



# A Bright Future, A Living Hope

St. Thomas Episcopal Church  
Vision Action Plan, 2024-2026

*By God's great mercy we have been born anew to a living hope  
through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. (1 Peter 1.3)*

Compiled by the Visioning Committee  
Adopted by the Vestry on December 19, 2023

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (1 Pet. 1.3).

Several months ago, we established a Strategic Planning Committee at St. Thomas to address the future vision of our church. Our need to revise our Mission and Vision statements as well as revisit our Core Values as a faith community was only the beginning of the work that needed to be done. As part of the ongoing work of the Kingdom, we were called to establish a Vision Action Plan that will forecast the next three years of mission and ministry at St. Thomas Church.

Heavily driven by the survey taken by over 100 parish members, the Strategic Planning Committee, with the Rector and Strategic Planning coach, Rita Barreto, identified five areas of growth (strategic themes) to develop over the next three years. These areas are: Ministry to Families, Inspired Christian Formation, Evangelism and Outreach, Increased Generosity, and Servant Ministry Development.

Each area of growth, or strategic theme, has an explanation as well as several broad goals to be achieved over the three years of the Vision Action Plan. Each theme will have a committee and point person to help carry out the goals.

**Rationale:** To build on our strengths as a congregation where True Community is fostered, and people find the unconditional love of God in Christ in a fellowship where all people are embraced.

## Core Values

The congregation of St. Thomas values people. As we continue to draw others into *True Community* with others and with Christ, we hold these values deeply:

- Welcoming all people.
- Hospitality, Fellowship, and Community life.
- Excellence in liturgical worship.
- A compassionate heart for those in need.

**Our Core Values** directly influence our **Mission and Vision:**

### Mission/Purpose:

Living and proclaiming the love of Jesus Christ in a welcoming and authentic community.

### Vision (desired future):

We seek to be a growing, vibrant, and inviting congregation that fosters Christian transformation among all people.

## Ministry to Families

St. Thomas Church finds itself in a changing demographic context that includes couples with and without children, single parent households, retirees and singles of all ages. While our strengths in pastoral care and visitation remain strong to an older demographic, and will continue, expansion of our reach to younger families with school age children to broaden and enrich our church community, must become a priority in the next three years.

1. Take measures to demonstrate a child/family friendly atmosphere.
  - a. Install a playground.
  - b. Move the nursery to the library.
2. Offer affordable childcare.
3. Begin afterschool program for elementary students.
4. Establish programs for senior parish members.
5. Hire Minister for Youth and Technology *or*
6. Hire an Associate Priest to minister to families.

### **Responsible** (*Youth and Children’s Ministries*)

*One staff member*

*Vestry liaison for Youth*

*The Rector*

*One member at large*

## Inspired Christian Formation

St. Paul writes, “be transformed by the renewing of the mind, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect” (Romans 12:2). Christian education, spiritual practices, meaningful worship, and prayer/study groups are ways that we deepen our spirituality and relationship with the Living God. We will provide and participate in opportunities for spiritual growth and learning to enrich lives, deepen faith, and increase discipleship.

1. Establish an ongoing adult Christian education program.
2. Start a weekday evening worship/study offering with childcare provided.
3. Implement a speaker series, open to the public, that includes discussions on community, faith, and other topics of enrichment.
4. Encourage participation in diocesan wide Cursillo and Happening.
5. Identify enriching music options for various worship services.
6. Establish a monthly social event that includes fellowship activities.
7. Hire Minister for Youth and Technology

**Responsible (Christian Formation)**

*Vestry liaison for Formation*

*The Rector Up to three members at large*

**Evangelism and Outreach**

Episcopalians generally shun the “E” word, Evangelism. This word only means “sharing the good news of God in Christ.” Basically, we share this news by telling others – at home, at work, at play – that we find joy worshipping at St. Thomas, and we think others will find that joy here too. Therefore, we will be intentionally present in the Palm Coast community by raising our profile through service and publicity while demonstrating our deep joy of knowing and serving Christ in others. The ministries of evangelism and outreach have some overlap.

1. Establish an inclusive committee (combine communications and outreach).
2. Develop a marketing and communications plan to include social media.
3. Purchase swag and make available (t-shirts, golf shirts, mugs, tote bags, etc.).
4. Increase STEC presence in the community, attending at least 3 community events annually.
5. Launch a new website that is more user-friendly and attractive.
6. Hire Minister for Youth and Technology
7. Explore participation with Flagler Volunteer Services.

**Responsible (Evangelism and Outreach)**

*One staff member Vestry liaison for Outreach*

*Up to three members at large*

**Increased Generosity**

The people of St. Thomas are generous in so many ways. The tireless work invested in our fellowship events and, outreach efforts, and worship services are very evident. The sweat equity in keeping our grounds and buildings kept up is remarkable. Giving of our time and talent are important, but so is giving of our treasure. We must recognize that the resources needed for the mission and ministry of a parish the size of St. Thomas is significant. Therefore, we will focus on the Christian aspect of giving to meet our goals toward church growth by inspiring a broader range of increased annual giving, encourage Legacy Giving and other special gifts, and implement new and innovative methods for giving as we grow and embrace our future.

1. Create a culture of generosity through year-round stewardship, seeking to educate all parishioners to be faithful and joyous givers.
  - a. Raise budget awareness of how funds support mission and ministry.
  - b. Highlight the impact of giving (how are lives being changed?)

- c. Raise awareness of ways of giving, including electronic giving (Venmo, ACH, non-operating, Legacy).
2. Form a building fund and other non-operating options to give to.

***Responsible (Stewardship and Finance)***

*One staff member                      Vestry liaison for Stewardship*  
*The Treasurer                          One Finance Committee member*

**Servant Ministry Development**

Not only did our survey reveal a need to raise up more members of our congregation to serve in an array of ministries at St. Thomas, but we also hear this need coming from those who serve diligently and regularly to make St. Thomas the lively parish community that we are. To live into the joyous future that God calls us into, we will find ways to connect new and existing members to ministries to enliven our church community.

1. Establish Invite, Welcome, Connect program.
2. A September Back to Church Sunday table to actively recruit for ministries.
3. Develop a video highlighting each ministry offering.
4. Create a directory with personal profiles that include talents and abilities.
5. Encourage St. Thomas heads of ministries to be more visible and vocal.

***Responsible (Membership)***

*Vestry liaison for Membership*  
*Up to four members at large*

**\*A vital goal for the success of all the above is to renovate the parish hall entirely.** This includes audio, lighting, and soundproofing, to create a multi-use, versatile space for education, fellowship, guest speakers, children’s activities, outreach, and much more.

\*To fully realize our highest goals, a full-time staff position that encompasses youth leadership (middle-high school), worship technology, and website/electronic communications would be ideal. (This addresses goals for Ministry to Families, Evangelism and Outreach, and Inspired Christian Formation.)