

# St. Nicholas Five-Year Planning

## The five-year plan

If you want to go anywhere, you need to map the journey:

- To estimate the resources you'll need
- To plan for what you'll want to see along the way
- To work out the best route to get there

Without a plan, there's no telling where you'll wind up, if you go anywhere at all.

The goal of our St. Nicholas five-year plan is something like that. We have general ideas of what we want for our parish—To grow and thrive while fulfilling the Great Commission and maintaining what we love about the parish now. But embodying those ideals with our people and our parish takes some effort and focus. The parish council wants to work with the entire parish to make those goals specific and practical.

The words “five-year plan” can be terrifying to anyone with a knowledge of history. That's unfortunate, because five years is a short stretch of time, long enough to make progress, short enough to allow maneuverability. Still, people's concerns are valid, so let me tell you what the five-year plan is not.

1. **The plan is flexible, not rigid.** A goal can be changed or even abandoned for good reason—a change in circumstances, unforeseen events, failure to plan well enough to know what the risks and problems will be.
2. **The plan is open, not closed.** New ideas, new opportunities may arise, and we want to be open to positive changes as well as negative.
3. **The plan is Christ-focused, not ego-focused.** The Body of Christ is a fractal pattern that plays out from the smallest parish to the Church throughout time and place. As the Body of Christ, St. Nicholas Parish offers the opportunity to all its members to participate in building the kingdom in the world. Our five-year plan will help us figure out what that might look like and make progress in its construction.

## The survey

The first step in the five-year plan was the survey. The survey ran during early September and had a total of 62 participants. It aimed to get a sense of what how parishioners view the parish in terms of ministries and opportunities for spiritual growth.

The questions addressed how St. Nicholas parishioners perceive our parish, especially in the areas of personal growth, education, community-building, and outreach.

Download a summary of the survey results here: [Survey results \(https://tinyurl.com/survey-st-nicholas\)](https://tinyurl.com/survey-st-nicholas). To preserve the privacy of participants, we omitted the comments and names submitted.

# The planning session

The parish council held a four-hour planning session Saturday, September 18, 2021.

In preparation for the meeting, we watched a video about the planning process: two talks given by Protodeacon Peter Danilchik.

Dare Great Things, Part 1

Dare Great Things, Part 2

At the meeting, we discussed who St. Nicholas is as a parish—strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats. As we talked, we noted ideas to address the concerns and possibilities expressed by the parishioners who participated in the survey as well as of the clergy and parish council members present at the meeting.

These ideas are not the total of what is possible for the parish. Some of them are easy to implement; others will turn out not to be practical. We have talents and gifts among parishioners who weren't present at the planning session but who are willing and able to help make the changes we need to thrive as a parish.

We wanted to set up a process that involves the whole parish and allows all parish members to contribute in accordance with their gifts and interests.

The idea is not to create a report that goes into a file cabinet and is never referenced again. The idea is to build a framework for us to live out the unique ministry of St. Nicholas in our city, region, diocese, and in the Church in the world.

This report is the first step in expanding the planning process to the parish as a whole, while respecting the time and resources of parishioners.

We centered our discussion around the overarching topics of the survey:

1. Worship and prayer together
2. Spiritual growth
3. Christian education for all ages
4. Service into and for the local community
5. Social life and fellowship
6. Growth
7. Willingness to help or be involved.
- 8 and 9. Positive and negative aspects of the parish
10. Quick description

The first five might be called areas of ministry. The sixth, growth, will come if we work effectively in the first five. And the last few have to do with where the parish is now.

## Next steps

Going forward, we want to form work groups around each area of ministry. We call them work groups, not committees, because the idea is not just to decide what needs to happen, but to make it happen. We understand everybody has work and life outside church, but if we split up the work among different people, it's better for the parish and better for participants.

### *Form work groups around each topic*

We invite you to sign up for the group that engages you. We invite ideas from any and all parishioners, and the work group will explore those ideas and, in collaboration with other parish leadership, set priorities and implement them in a deliberate and focused way.

Here are the five work groups and a selection of actions from the survey as well as ideas from the parish council. These actions are a starting point, not a list of requirements. It will be up to each work group to set priorities and develop its own list, focusing on these actions or others as they decide.

We also have ongoing ministries, such as the St. Elizabeth Team, Church School, and grounds and maintenance, etc.



# Spiritual growth

The actions below are a sample of ideas that would be handled by the work group, to give you an idea of whether this is the kind of work you want to do. The work group will decide what actions to take on—these or others—and the priority among them.

## *Sample actions*

- Bible/book study
- Bible study classes
- Publicize small groups (e.g., Zoom groups)
- Special study/meditation events

Name	Phone/email

# Christian education for all ages

The actions below are a sample of ideas that would be handled by the work group, to give you an idea of whether this is the kind of work you want to do. The work group will decide what actions to take on—these or others—and the priority among them.

## *Sample actions*

- Adult ed classes, e.g., guest speakers, films, etc.
- Allow non-inquirers attend inquirer classes (for general Orthodox Christian education)
- Christian education for adults
- Promote parish library for reading
- Pan-Orthodox programs

Name	Phone/email

# Service into and for the local community

The actions below are a sample of ideas that would be handled by the work group, to give you an idea of whether this is the kind of work you want to do. The work group will decide what actions to take on—these or others—and the priority among them.

## *Sample actions*

- Opportunities for face-to-face service
- Reach out to neighborhood
- Develop parish relationship with 1-2 ministries on the ground
- Support groups parishioners already volunteer with
- Help parishioners with project, such as deck/yard project
- Help the frail elderly

Name	Phone/email

# Social life and fellowship

The actions below are a sample of ideas that would be handled by the work group, to give you an idea of whether this is the kind of work you want to do. The work group will decide what actions to take on—these or others—and the priority among them.

## *Sample actions*

- Return to full meals on Sundays?
- Offer church tours at events
- Parish sales, e.g., garage sales
- Retreats
- Host neighbors for BBQ or party
- More face-to-face social events
- Saturday evening potlucks
- Set up kids' play area outside
- Teen hiking/camping trips

Name	Phone/email



