CSMSG Strategic Plan
January 2026

Sharing our Faith Forward

Contents

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- 2019 Strategic Plan
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Rector's Message

Dear friends in Christ,

What does God call us to do? Six years ago in 2019, our Strategic Plan established that our priorities were to:

1. Improve operations
2. Emphasize stewardship
3. Support community development
4. Increase parishioner engagement
5. Strengthen the ties between our church and school

In June I shared our intention to refresh these strategic priorities so that we can fulfill our mission to "live Christ's life in the world." I asked Stephen Eisele from our Vestry to lead a committee of 16 members in this effort. In turn, they have gathered input from every part of our community. Through your faithful participation in our survey, focus groups and numerous individual conversations, you have contributed tremendously to this process. As a result, our strategic plan has been entirely dictated by the parish's input.

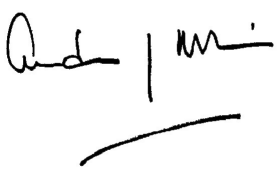
Without losing sight of the priorities we set in 2019, we have learned that we should focus on the following areas in 2025:

1. Connection: Increase members' opportunities to connect with each other, especially through small groups.
2. Communication: Strengthen our communication systems to enrich our community and our relationships.
3. Administration: Reinforce best practices for all positions of responsibility in the church—Vestry, staff, clergy and volunteers alike.

Addressing these priority areas will make it possible for us to make progress in welcoming newcomers, in stewardship, and in leaning into our historic strengths.

The Strategic Planning Committee has prepared the attached report for Vestry consideration and adoption. They welcome your continued feedback by email at csmsgstratplan2025@gmail.com. Your passion for The Church of St. Michael and St. George is unique. I am continually reminded of the blessing that it is to be your Rector. Thank you.

In faith together,
Andrew J. Archie



Senior Warden's Message

In the past six months, a group of fellow members have invested significant amounts of their time and talent to craft a road map to assist our church and its leadership to achieve our mission:

"To live Christ's life in the world through the Anglican traditions of worshiping God with reverence, joy and awe; serving and caring for our community and leading spiritual formation for all ages reverence, joy, and awe; serving and caring for our community, and leading spiritual formation for all ages."

This road map will be called Sharing Our Faith Forward. The intention is to establish the priorities we, the members, have asked to be a focus. Clearly, all our efforts to achieve our mission are important. What has been attempted is to identify areas that need more attention to improve. These priorities were identified by a survey of all members in which 280 members shared their views. With the survey as a basis, the planning group went on to host 4 focus groups, which were open to any member wishing to participate. Additionally, the staff and clergy were asked for their point of view and how best to move our mission forward. Then this information was assimilated by the planning group of 16 people led by Stephen Eisele, Tom Horlacher, Ian Hagemann and Patience Schock. During this assimilation several spirited discussions were had over several hours of meetings. This work culminated in the document in hand.

We are members of an amazing Episcopal church. Over the past 6 years the continued effort to successfully live Christ's life in the world has been praiseworthy. However, in today's world, it is our obligation to continue to critically evaluate how our parish may better enable our membership to follow Christ's call. Today, our parish is impactful on our community and our diocese. In doing the work and focusing our time, talent and attention on the areas identified, in this Faith Forward plan, I believe we will make the Church of St. Michael and St George stronger and more impactful in our community than ever before. This plan is designed to be a living document. Please look for updates and opportunities to help in our efforts in the coming months.

After reading this plan I encourage each of you to join in the effort to turn this plan into action.

Sincerely,
Joe Sheehan
Sr. Warden

Our Vision

The Church of St. Michael & St. George's vision is to transform lives through Christ.

Our Mission

Our mission is to live Christ's life in the world through the Anglican traditions of worshiping God with reverence, joy, and awe; serving and caring for our community, and leading spiritual formation for all ages.

Our Values

We celebrate the Anglican liturgy with excellent preaching and traditional music in a holy church setting.

CSMSG is a welcoming community and a family-friendly church uniting lifelong Episcopalians with members from other religious backgrounds through the beauty of our liturgy and music as well as the excellence of our preaching and teaching.

CSMSG is a place for all sinners.

CSMSG strives to improve the spiritual lives of its members through worship, education, outreach, and evangelism.

CSMSG has a passionate membership serving God with our time, hearts, and money.

CSMSG is led by clergy dedicated to the parish and accountable to the apostolic faith.

Through our example and with our clergy, CSMSG is committed to training the future leaders of the church.

Our parish and school are united to offer children the finest educational and spiritual growth opportunities.

Strategic Planning Committee Members

Stephen Eisele – Chair
Matt Aplington
Carl Eichenberger
Andrew Friend
Lucas Gredell
Ian Hagemann*
Harrison Hagan Heil
Jim Holbrook*
Tom Horlacher*
Jefferson Miller
Harry Moppins
David Ott – Treasurer
Sam Panke
Nancy Reynolds
Cathy Sanders
Patience Schock*
Joseph Sheehan – Senior Warden*
Daniel Smith
Will Springer
Jim Stephenson
Sonya (Wooley) York – Chief Operating Officer

* writing subcommittee

Methodology

The Strategic Planning committee was empaneled in June 2025 to update the plan made and initially implemented in 2019. Members of the Committee were drawn from a wide range of stakeholder groups including parishioner, Vestry and staff representation. A churchwide survey was administered by HolyCow Ministries and the results were returned to the committee via a formal analysis and presentation. The committee conducted focus groups and staff interviews. The 2019 Strategic Plan was reviewed to identify continuing themes, successful changes made, and new challenges. A SWOT analysis was refined over the course of four in-person committee meetings. Results were shared with the Vestry in November 2025 and feedback received before preparing the final report.

Timeline

June 2025	Rector calls Strategic Planning Committee
July 2025	Broad objectives envisioned Survey/focus groups planned Survey administered
August 2025	Survey results returned to Committee, Vestry and parish
September 2025	Initial committee deliberations
October 2025	Focus groups held, results analyzed
November 2025	Continued committee deliberations Initial draft of SWOT and recommendations Draft shared with Vestry for feedback
December 2025	Feedback incorporated into final draft
January 2026	Draft communicated to parish and feedback received
February 2026	Plan discussed at Vestry meeting for adoption
Continuing	Implementation

A Look Back at the 2019 Strategic Plan

The Strategic Planning Committee in 2019 followed substantially similar methods to the present effort and was led by some of the same individuals. Principal conclusions in 2019 were that CSMSG was a healthy, vibrant church that was faithfully serving its parishioners and the larger St. Louis community. Financial support and attendance had remained steady at a time when overall national trends were in serious decline. The Church had established itself as a leader in the high Anglican tradition with excellent preaching, an outstanding music program, strong pastoral care, long-serving and dedicated staff members, comprehensive and well attended church school and youth ministry programs and a broad array of parish life and outreach programs.

The plan recommended that the church strengthen its worship and spiritual formation by more effectively communicating its Anglican traditions; reorganize its efforts to care for and serve the church community; and improve its internal management processes, IT systems, financial control/reporting and church building maintenance.

Changes in worship included changing to a schedule with three Sunday services instead of four and initiating a livestream ministry. To an extent these changes were driven by the Covid-19 pandemic. A more consistent “Education Hour” was created in the Sunday 9:00 time slot, with offerings for both youth and adults. Children’s worship now ends at the passing of the peace so that children and adults take communion together in the main church. A new organ has been ordered and largely funded.

Outreach ministries were grouped under a revitalized “Faith in Action” committee whose visibility is promoted by a dedicated fundraiser event.

The St. Michael School of Clayton was rebranded as St. Michael’s Episcopal Day School, with a renewed Episcopal identity and mission.

A Director of Stewardship and Giving position was created. The Alleluia Fund was created as an umbrella to permit gifts to be directed toward building maintenance projects.

A Chief Operating Officer joined the staff and revitalized some administrative processes, resulting in both cost savings and improved performance and compliance. Other action items remain in progress to improve the effectiveness of church operations. Financial concerns from 2019 have been alleviated by recent market performance as well as prudent budgeting.

The world and the St. Louis community are different places than in 2019. Many of the recommendations from the last Strategic Plan have been implemented. Others have lost their currency. The 2025 Strategic Plan validates the successes of the 2019 Strategic Plan and provides a roadmap to build on both the themes and details of the prior plan.

Executive Summary of Survey Findings

The Vestry commissioned a survey and analysis using HolyCow Consulting's Congregation Analysis Tool, funded by a special donation. We received 281 responses (55% of average Sunday attendance), representing diverse ages, tenures, and attendance frequencies, with a predominance of older and longer-tenured members responding.

The 2025 HolyCow survey showed high satisfaction with CSMSG, with 67% clearly satisfied and only 4% clearly dissatisfied. Compared to national benchmarks, CSMSG was rated as a high-energy church. Respondents valued participation in church activities beyond worship (70% clearly agreeing). Priorities include reaching new people, creating relationship opportunities, and drawing in families and youth.

Most of the satisfied respondents cited our clergy and worship services as driving factors. The HolyCow survey can identify factors that energize a church's most energetic members, but no single driver emerged. This suggests a diverse range of drivers. High satisfaction and energy place CSMSG in the "transformational" quadrant, where "everyone wants to be."

Potential areas of risk were identified. CSMSG, a clergy-driven church, needs sufficient resources for clergy support. While most areas of the HolyCow "performance dashboard" are strong, hospitality and governance could be improved. The Strategic Planning Committee explored these topics in focus groups. Our stewardship contributions are below 1% of family income, placing us at the 4th percentile of churches nationally.

The 2025 survey results were similar to our 2019 in-house survey. Overall satisfaction averaged 8/10 in 2019, with 88% scoring 7 or higher. In both surveys, parishioners desired more involvement and community engagement. In 2019, 95% contributed, but 75% felt the church was underfunded, a sentiment confirmed in 2025. Consistent "wants" include more programming, protecting our traditions, recruiting and retaining young people and young families, increasing outreach, and fostering meaningful relationships. The church made several changes in response to the 2019 Strategic Plan. The 2025 survey suggests that these changes were beneficial and that an updated Strategic Plan may allow for further growth as we focus on our mission to "live Christ's life in the world."

Executive Summary of Focus Group Findings

Two live and three Zoom focus groups were convened in October 2025 via open signups advertised by email. Combined participation was approximately 45 parishioners. Facilitators drawn from the Strategic Planning Committee developed an interview guide focusing on the following topics: Vision/Mission alignment + strengths; Relationships/hospitality + newcomer integration; Incorporation/readiness for ministry + operations/systems; Families/youth + pastoral care (survey themes); Outreach + school/church relationship + governance; and Prioritization + feasibility.

Hospitality and Belonging
Hospitality emerged as the most prominent theme. Participants noted that CSMSG's size, generational diversity, and current habits create a gap between welcoming newcomers and integrating them into parish life. Name tags, greeters, the photo directory, and programs such as Wonderful Wednesdays or small groups were frequently cited as mechanisms that once supported connection and could again. Many observed over-reliance on a few staff members, especially in newcomer engagement, and expressed interest in lay-led approaches. Some described a sense of "coldness" in community life, especially for younger families or individuals who do not already have relationships within the parish.

Pastoral Care
Participants respected the clergy and acknowledged strong individual efforts, yet many perceived inconsistent pastoral responsiveness and communication. Some recalled periods when pastoral care felt more visible. Suggestions included clarifying how pastoral needs should be communicated, expanding lay involvement, and implementing more reliable weekend or crisis contact systems.

Programs and Engagement
Youth ministries were widely recognized as a strength; adult formation offerings are also appreciated. However, several groups observed that many parishioners—particularly working adults and young families—struggle to participate because of schedules, childcare needs, or lack of smaller, relationally oriented groups. There was interest in revitalizing midweek programs, creating targeted groups (e.g., parents, young adults), improving publicity of existing opportunities, and reducing barriers to entry for ministries that rely on volunteers.

Operations, Systems, and Governance
Several operational issues were repeatedly mentioned: frustration with Realm; inconsistent volunteer coordination; and concerns about nursery security and check-in processes. Transparency in finances and governance generated mixed responses. Some saw current disclosures as adequate, while others viewed financial transparency as a long-standing weakness and wanted more visibility into budgeting, decision-making, and the church's relationship with St. Michael's School.

Overall Themes
Participants expressed deep appreciation for CSMSG's worship, leadership, and history, along with a desire for more intentional community-building, clearer communication, and systems that better support engagement. Most recommendations focused on achievable, incremental improvements rather than structural change—"quick wins" that could signal momentum and strengthen trust in the strategic planning process.

Executive Summary of Staff Interviews

Two Strategic Planning Committee members met with all available staff individually and in small groups.

Strengths
Staff described CSMSG as a committed and caring community with strong lay leadership, deep liturgical and musical traditions, and a growing cohort of young families. Parishioners value life-long learning, and the church's financial position and multigenerational history provide a stable foundation. The breadth of available programs and the close relationship with the school were seen as important assets.

Challenges
Staff identified several areas where internal systems and organizational culture could be strengthened. Across interviews, people noted a desire for clearer alignment within the clergy team, more consistent planning and decision-making processes, empowerment rather than micromanagement, and improved communication across departments. Staff morale, workload, and recognition surfaced repeatedly as areas in need of attention, as did the development of more unified approaches to pastoral care and Sunday operations.

Operational constraints were also highlighted, including staff burnout, uneven policies around remote work and PTO, inconsistent application of communication protocols, and the need for greater clarity in roles and expectations. Some financial and administrative practices were described as lacking transparency or modern structure, and several staff members expressed uncertainty about standard procedures in budgeting, check-signing, and expense oversight. Comments regarding financial procedures were framed as questions about best practices rather than allegations of misconduct.

Opportunities
Several opportunities emerged around strengthening leadership cohesion, investing in professional development, and implementing the upcoming strategic plan. Staff noted the potential for clearer direction-setting at the institutional level, better cross-training, and the addition of roles (e.g., accounting support, full-time assistant organist, Sunday-morning junior staff, full-time Church School director, sextons) to meet growing demands. Clergy involvement in Children's Chapel was recommended. A more consistent framework of protocols—communications, pastoral care, remote work, volunteer engagement—could immediately streamline operations.

There is also an opportunity to deepen church–school integration, address deferred maintenance more systematically, and create intentional pathways for lay ownership of ministries. Improved communication of events and a more structured approach to ministry visibility on Sundays were described as helpful next steps.

Threats and Risks
Staff raised concerns about long-term sustainability, especially related to burnout, aging lay leadership, and the loss of institutional memory if long-serving staff retire without documented processes. Financial pressures, including donor aging, building maintenance needs and the school's fiscal dependence on the church, were noted. At the cultural level, tensions between tradition and adaptation continue to require careful navigation.

SWOT Analysis

This analysis was developed by the Strategic Planning Committee based on data from the survey, focus groups, staff interviews, and their collective experience.

	Internal	*External*
Positives	**Strengths** ● Vibrant, traditional worship/liturgy and music ● Clergy: Excellent preaching and Christian education ● Robust outreach ministries ● Welcoming, nonjudgmental, nonpartisan culture ● Thriving family/children's programs ● Healthy finances and endowment ● Partnered with school and infant/toddler program ● Historic, architecturally significant campus ● Dedicated staff ● Parishioners seeking deeper connections	**Opportunities** ● Religious participation is on the uptick nationally ● Relations with the Bishop are congenial ● New organ coming ● STL community has needs that we are able to serve ● Clergy transitions will catalyze change ● University and Rockwell House are nearby
Negatives	**Weaknesses** ● Communication is lacking; Realm works poorly ● Pledging is low relative to family incomes ● Concern about pastoral care/responsiveness ● Old building, deferred maintenance, no parking ● Liturgy may appear too traditional or intimidating ● Decisions are made without stakeholder input ● Administrative processes not best practice yet ● Staff feels overextended and under-supported ● Aging lay leadership ● Decreased small groups and connections	**Threats** ● Potential for departure of key staff ● Unknown timing and details of clergy transitions ● Demands of a secular world ● Perceptions of wealth and exclusivity

Strategic Implications

The Strategic Planning Committee endorses the continuation of our existing Vision, Mission and Values. Review of the SWOT reveals several strategic implications that can be leveraged to pursue these goals. The first three appear to be enabling priorities that will make it possible to achieve the second set of three.

1. Existing members want more opportunities to **connect** with and support one another
2. The complexity of the parish demands improvement in our **communication** strategies
3. There is a need to adopt stronger **administrative processes**
4. We can grow by welcoming **newcomers**, especially families that walk through the door
5. Strengthen **stewardship** to provide better resources for pastoral care, staffing and upkeep
6. Lean into our **strengths**—worship, music, outreach

This plan should be comprehensively communicated to the parish prior to adoption. Continued visibility of the plan will promote focus and alignment during the implementation phase, both within the parish and as part of staff and clergy recruitment efforts. Moreover, the Strategic Planning committee proposes a formal accountability protocol to ensure successful implementation.

Recommended Initiatives

Priority area	Actions (examples)	Timeframe	Proposed Owner
Connection	Establish and nurture small groups	June 2026	Vestry and Staff
	Create mechanism for small group involvement	June 2026	Staff
	Hire and onboard new parish life director	December 2025	Staff
	Consider breakfast program	TBD	Vestry decision
Communication	Retire and replace, or retrain and relaunch Realm	November 2026	Staff
	Publish parish directory	November 2026	Staff
	Comprehensively update website	2026	Staff
	Establish communication protocols (staff and clergy/pastoral care)	2026	Staff
Administration	Strategic Plan Committee invited to Vestry semi-annually	January 2026–28	Vestry
	Vestry to adhere to bylaws-specified nomination process	January 2027	Vestry
	Vestry conducts operational audit & employee survey annually	2027	Vestry
	Adopt best management practices	TBD	Staff
	Adopt procedure manuals for staff and lay ministries	2026	Staff & Vestry
Newcomers	Establish and staff welcome area on Sundays	2026	Vestry
	Consider formal welcome processes (Invite-Welcome-Connect)	2026	Vestry
Stewardship	Confirm or revise 1%/4%ile factoids	2026	Stewardship team
	Partner with parishioners to climb towards 10%ile	2027	Stewardship team
Lean into strengths	Capitalize on new organ via musical outreach	2026	Organist & Vestry
	Establish Worship and Music Committee within the Vestry	2026	Vestry
	Expand infant/toddler program	TBD	Staff
	Facilitate leadership turnovers in outreach ministries	TBD	Faith in Action

Expansion and Discussion of Recommended Initiatives

Priority area: Connection

The survey, focus groups and committee process all showed that parishioners are looking for more extensive personal and spiritual connection in **small groups**. Longtime parishioners identified "casserole clubs" as a model that was successful in the past. More recently, "Wonderful Wednesday" filled a similar need with clergy support. It was noted that there are several successful and long-running small groups (Bible studies, home groups and others). While parishioners felt it is difficult to learn about existing groups, some are advertised in the weekly notices. Some groups have limited capacity to accommodate new participants. Facilitating the formation of new small groups is a high priority, along with establishment of a "bulletin board"-style forum to publicize them. The potential adoption of **Invite-Welcome-Connect** or a similar framework may be pertinent to this item.

Onboarding of a new **parish life director** is underway. Given the central role of the prior parish life director, this process will be essential.

The HolyCow survey identified hospitality as a possible area of growth. The focus groups confirmed there is some interest in a full **Sunday breakfast** program to promote connections. However, staff support and physical infrastructure could be challenges.

Priority area: Communication

Parishioners and staff are uniformly dissatisfied with Realm, a **parish management platform**, that has not delivered on expectations. A needs assessment should be conducted to determine if the platform lacks needed capabilities or simply needs data updates and/or better training. If Realm cannot immediately be adapted to our needs, it should be retired and replaced with a more effective system.

The Church has not had a functional **parish directory** since the adoption of Realm. The promised use of Realm as a directory has not been realized, largely because the system requires each user to actively create an account in order to be listed. The church does maintain a back-office directory. Creating a searchable parish-facing directory, preferably including photographs, would facilitate personal connections, engagement and communication.

Several pages within the church **website** (e.g., outreach ministry descriptions) are out of date or incomplete. Comprehensive updates would show transparency and promote involvement.

There is dissatisfaction around **communication** in the Church, hindering operations as well as personal connections. The weekly e-letter is effective, but individual parishioners have limited ability to reach Church staff. It is not always clear who oversees certain areas or how they should be contacted. Some parishioners indicated that it should be easier to reach a clergy person (including in emergent "on call" situations). The path to reaching the right person often runs through a single parish life director who is the unofficial repository of information that is not recorded anywhere else. More formal protocols, including a "who to call" list or an email box that is answered daily, could be helpful in this regard. Clarification of pastoral care expectations could also be beneficial. This process has already begun as part of the onboarding of the new parish life director.

Priority area: Administration

Implementation of the Strategic Plan is a shared responsibility of the Vestry, clergy and staff. The Strategic Planning committee should be continued in an advisory capacity and invited to **meet with the Vestry** semi-annually to promote completion of the recommended initiatives, with any necessary alterations. The Vestry is encouraged to appoint a member to serve as liaison for each item assigned to Staff in order to monitor progress and provide a champion for each initiative.

The committee recommends strengthening the Vestry's autonomy and responsiveness, particularly in light of the expected upcoming transition in rectors. The Church bylaws specify a **Vestry election process** that is not currently being followed. The committee recommends following the bylaws, including use of a Nominating Committee and active solicitation of nominees from the membership.

The Vestry currently has little interface with the staff, limiting their awareness and oversight of Parish operations. Staff indicated that they could better serve the parish if they had greater visibility to the Vestry. To remedy this situation, the Vestry should annually conduct an **operational audit** and staff survey or listening session.

The committee recommends adopting the Alban Institute's **church management practices** or other best practices as appropriate.

Standard operating procedures should be adopted for key processes, mitigating risk of information loss during both unplanned and planned transitions. Creation of **procedure manuals** would make it possible to document workflows and clarify lines of responsibility and reporting.

Priority area: Newcomer Welcoming

The Strategic Plan recommends taking additional steps to welcome newcomers, both on their first day and as they join the parish. Given high Sunday attendance, newcomers may be difficult to identify. Coffee hour may be intimidating. Measures could include adding a welcome statement back into **Sunday announcements** more consistently as well as creating and staffing a **newcomer area** in the Great Hall or narthexes. The **Invite-Welcome-Connect** program was considered after the 2019 Strategic Plan but was not implemented due to the pandemic and can be considered again, with adoption depending upon the associated cost.

Priority area: Stewardship and Finance

Growth in stewardship appears possible. One approach would be to **set stewardship goals** (e.g., to work toward reaching the 10th percentile) and publicize them to the parish (e.g., so the goal can be reached for the 2027 stewardship campaign). Numerical goals (average pledge size, laddered targets) could be used for standard setting. A culture of giving should be built, together with mechanisms for continued focus on how money is spent, for example when resources are committed to outside vendors. Additional giving would allow us to address maintenance, staffing and clergy workload.

Priority area: Lean into strengths

The planning process identified many strengths which should be recognized and valued. A new organ will be installed in 2026. Together with the favorable state of our choir and music program, the church should take the opportunity to promote our **musical leadership** in the diocese and

region, for example by greater publicity of our musical programming, a guest organist/musician series, or other partnerships.

The Vestry has several standing committees (Evangelism, Parish Life and Stewardship). The Plan recommends **establishing a Worship and Music Committee** to be composed of Vestry members, clergy, the organist and choirmaster and representatives of the Vergers' Guild and Altar Guild. This committee will be charged with writing standard operating procedures for worship services to aid participants, visiting clergy, and new clergy. This standardization will help the church carry forward its strength in traditional, reverent worship.

The **infant/toddler program** is highly successful and has a positive cash flow. It may be possible to expand this program.

Our **outreach ministries** are successful, but many have aging leadership. There is an unclear pipeline for leadership transition and little documentation of standard operating practices, exposing these ministries to "key man" risk. Some ministries have run their course while others are newly established and could be expanded. The Faith in Action umbrella committee may be the best setting for this discussion. It is noted that this committee will itself be seeking a new chair.