



St. Bartholomew's Episcopal Church Listening Initiative



Listening Initiative Key Themes

- Over 60 members of St. Bart's took part in the outreach listening initiative – a tremendous response and incredible effort by everyone, particularly Peter.
- People mentioned the value of “listening”, appreciating the opportunity to be heard as well as “listening and learning” before “doing”.
- Outreach, defined many ways, was seen as fundamental to our faith and consistent with our Christian values.

“ So much of the fear that is out there is because we don't necessarily understand someone else...I think that if we understand something, it eliminates a lot of the fear and bad reactions to things. “

The goal of Outreach was generally seen as bringing hope and encouragement to those around us and tangibly improving the welfare of the community.

- The goal is to have a positive impact on others more than to grow our own church.
- Our efforts are rooted in the values Jesus exemplified – love, compassion, humility, respect, generosity and courage.
- Outreach, whether focused externally or internally on our own members, is part of our culture, a way of life.

“It’s the expression of faith... who we’re supposed to be in the world.”

While Outreach was generally defined as faith-based engagement with the community outside the walls of our church, many emphasized the importance and value of “outreach” to our own community.

- Our Pastoral Care generously and quietly devote time and resources to our own members at vulnerable and critical times to help them remain whole.
- Our highly regarded Choir and Music Program add tremendously to our worship and create opportunities to invite others to join us.
- Many mentioned appreciating the well-maintained gardens, building and grounds.

“I’m really impressed that church is a verb, and being a member of the congregation is a verb.”

In terms of a more traditional definition of Outreach, most felt that St. Bart's is doing a very good job.

- The Day of Service was consistently identified as a huge success both in terms of the positive impact on the community as well as on the individuals participating.
- Our well-established connections with St. E's, Friendship House, YCHI and Yarmouth Food Pantry were frequently mentioned.
- Many members participate in outreach activities on their own.
- Outreach is recognized both as fuel for individual spiritual sustenance as well as an opportunity for fostering greater sense of community among members.

*“I think St. Bart's Day of Service is absolutely fabulous.
I think it is probably one of the most wonderful things I've ever seen the church do.”*

- As was the case in the 2021 survey, members chose food insecurity and asylum-seekers/immigration most frequently as the highest priority right now.
- The environment/climate change was frequently mentioned as a high priority although at times the direct link to outreach was not clear.
- The LGBTQ+ population, which was not on the list of priorities in the question, was also identified as a high priority.
- Social justice or political advocacy consistent with Christian values was identified as an opportunity where our efforts were important and could be “bolder”.
- The political climate and the impact on Outreach efforts was a common topic while discussing priorities.

“...racial justice.... almost too narrow, but maybe “injustices” because it’s racial and social and sexual... the list goes on and on. But I would like to see us do something on social justice...,”



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Main Challenges

- We all have different ways of “doing Outreach”. How can we be sure all of us are recognized and appreciated for our outreach efforts.
 - Some of us make financial contributions.
 - Some of us are focused on service or social action.
 - Some of us focus on prayer.
 - Some of us are focused on supporting our community and worship.
- How can we optimize the time, talent and resources of our congregation for the greatest impact?
 - There was concern about spreading ourselves too thin.
- How can we communicate more effectively?
 - Many were unaware of all that was happening.
 - Not everyone knew how to get involved.
 - Some did not feel their spiritual gifts were being used.



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Ideas and Suggestions

Many thoughts and suggestions including but not limited to....

- An additional Day of Service
- Deepen our relationship with existing partners (St. Elizabeth's, Friendship House)
- Partner with other faith-based organizations
- Create a "Knights of the Roundtable" organization
- Use more visible forms of communication (e.g., Day of Service sign-up board)
- Consider a speakers' series
- Hold more small group conversations
- Collaborate with another church for youth education and formation
- Consider an Instagram page
- More events to which the community is invited
- Participate in community events – marathon water stop, Pride parade, clam festival



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Next Steps