Calling Initiative.

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# NEXT STEPS SUMMARY



### 01 — Justice

Form a Sacred Ground Circle at St. Matthew's and establish a partnership with Kentucky Interfaith Power and Light.



### 02 — Radical Welcome

Build a ministry of radical welcome for the whole parish.



### 03 — Communities of Calling

Next steps to continue to build skills-sharing classes led by community members and further develop the social enterprise.

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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many thanks to those who have served in 2021 on the Vision Implementation Team: Sara Bailey, Phil Eschels, Benjamin Hart, Kelly Kirby, Melissa Klassen, Rick Lotz, Gibbs Reese, and Peggy Woolley.

Many thanks to those who have served and supported the work in social justice, skills-sharing classes, and welcome ministry.

The Vision Implementation Team will continue to meet in 2022. As new Vestry members are elected, the Vestry representation on this team may change.