



ST JOHN'S
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Transformation Team Report and Proposal

October 2024

Experiencing and sharing God's love together.



Table of Contents

➤ Introduction	3
➤ Our Prayerful Proposal	6
➤ Welcoming & Community	7
➤ Worship & Music	13
➤ Faith Formation & Spiritual Growth	18
➤ Outreach & Mission	21
➤ Marketing, Publicity, & Community Engagement	24
➤ Administration & Organizational Life	27
➤ Facilities	29
➤ Conclusion	35



Introduction



The Future of St John's Presbyterian Church

This proposal from the St John's Presbyterian Church Transformation Team outlines our vision for a thriving future. Our goal is to foster growth in worship, ministry, mission, financial health, and spiritual vitality, ensuring St John's remains a caring, vibrant, and meaningful presence in our community for generations to come.

Background

Since 1892, St John's Presbyterian Church has been a warm and inviting congregation that has made a difference in the local and regional community. Like many other Presbyterian and mainline Christian churches, it faces a changing culture that's becoming increasingly ambivalent or even hostile to religion, Christianity, and church. It has become clear that for our church to thrive far into the future it must adapt in ways that make its calling apparent to all who can be impacted by the life, ministry, and mission of the church. The following proposal offers a path forward enabling St John's to flourish well into the future.

Members of the Transformation Team

Pastoral Representatives:

Rev. Dr. Patrick Marshall
Rev. Ridgley Joyner

Session Representatives:

Lauren Feldman
Jim Little

Trustee Representative:

Rich Loomis

Congregational Representatives:

Nancy Arico
Christa Fisher
Nancy Higgins
Lisa Howell
Jim Ryland
Steve Scolari

Our Process

The decision to undertake this transformation process stemmed from a report by the Operating Reserve Task Force in 2022 on long-range financial projections for the church. A small group including Patrick Marshall, Ridgley Joyner, and Gavin Kerr began interviewing consultants to guide this project in early 2023. The Session hired The Rev. Dr. Graham Standish, PhD, MDiv, MA, MSW in July of 2023.

Session approved the Transformation Team on September 19, 2023, and the 11-member team had its first meeting on October 5, 2023. It was commissioned before the congregation on November 12.

Since October 2023, the Transformation Team has met monthly with Graham Standish, and has engaged in two retreats and several small group meetings for more intensive work between those monthly sessions. **Our work has been in three phases:**

Phase 1: Open Up (October-January)

During this phase, we completed and discussed assigned readings to prepare our hearts and minds for the work ahead. Our goal was to learn to think differently and to look at St John's and other churches with fresh eyes and prayerful consideration.

Phase 2: Explore Out (January -April)

We visited three area churches – Victory Church in Audubon, The Dwelling Place in Paoli, and Grace Presbyterian Church in Jenkintown. Victory and The Dwelling Place are newer churches with more contemporary worship styles. Grace is a more traditional Presbyterian church. Our goal was to experience how other growing churches helped members and visitors experience God and to gain inspiration and ideas that would inform our recommendations for St John's. In addition, we invited friends to "secret shop" St John's and give us feedback on their experiences. We also "revisited" St John's and tried to see and experience the church through the eyes of guests.

Phase 3: Discern In (May - October)

During this final phase, we have spent a great deal of time intentionally and prayerfully developing, drafting, designing, and finalizing the content of this proposal and our presentation to the Session and the congregation.

12

Months

15+

Meetings

100+

Hours



A Vision for Renewal

St John's Presbyterian Church is a welcoming community where all can experience and share God's love.

We envision St John's as *a community where people experience and share God's love* as revealed through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. God's grace, mercy, and unconditional love are extended to all, and we are called to reflect this love in all that we do.

We strive to deepen our knowledge and love of God through worship, prayer, studying scripture, and sharing life together. Growing together in faith, we seek to grasp the full extent of the love God has for us.

Guiding Themes, Our Pillars for Transformation

Our vision for the future of St John's is anchored by these key pillars:

- Welcoming and Inclusion: Creating an open and gracious environment where all are invited to experience God's love.
- Community and Engagement: Building a deeply connected faith community where relationships and spiritual growth are nurtured.
- Spiritual Vibrancy: Fostering vibrant worship and spiritual formation opportunities for people at all stages of their faith journey.
- Outreach and Service: Extending God's love beyond our walls, serving the local and global community in tangible, transformative ways.

These themes guide every recommendation that follows, connecting our vision to the practical changes that will help St John's grow and thrive.



Our Prayerful Proposal

Our recommendations for St John's are grouped into seven categories, each reflects the vision and represents a critical area that we feel the church must address in order to move forward purposefully.

- Welcoming and Community
- Worship and Music
- Faith Formation and Spiritual Growth
- Outreach and Mission
- Marketing, Publicity, and Community Engagement
- Administration and Organizational Life
- Facilities

Implementation

The Transformation Team strongly recommends creating a separate task force or team to address each of these categories in detail. Each one should have a leader/chair who has expertise or specific knowledge relevant to that category and the suggested recommendations. Each team should also have a Session representative.

The Transformation Team has provided some detailed recommendations and ideas for implementation in each category. However, we hope that each task force will develop additional ideas and continue to look more in-depth at the issues, challenges, and opportunities within each category. We want the church leadership and members to be invested in and take ownership of the church's ultimate transformation program.

It is important to understand that healthy transformation and renewal in a church is an ongoing process. This team recommends that Session and the church's committees and membership engage in a process of continuous prayerful reflection, evaluation, and openness to change and new ideas as a cultural norm rather than treating our proposal as a one-time initiative.

Welcoming and Community

A Gracious and Inviting Church Home

When people visit St John's, their experience begins the moment they turn into the driveway and enter the parking lot. The way our congregation and church buildings welcome visitors sets the tone and plays a crucial role in helping them experience God's presence and love within our community. To reflect Christ's love, we must create an atmosphere that is gracious, welcoming, and caring to all who enter.

Over time, it is easy for churches to become so focused on the needs of those who regularly attend that we may unintentionally overlook how newcomers experience our space and community. While St John's already offers many positives – Sunday morning greeters, a friendly congregation, a charming, historic feel, and activity bags for children – there are opportunities to enhance how we welcome guests. After visiting other churches, inviting feedback from people unfamiliar with St John's, and viewing our church with fresh eyes, we identified several steps we can take to create an even more welcoming experience for all who attend.

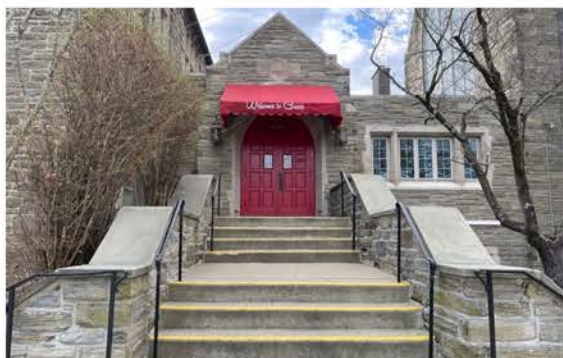
Recommendation Summary: Welcoming & Community

- ✓ **Redesigned Entrance and Signage:** Relocate the main entrance to the door most visible from the parking lot. Add clear, inviting interior and exterior signage and relocate some greeters to this area to welcome and direct visitors. Create a welcome table with nametags for all and "welcome bags" with information and St John's swag for guests.
- ✓ **Welcome Ministry:** Elevate welcoming to a dedicated ministry that trains and equips the congregation to create a consistently warm and gracious experience for members and visitors alike.
- ✓ **Fellowship Hall:** Reimagine Fellowship Hall to be more comfortable and inviting, with diverse seating options, a children's area, and spaces for deeper engagement.

Welcoming & Community Detailed Recommendations

Emphasize the main church entrance as the back door most visible and accessible from the parking lot

With six different entrances to the main building, it's not immediately obvious which door to enter, especially when trying to find the Sanctuary after parking in the back of the building. Emphasizing the main entrance as the most visible door from the parking lot will help visitors and members feel oriented and welcomed to our church home. Adding a welcome awning, signage, and greeters in the parking lot and at the entrance on Sunday mornings will assist in clarifying the main entrance. We further recommend having a welcome table/station inside that door with nametags and "welcome bags" with church information and St John's swag for guests. See the contrast in the photos below of Grace Presbyterian and St John's entrances.



Main entrance of Grace Presbyterian Church, Jenkintown, is clear and visible from the parking lot.



View of St John's from the parking lot and most visible entrance. It's unclear where to enter the building.

Update and improve interior and exterior signage

We discovered that it can be difficult for non-members to figure out where to go for worship, childcare, education, fellowship, and where even the restrooms are located. This disorientation begins in the parking lot, where it isn't clear that there are two sections of parking designated for the church, nor which entrance to use to enter the building, as addressed above. Directional signage inside the building is small, inconsistent, and not always positioned optimally to help visitors locate important spaces such as the Sanctuary, restrooms, childcare areas, Fellowship Hall, the elevator, and offices. Updating the sign by the road to something easier to read that includes a changeable area where messages and upcoming events can be posted will also contribute to awareness and marketing of the church to community members.



Existing exterior signage is difficult to read, often overgrown, and not changeable to reflect messages or upcoming events.



Directional signage at St John's is small and generally printed on paper.



Directional signage at Calvin Presbyterian Church is consistent, easy to read, and professional.

Create a Welcome Ministry devoted to making St John's an incredibly inviting community for members and visitors

At other churches we visited, it was clear that welcoming visitors went beyond a weekly volunteer position and was elevated to an intentional ministry that included the entire congregation. The initiative was supported by clear guidelines and training that emphasized hospitality as a crucial ministry of the church and provided a consistent experience for visitors. St John's has greeters who do a great job welcoming members and visitors at the back of the Sanctuary each Sunday and we hear from current members how welcome they felt when they first visited the church. By elevating this work to a more comprehensive ministry, St John's can approach welcoming visitors and new members in a more intentional, comprehensive, and consistent manner that can create more touch-points and build a stronger community of faith.

Some specific actions recommended for this ministry team include:

- Enhance the greeter program to include parking lot greeters and greeters at the new main entrance who hand out welcome bags and information.
- In conjunction with a Marketing Team, evaluate and make suggestions for new and updated printed welcome and information materials for guests (for both adults and children), as well as suggestions for the church website.
- Recommend and oversee the creation of intentionally welcoming spaces that invite people to engage and spend time together, including adding art to the walls that reflects our Christian identity and mission as well as celebrates our community, history, and accomplishments.
- Develop and offer detailed training for welcoming efforts to ensure all visitors and members feel consistently and warmly greeted.



In addition to greeters stationed in the parking lot, inside the entrance, at an information desk, and circulating among members and visitors in the common areas outside the auditorium, Victory had a great deal of visible signage welcoming, directing, and engaging visitors.

Re-imagine Fellowship Hall to be a more comfortable and welcoming space for members and visitors

Many of the churches we visited had various seating options and children's areas in their fellowship spaces that made those areas warmer, and more welcoming, encouraging members and visitors to stay longer and engage with one another more deeply. These ranged in size, style, complexity, and amenities, but they each created intentional spaces that conveyed community and created a welcoming environment. We recommend adding a few standing tables (high tops), couches and seating areas, as well as a specific area for kids to gather in Fellowship Hall. These additions would need to be thoughtfully chosen and placed to preserve the flexibility of the space and be easily relocated for exercise classes and other uses of the hall.



St John's Fellowship Hall, Sunday morning



Fellowship Hall with tables, chairs, and comfortable seating area at The Dwelling Place.



Welcome room for visitors to meet pastors after service and cafe space at Victory church.





Worship and Music

Creating an Engaging, Accessible, and Relevant Worship Experience

The center and heartbeat of a thriving congregation is worship where people hear God's Word, sing songs of praise and devotion, share in the sacraments, and pray. Worship is the primary time and place where people experience God, open themselves to Christ's transforming power, and lay the foundation for a life of love and compassion. Therefore, the congregation should strive to create a worship experience that is engaging, accessible, and relevant in a contemporary culture.

St John's already has a spiritually enriching worship service and there are ways we can enhance our worship to reach a greater variety of people and connect with our existing members more deeply. These include diversifying our musical offerings to include a variety of styles that resonate with different age groups and stylistic preferences, ensuring that music becomes a powerful, unifying element of our services.

Youth and family involvement should be prioritized. Youth should be invited to take more active roles in worship and music, fostering a sense of ownership and connection. Families should be considered and thoughtfully integrated into the worship service including adding a "family worship" format where everyone remains together six or more times a year. Special worship areas and child-friendly worship programs will ensure inclusivity and engagement for all ages and abilities.

By incorporating more multimedia elements, such as screens for images, song lyrics, and scripture, we can enhance participation in and understanding of the liturgy, sermon, and music. In recognition of the importance of live-streaming for the existing congregation and for people in our region and beyond, St John's needs to continue to ensure that we offer the best quality online version of worship. This means supporting the current A/V team as we add more "moving parts" to the service with screens, and creating a budget to maintain high-quality sound and visual equipment.

Worship can be further enhanced through experimentation including, interactive sermons, videos as part of sermons, images, note-taking resources, and much more.

Summary Recommendations: Worship & Music

- ✓ **Members Engaged in Worship Service:** Engage more people in the worship service regularly with youth and family greeters, readers, musicians, etc.
- ✓ **Screens and Sound Additions and Updates:** Add digital screens and update the sanctuary's A/V system to enhance the audio and visual experience in worship.
- ✓ **Family Engagement:** Create space, materials, and approaches to worship and music that are accessible, relevant, and inclusive to all.
- ✓ **More Musical Variety:** Expand the variety of music experiences and styles to better reflect more contemporary tastes to help people better experience God in worship.
- ✓ **Music Integration into Worship:** Continue and expand coordination between music and worship messages and explain integration more clearly to the congregation.



Victory Church with a large front screen and contemporary worship band. One of the pastors welcomed everyone to worship. Music began the service and children and youth stayed in the auditorium.

Worship & Music Detailed Recommendations

Find ways to further engage the congregation in the sermon/message

Not everyone is an auditory learner, yet traditional services are primarily listening experiences. All of the churches we visited have incorporated visual elements in worship such as lyrics, images, scripture, and video shown on large digital screens. They also provided notes and key points of the sermon or theme in the bulletin or on handouts with QR codes that linked to more resources and deeper-dive materials on their website.

Install large screens and update the A/V system in the sanctuary

In order to support better congregational engagement with both the music and messages, St John's should install large digital screens in the sanctuary that can be easily seen from all sections of the congregation. These screens can display hymns and other song lyrics, scripture, images, videos, announcements, and other visuals to support the worship experience. These would not replace the bulletin, hymnals, and Bibles in the pews, but offer an option for those who wish to view content on these screens. The A/V system in the sanctuary may need to be updated to support this technology. At that time the system should be evaluated by professional sound engineers already within the congregation and outside experts as needed to make the system efficient and the best quality possible for the congregation, musicians, and those running the live-streams and new screens.



Victory Church auditorium



Grace Presbyterian Sanctuary.



St John's Presbyterian Sanctuary



Involve youth and young adults in worship in a regular and intentional way

Invite them to be readers, greeters, musicians, etc., not just once in a while or during a “special” youth service, but as a regular part of worship.

Revamp service materials to be more inclusive and accessible across ages and abilities.

St John’s service materials (bulletin, hymnals, Bibles) are designed for adults who are proficient readers. To help make the worship service more engaging and accessible to all ages and abilities, the church needs to re-evaluate, reimagine, and redesign the supplemental materials it shares with attendees. Some ideas include providing larger font options, using the screens recommended above to incorporate more visuals, using technology to make the service accessible for the hearing impaired, and providing more age-appropriate materials for children and youth.

Adapt worship and worship space to be more family-friendly and consider Family Worship at least 6 times a year

Rather than ask families with small children to adapt to traditional Sanctuary spaces dominated by pews designed for adults, create a section for families with flexible and appropriately sized seating and some of the materials described above. This signals to current families and visitors with small children that families are welcome and considered in our worship.

Continue to make explicit connections between the music and the messages/themes of the worship service

Continue to explain the music choices and connections between the music and messages, as the Joy Messengers have started to do, so that the music becomes an even more meaningful and integrated aspect of the worship service. Show lyrics in the bulletin and screens so that people can follow or sing along in some cases if they choose.



Provide more diversity and variety of musical experiences, styles, and approaches

St John's already has some variety in its offerings with bells, Devon Brass, Joy Messengers, choir, and some guest musicians. However, other than Joy Messengers, the style of music presented is largely traditional. Growing churches that attract younger members offer contemporary music styles more prominently in the mix. This fits better with more people's musical tastes and experiences outside of church. We recommend expanding the music options offered to lean more into contemporary styles without losing the core of talented and committed musicians already involved at St John's.

Hire a music director who can facilitate a variety of musical styles and strengthen the thematic integration between music and messages

Essential to implementing the recommendations above and rebuilding the musical program, particularly the choir, is hiring a music director who can engage with and support the existing music groups and encourage other talented musicians of all ages to become involved with the music ministry.

Consider a new hymnal that includes more current options for communal singing

Our current hymnal has numerous hymns that don't particularly connect with the congregation or inspire a closer connection with God through their communal singing. We recommend a re-evaluation of the current hymnal and communal singing resources to introduce some more up-tempo songs, that better connect with modern language and melodies. Find other sources that offer new options alongside the hymns we all love to sing. One of the churches we visited held a "Hymn March Madness" where they created a bracket of favorite hymns chosen by the congregation. Each week they voted until they were down to the congregation's favorite hymn, which they sang the week after Easter. It was a great way to determine what hymns the congregation felt a connection with and which ones they could retire.

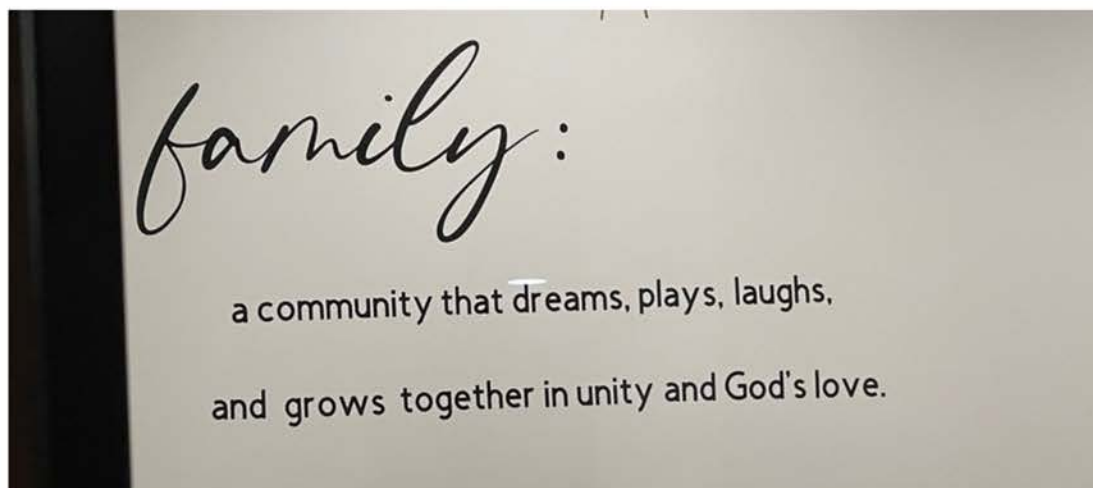
Faith Formation and Spiritual Growth

Experiencing and Sharing God's Love

According to the Reformed tradition, we are always being re-formed by the grace of God. Faith is less of a destination than a journey, advanced by constantly growing in our knowledge and love of God. For St John's to truly be a place where people "experience and share God's love," we must consistently work to help everyone grow spiritually in all aspects of their lives.

While Sunday worship is the foundation of our communal life, St John's has a rich history of fostering spiritual growth and community through programs such as Supper at St John's, Bible studies, women's fellowship, Sunday School, mission trips, and fellowship events such as the Progressive Dinner. However, in recent years, participation in some of these activities has declined, and few new initiatives have been introduced to re-engage members or draw new potential members in.

To reinvigorate spiritual growth at St John's, we must intentionally expand our faith formation programs, offering opportunities that meet people wherever they are on their spiritual journey. Thriving churches provide a diverse range of spiritual growth experiences – small groups, retreats, study options, various ministries, prayer groups, and intergenerational opportunities, that allow the community to grow together in faith. By offering an expanded variety of experiences that allow people to connect, learn, and grow, St. John's can nurture a sense of belonging as a vibrant community where Christian spiritual growth is central to everything we do.



Wall art at Victory Church.

Recommendation Summary: Faith Formation & Spiritual Growth

- ✓ **New Small Groups and Classes:** Offer expanded options for small groups, Bible studies, and Sunday or evening classes that cater to different interests and spiritual stages.
- ✓ **Mentorship Programs:** Reintroduce new member mentorship programs to foster deeper connections within the church.
- ✓ **Mission Trips and Special Workshops:** Provide mission trips and host special workshops to inspire and challenge members to grow spiritually and serve others.
- ✓ **Intergenerational Experiences:** Create more opportunities for people of all ages to learn and grow together, encouraging faith formation across generations.
- ✓ **Partnerships with Other Churches:** Join with other area churches and organizations to expand and multiply opportunities for programming.



Screen during worship promoting participation in small groups, called Life Groups, at Victory Church. Emphasized “belonging” language. QR code allowed members to sign up from their phones in the moment.

Faith Formation & Spiritual Growth

Detailed Recommendations

Offer expanded options for small groups, classes, mentorship, and other ways to engage together to grow our faith

Whether through the efforts of an existing committee(s), or a new one created in response to this proposal, the church needs to prioritize and reinvigorate efforts to intentionally cultivate spiritual growth and depth by meeting people where they are on their faith journey – whether they are Seekers curious about the teachings of Jesus Christ or Christians with a more mature faith looking for ways to deepen their understanding and discipleship.

The following are specific areas of focus:

- **Develop and market “entry-level” programs** designed for Seekers around fellowship and study opportunities.
- **Reintroduce the new member mentorship program** to welcome and quickly integrate new members and families into the church.
- **Provide deeper-dive programming**, workshops, and groups that allow for more exploration of sermon themes and series, and other topics of interest to the congregation (extension of Supper at St John’s courses).
- **Encourage the formation of and engagement in a range of small groups** around a variety of topics and experiences. This was a significant focus of Victory Church as a way of engaging everyone, building community, and offering a range of Christian education opportunities that work with different schedules. Small groups help people get to know each other and form closer connections. They also help members and newcomers find ways to “plug into” the church community. Examples included Bible studies, hiking, supper clubs, choir, etc.
- **Offer opportunities for intergenerational experiences** centered around faith formation and growth.
- **Offer additional mission trips, workshops, retreats, and group events** (at St John’s and elsewhere) that can engage members and friends in faith formation and growth (could include outings to theater, concerts, etc. with Christian or faith-based content).

Partner with other churches to expand and multiply opportunities for programming

Connect and partner with other churches in the area, particularly other small churches even across denominations, for programs, workshops, guest speakers, and events. This may offer us access to new and different options, increase attendance, and build awareness of St John’s across the faith community.



Outreach and Mission

Engaging in Outreach that Shares St John's Love and Life Beyond Our Walls

The risen Christ commissioned his disciples to go into all the world and make disciples of all nations, baptizing in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that he has commanded (Matthew 28:19-20). Jesus calls us to do this, not by imposing ourselves on others, but by serving them. St John's is called to be a compassionate, transforming congregation offering care locally, regionally, nationally, and globally and should continue to engage in outreach that shares St John's love and life beyond our walls.

Mission and Outreach has always been a priority for St John's. The church contributes 20 - 25% of its annual budget to mission projects and charitable organizations, engages the members in service and outreach projects throughout the year, and both youth and adults have participated in meaningful mission trips to serve communities in crisis in the US and abroad. The Transformation Team acknowledges this hard work and encourages the Outreach Committee and the church to continue and expand on these efforts.

Worship is outreach and mission. Through its discernment process and visits to other churches, the Transformation Team has come to view our worship service as a primary part of outreach/mission. We experienced other churches that put a great deal of energy and intention toward making worship a central point of continuing connection with existing members and a primary touchpoint for guests and potential new members. It is the foundational way we seek to transform and improve people's lives and help them grow in God's presence and love. We also recognize the theological and experiential importance of maintaining a strong outreach and mission program beyond worship as we seek to walk as Jesus did in the world.

Summary Recommendations: Outreach & Mission

- ✓ **More Opportunities to Serve the Community:** Develop more mission/service opportunities inside and outside of St John's to interact and develop relationships with groups and individuals served by these initiatives.
- ✓ **Mission Trips and Experiences:** Offer mission trips and experiences for adults, youth, and intergenerational groups.
- ✓ **Opening Our Facilities to More External Groups:** Invite groups to come and use our facilities as part of our effort to connect with others.
- ✓ **Partnerships with Other Churches:** Develop joint efforts and partnerships with other churches to amplify and expand mission efforts and opportunities.
- ✓ **Culture of Permission:** Shift the St John's culture to one that empowers members to explore initiatives, especially in the areas of mission and ministry.



The Mission Team exists to activate the congregation in service that helps us carry out Grace's mission: To know Christ, and make Him known.

Outreach & Mission Detailed Recommendations

Seek and develop more community-based service opportunities where members can personally interact with others

As Jesus went out into the world and personally connected with those he taught and served, it would be meaningful to St John's members and friends to have more opportunities to serve the community in person – to interact with and develop relationships with individuals in our own backyard who benefit from these projects. These interactions also give St John's members and friends the opportunity to see God in everyone and help eliminate stereotypes and biases.

Continue and expand in-house, hands-on opportunities for service and outreach

St John's is actively engaged in this type of ministry. Continue to explore and be open to these experiences as they arise.

Invite external groups to use our facilities

St John's is already offering our facilities during the week to organizations like AA, TE Cares, a local opera company, and others. Continue to support these and other groups seeking space for meetings and ministries that benefit our community. Expand our reach and awareness of St John's as a community resource.

Commit to offering adult mission trips

Covid certainly made these kinds of initiatives challenging but adult members of the St John's congregation crave and could greatly benefit from regular opportunities for immersive mission experiences.

Connect and explore joint efforts in service and mission with other churches

Partnering with other area churches may offer broader opportunities for service and mission trips. One such organization that was mentioned for consideration was the Interfaith Alliance.

Create a permission-giving culture at St. John's

Find ways to support members who feel called to particular missions and ministries financially, materially, and prayerfully. Simplify the decision process, and reduce barriers. This doesn't mean saying yes to everything. It does mean changing the mindset to permission-giving rather than gate-keeping.



Marketing, Publicity, and Community Engagement

Telling St John's Story to Draw Others to Our Faith Community

Jesus called his disciples to be light in the world. We are to let our light shine before others, so that they may see our good works and give glory to God (Matthew 5:14-16). St John's is a wonderful congregation, but we do not do a great job of shining that light and letting people in the community know about us. Too often we hide our light under a bushel.

Churches, in general, struggle with effective marketing and publicity. To increase awareness of all of the amazing things already going on at St John's, the church needs to focus attention and resources in this area. Efforts should prioritize updating the church's branding and messages, expanding digital outreach through the website and social media, and developing platforms to share stories about who we are and what we uniquely have to offer to those exploring a relationship with Jesus Christ and seeking a church home.

Summary Recommendations: Marketing, Publicity, & Community Engagement

- ✓ **Marketing Team:** Form a Marketing Team to lead the development and maintenance of St John's marketing.
 - ✓ **Updated Branding and Messages:** Re-evaluate, redesign, and update the church's brand identity including its logo, tagline, key messages, and positioning.
 - ✓ **Updated Website and Marketing Materials:** Update the church website and other marketing materials to be more user-friendly, reflect the updated branding and content, and appeal to prospective members, including creating some St John's swag.
 - ✓ **Social Media Presence:** Enhance the church's social media presence, especially on Facebook and Instagram.
-



Marketing, Publicity, & Community Engagement Detailed Recommendations

Form a Marketing Team to manage new and ongoing marketing for St John's

Members should have some aspect of marketing or related experience and represent different constituencies within the St John's community. This group should take the lead on new initiatives and develop an ongoing marketing plan to manage and continue to adjust and expand these efforts over time. They should have reasonable resources to engage professionals in critical disciplines such as photography, web design, social media planning, branding, and graphic design if those areas of expertise do not exist within the congregation.

Refresh St John's brand identity and messaging

The current St John's logo and tagline were developed 15+ years ago. Especially in the context of the Transformation Team's work, recommendations, and renewed vision, this is a good time to take a look at the current identity and determine if it continues to represent who we are now and want to be in the future. Key messages that appear in church marketing and on the website should also be part of this refresh effort. From these refreshed brand elements, new marketing collateral for the church should be developed. This would also be a great opportunity to create some St John's swag for members and guests.

Redesign and expand St John's digital presence

The church website will continue to be St. John's online hub, and the primary place where members, visitors, and Seekers go to find information about the church, schedules for services and programs, and online resources. The current website needs to be updated with the new brand identity and messages, as well as redesigned using current user experience and design best practices to be more user-friendly and interactive. Beyond the website, St John's needs to enhance the use of its social media platforms, particularly Facebook and Instagram. These platforms are how the church can connect with current and prospective members, and develop a broader geographic presence. The Marketing Team should develop a content plan and schedule for these platforms so they remain relevant and up-to-date.

Continue live-streaming of worship and expand online access to events and classes

We have seen the positive results from our live-streaming efforts from members who can attend worship remotely to the growth of St John's geographic reach. St John's should continue to offer this service for worship and other events as appropriate and continue to invest in equipment and expertise that makes the streaming product as high quality as possible. Since the pandemic, Zoom has changed the landscape of how we are able to work together as teams. St John's should continue to offer Zoom for meetings and small group activities such as Bible studies. As with live-streaming, we encourage the church to invest in high-quality equipment and connectivity across the church campus to facilitate these remote options.

Create more on-demand content

Develop more content and resources for faith formation, study, and information about St John's that people can access on the church's website from wherever they are and when it works for them. This should go beyond sermons and be developed using different platforms and approaches. St John's could create and offer podcasts, short videos, blogs, and more.



Victory Church has a section of their website devoted to "church online" that includes links to both live-stream and videos of services and other on-demand content.

Administration and Organizational Life

Enhancing Our Operations

Following the ascension of Christ, the early church began organizing themselves according to their gifts to fulfill the great commission. Paul told the early church that, in their life together, “all things should be done decently and in order” (1 Corinthians 14:40). The Book of Order reminds us that “(faithful members) bear witness to God’s love and grace and promises by being involved responsibly in the ministry to the church.”

St John’s leadership, members, and staff are called to live as a church family in ways that intentionally help people experience and share God’s love. Optimal life together requires a healthy operational structure supporting connection and relationships. This means enhancing committee and board operations to prayerfully seek God’s guidance, creatively integrating different perspectives, and adapting to the changing nature of modern American life. We recommend that St John’s create a short-term Operational Appraisal Team to assess overall administrative operations and develop a plan for increased efficiencies, consistency, and other improvements.

Summary Recommendations: Administration & Organizational Life

- ✓ **Church Committee Structure:** Do we have the right groups focused on the right things to move us forward?
- ✓ **Communications Platforms and Infrastructure:** Improve St John’s communications platforms and internet infrastructure to be more accessible, inclusive, user-friendly, and consistent.
- ✓ **Online Giving:** Improve access to and use of online avenues for church giving through QR codes, legacy giving, etc.
- ✓ **Pipeline for Church Leadership:** Develop a pipeline for more church members to become involved in all levels of church leadership.



Administration & Organizational Life Detailed Recommendations

Re-evaluate the church's committee structure

St. John's committees have remained largely unchanged for many years. It is time to take a critical look at whether we have the right committees and structure to take the church into the future and to address the recommendation in this proposal. We further suggest that this re-evaluation be an ongoing process, with a more formal review every 5 years.

Enhance communications processes, platforms, and connectivity

This recommendation covers a number of areas including digitizing important files, improving member contact lists, making sure we have everyone included in the online directory, enhancing communications that highlight new members, accomplishments, joys, and sorrows, and allow for more engagement – perhaps through a closed Facebook group or app.

Improve options for donating/giving to the church

In addition, we recommend providing easier ways for members to donate/give to the church online. Several of the churches we visited posted QR codes for online giving on the seats or on sermon-related handouts. In addition, the church should promote legacy giving, special funds to support specific initiatives and other ways for individuals and families to contribute to the short and long-term financial health of St. John's.

Encourage others to step into leadership and volunteer opportunities by enforcing sabbaticals and term limits

While the church is incredibly grateful for members who have stepped up to various leadership positions time and again, St John's needs to promote leadership and volunteer positions more broadly among its congregation. Promoting these opportunities, providing position descriptions, a general operational overview of each group, and clear and simple training and guidelines will help recruit and create a more robust pipeline to fill these roles. More opportunities will also help spread the responsibilities so that the leadership roles feel less overwhelming. Ultimately, this initiative will promote more ownership of the church across the congregation.

Facilities

Intentionally Designing and Improving Our Spaces to Enhance Worship and Community

The church is not a building where God resides, but a community in which God's spirit dwells. God's people need a place to gather, and throughout the history of our faith, church buildings have been designed to reflect the beauty and glory of God. The architecture and aesthetics of St John's buildings and property profoundly influence how people experience and share God's love. Outdated or poorly designed spaces can hinder connection, while thoughtful, inviting environments inspire and energize our community. We recommend that St. John's intentionally redesign and enhance its spaces to better support worship and foster community engagement now and in the future.

Our buildings and property should be welcoming, easy to navigate, and foster spiritual growth and service. This includes inviting parking areas with clear signage that leads to a well-defined main entrance. Thoughtful landscaping should inspire and reflect God's beauty. The Carriage House and other spaces must be easy to navigate and adaptable for various fellowship and ministry activities, including community use, and adequate storage is essential. Most importantly, the sanctuary should enrich worship for everyone, drawing them closer to God.



St John's Sanctuary features traditional pulpits, a choir loft, and both an organ and piano in a designated area at the front. Pews are the only seating option. This space has not seen any major renovations since the removal of the carpet and may not meet the needs of the expanded music ministry we are recommending.

Summary Recommendations: Facilities

- ✓ **Retention of an architect and other experts:** Hire an architect and other specialists as needed to redesign the recommended spaces, balancing modern updates with the historic character of St John's.
- ✓ **Structural updates to the sanctuary:** Open the pulpit area to better integrate the music program, and consider more flexible seating, particularly in a designated family space.
- ✓ **Improvements to HVAC, lighting, A/V system, and Internet connectivity:** Upgrade critical building systems and technology that disrupt worship and hinder the functional use of other spaces.
- ✓ **Relocation of the church offices to the Carriage House:** Move the pastors' and administrative assistant's offices to the Carriage House.
- ✓ **Redesign of the second-floor non-sanctuary spaces into community areas:** Transform the old offices, choir library, and "counting room" into more usable community space, including a quiet room for families and nursing moms during worship with live-streamed service. Update the Kean Room.
- ✓ **Updates to the Carriage House:** Redesign the first floor of the Carriage House to include new administrative offices and make the downstairs space more attractive and functional for both church and community programs. Consider adding a front porch for usable outdoor space.



Victory Church has a very modern, contemporary design



Grace Presbyterian has a very traditional church design.

Facilities Detailed Recommendations

Hire an architect to help St John's reimagine key spaces

Hiring an architect with experience in renovating and updating church spaces will help St John's determine what changes/updates are possible, practical, and cost-effective. They will also help the church develop budgets and plan in phases if necessary.

Options for funding the renovations

The Transformation Team recognizes that facility renovations can be costly. We recommend exploring diverse fundraising options, including grants and fundraising events. A more comprehensive approach would be to engage in a capital campaign.



Grace Presbyterian capital campaign graphic (left) and promotion for its fundraising event, "Feast with Friends" (right).

Sanctuary Updates/Renovations:

Open the pulpit area

Preserve the character of the space while updating it for a more modern and accessible worship style. Remove physical barriers to help musicians connect more effectively with the congregation and better integrate music into the worship experience.

Evaluate the HVAC system and lighting

Reduce noise from the HVAC system and update the lighting for a brighter, more modern sanctuary. Feedback indicated that the hum of the air purifier system makes it difficult to hear from the back of the Sanctuary.

Introduce flexible seating options

Create family-friendly, accessible spaces by replacing some pews with flexible seating. While traditional pews have historical value, they can be challenging for families with small children and those with mobility issues. Designate a space for families to show our commitment to valuing children and families in worship.

Digital Screens and A/V System Updates

These recommendations were addressed under Worship and Music, but are also important updates to the sanctuary's facilities.



The Dwelling Place was a traditional church renovated for their music and worship approach.

Other Main Building Updates/Renovations

Relocate the church administrative offices to the first floor of the Carriage House

Consider relocating the church administrative offices and reception to the first floor of the Carriage House to increase security and to open up areas in the main building for community spaces. This would provide more privacy for pastoral care. The current office configuration does not allow for much privacy for individuals having private conversations and receiving counseling from our pastors. In addition, the space could be configured so that visitors could be seen before they are buzzed in providing a more secure environment, particularly when office personnel are alone.

Update the Kean Room

The Kean Room needs to be refreshed and updated to be more comfortable and welcoming for church meetings and as space for outside groups to use when not occupied by church business. Integrate technology into the updates (screen, audio, and remote meeting capabilities).

Transform other areas on the second floor into vibrant community spaces

Design a more flexible community space in this area that feels open and inviting, including a quiet zone for families and nursing moms where they can watch the worship service via live-stream.



St John's library and choir storage room (left) and Kean Room (right)



Carriage House Updates/Renovations

Modernize the community space on the main floor of the Carriage House

Create a user-friendly environment for church events and to attract external groups as a potential source of income. Update the design and furniture to ensure adaptability for both church and outside needs and integrate conversion of the first floor classrooms into new administrative offices. Update technology in this space as well to improve wifi and video conferencing capabilities.

Add a front porch to the Carriage House

Consider adding a porch/deck to the area of the Carriage House facing Berkley Road that will provide usable outdoor space for church events, concerts, and fellowship, and also would attract outside groups to use the Carriage House for gatherings.

Church Campus-wide Updates

Upgrade wifi and connectivity across all church buildings

Upgrade the wifi and connectivity across all church buildings so that each space is optimized for technology use.

Install new outer doors with modern windows

Update the exterior doors on the main building to create a more modern and inviting atmosphere.

Install a more modern and secure access system to church buildings

Update and upgrade the security/access system to a more modern approach such as a keycard or code system.

Consider adding screens in other areas for meetings and study

Add faith and community-centered art to the walls

Add more permanent and attractively framed or painted art to our walls such as scripture, messages, St John's members' activities and accomplishments. A lot of the walls are blank, covered in bulletin boards or paper signage. We need to up our game.

Conclusion

Throughout this year-long journey, the Transformation Team has deepened our affection and appreciation for the wonderful faith community at St. John's. Our work has been a true labor of love. We truly hope that the Session and congregation will embrace our recommendations with open hearts and minds, sharing in the renewed energy and excitement we feel for the future of our church as we enter the review and implementation phase of this transformation process.

We have already seen some of the ideas from the team implemented, including pastoral prayer after worship, streamlining of the service by eliminating passing of the offering plates, more time for settling into silence in worship, and providing context for music choices from the Joy Messengers. The traction of these early changes is encouraging for the implementation of broader initiatives in the future.

By fostering a culture of intentional faith formation and spiritual growth, St John's can strengthen community bonds, inspire more meaningful worship, and extend its outreach beyond our walls. These efforts align with our broader goals of creating a welcoming and inclusive community, enriching our worship and music, and expanding our mission to serve others. Additionally, enhancing our marketing, improving community engagement, refining administration, and upgrading our facilities will support these initiatives, ensuring St John's remains a vibrant and spiritually rich congregation for generations to come. Embracing this renewed focus paves the way for holistic growth, making St John's a place where everyone can experience the transforming power of God's love.



