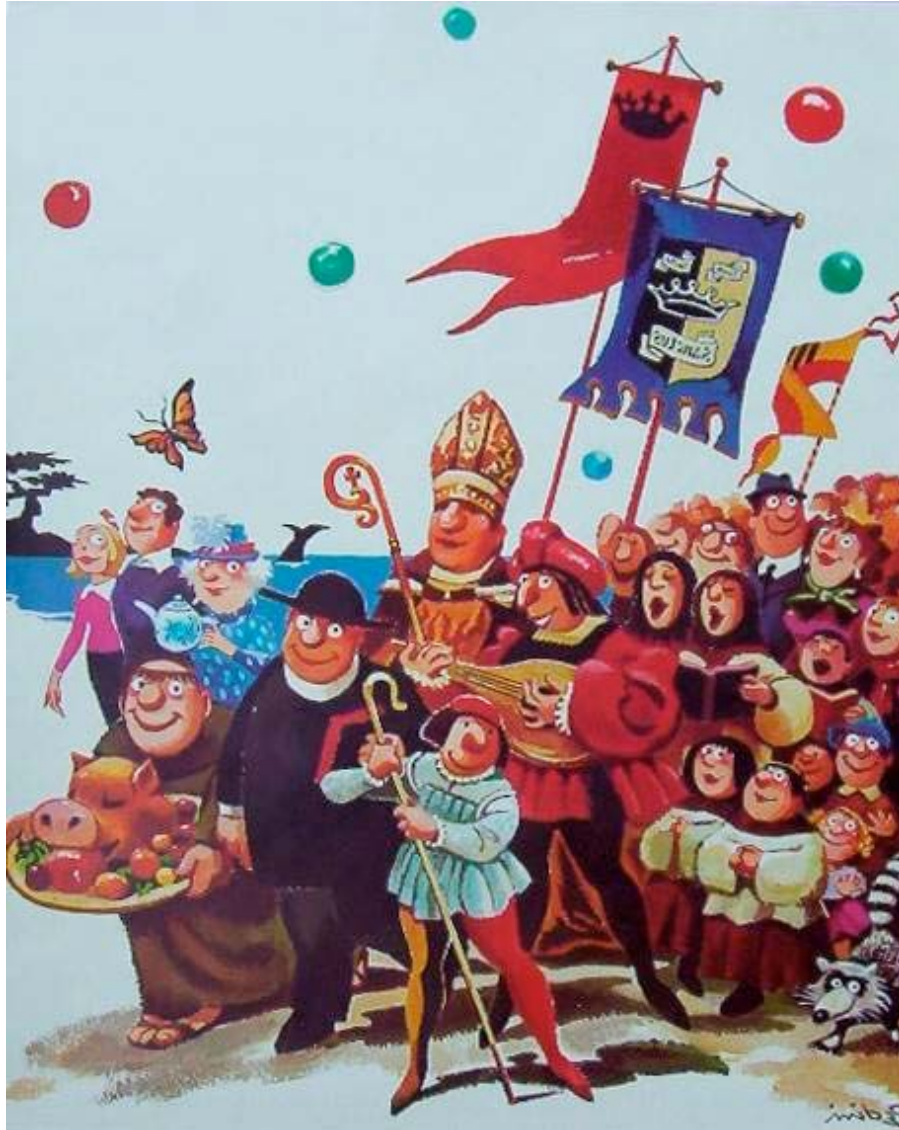


Vision for the Future

“The Conversation Version”



All Saints Episcopal Church
Carmel-by-the-Sea, California
September 2008

A EUCHARISTIC COMMUNITY CALLED
TO WORSHIP, SERVE & GROW
IN GOD'S LOVE

Dear Friends:

The picture of the future you will see in this document is given no date, because it is an ideal picture that is intended to set the direction for our growth and mission. It is painted in broad brushstrokes that momentarily lift our gaze to the horizon of God's future. It is a first step in a longer process of moving toward the future with concrete, manageable steps.

We thank the Vision Task Force (see page 11) for their diligent work that resulted in this vision. We have reviewed with them this picture of our future; now we ask you to join us in a conversation about where God might be leading us: as idealized as this vision is, would we fulfill our purpose if we were to live into this vision?

Specifically, we ask you to read the following text several times, listening for how it might or might not resonate with your sense of who we are and where God might be leading us. Feel free to share it with others and solicit their responses. You can obtain extra copies from our webpage or by contacting the parish office. The endnotes are not essential reading, but permit you to delve a little deeper, should you choose.

The most important question is whether you hear God in and through the words of this text. You will find several questions at the end of the document to assist our collective conversation.

Over the next few months, we will provide several opportunities for engaging each other in this conversation. We ask you to participate in this conversation as many times as you are able, in order to articulate your continuing reflection on our future, and also so that you might listen to fellow members of the combined All Saints communities of parish and school.

We will ask the Vision Task Force to modify the vision based on what we hear through our collective conversation. God willing, on the Feast of the Epiphany (January 6), we will celebrate the completion of our vision and embrace what we believe to be God's future for us.

Afterward, we will work on a long-range plan, with specific goals and measurable objectives that move us toward God's future. Please pray with us.

In Christ,

Nancy Collins, Susan Britton, Dick Barratt, Barbara Bown, Nancy Jones, Donald Kirk, Gwyn Romano, Claudia Ward, Ed Fincke, Rick Matters, Daniel Green and Elizabeth Barratt.

SECTION ONE: A WELLSPRING OF NEW LIFE

Walking with purpose and eager anticipation, converging from different directions, we arrive for the Sunday service. Friends and strangers exchange greetings. Children run toward classrooms. Families and individuals enter the church. Volunteers park cars, while ushers help those in walkers negotiate the entrance. Friendly members show visitors the way to the nursery, exchanging names as they walk. Greeters welcome all.

The congregation swells with last-minute arrivals, while the procession begins with simple majesty and joyful singing. God's Spirit descends with palpable presence and a sense of holy accord connects those assembled. The symbols and silence of the liturgy draw us into the deep mystery; its sights and sounds connect us to the ineffable. We gather weekly in order to taste the goodness of God and to draw near to the loving presence of Christ.

We participate in God's life through the Eucharist and other sacraments. Like stained glass windows, each sacrament glows with the light of Christ, bathing us with the beauty of holiness. Our sacramental celebration of love is rooted in Jesus' full humanity and full divinity.ⁱ The Incarnation of Jesus of Nazareth is nothing less than the transaction of love communicated between the creator and the created. Jesus holds in harmonious tension the fullness of our humanity with the fullness of divinity that offers health and salvation.

Our meaning and purpose derive from Holy Communion, which has become for us a wellspring of new life. Christ's redeeming love wells up from the sacrament like a spring of fresh waterⁱⁱ and the Holy Spirit flows into our hearts, empowering our relationship with God and those assembled. The Eucharistic feast informs how we relate to others, as the Spirit washes over each encounter and every partnership in the parish.ⁱⁱⁱ

SECTION TWO: WE HAVE BECOME THE RIVER OF GOD

Nourished and empowered by God's love, we pour out the doors of the church. We have become the river of God that flows from the liturgy, whose streams make glad God's people.^{iv} As we linger over refreshments, happy voices mingle in conversation, while children laugh and play. We welcome one another as those who share meaningful common bonds. People introduce one another and invitations are extended and received. The current of participation in the divine life runs through every aspect of our common life.

A community extending from local residents to those living in other countries participates in the Sunday liturgy through our web page. They take advantage of the rich variety of liturgical expressions offered by the parish. The web page contains an up-to-date selection of services, classes, and special events; it also streams live on Sundays, for those who want to join us in real time. These distant partners sometimes replay an anthem or sermon, savoring the mysterious presence of God. Some members of this extended All Saints partnership sign up for a class, write us for spiritual direction, or request a prayer.

Parishioners invite friends and visitors to encounter God's love by the example of their own quiet enthusiasm and dedication.^v We are simultaneously perpetual students in the All Saints

school of Christian love and teachers who lead others by both word and example. We undertake the life of a saint by serving as leaders within the context of our personal dedication to growth and maturation. Wisdom, courage and love are the pathways by which we shepherd others to God's green pastures beside still waters.^{vi}

Integrating God's love in all that we do and all of who we are is the mission of All Saints. Fulfilling the mission of the parish furthers the life-long journey of each individual Christian begun in baptism.^{vii} We fulfill our baptismal vows in a celebration of God's love by seeking the best in one another and affirming the worthiness of all people.^{viii} Refreshed by the fountain of Life, we renounce behavior that divides and demeans. We abandon the parched land of evil^{ix} by resisting the temptation^x of seeking our own preferences and opinions, by forgiving others, and by practicing generosity and humility.^{xi} Striving for excellence, we offer with thanksgiving the results of our efforts, whatever the mistakes or personal disappointments.^{xii} As a Eucharistic community, we build up God's Kingdom one relationship at a time.

SECTION THREE: A DANCE OF LOVE

All Saints is a place of intersection with God,^{xiii} as parishioners lead people into deeper communion with the Trinity.^{xiv} The early Church describes the oneness of the three persons of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as a dance of love.^{xv} This same dance of love within the Trinity continues at All Saints. Through this dance, we strive to incorporate God's love in our relationships with others. The All Saints community permits us to intentionally practice and reflect on the art of nurturing holy and healthy relationships. The purpose of Christian living is itself a dynamic, yet intimate, relationship with the transcendent, which, in turn, draws us into community as God invites us to continuous growth and ever-deepening joy.^{xvi}

All aspects of parish life reflect the fellowship of love we experience in Holy Communion. The All Saints heritage of beautiful music and delicious dinners brings joy and warmth to many. Receptions, picnics, and parties refresh the community by drawing people closer together. The Friends of Benedict group integrates contemplative discernment and daily responsibilities into a disciplined life. At Santa Lucia, members and guests appreciate the beauty of God's creation in our well-kept grounds and outdoor chapel. Our outreach extends the compassion of Christ and strives for justice in a manner that builds relationships between parishioners, the Interfaith Outreach of Carmel, and those we serve. We also work together with our friends at Epiphany Lutheran Episcopal Church in Marina. We continue our sacred tradition of providing food to those who come to our door. Looking beyond our local area, we also build friendships and participate in ministries within our diocese, through the national Episcopal Church, and with our sister congregations in the Middle East and Central America.

SECTION FOUR: THE ALL SAINTS WAY

Our public reputation reflects the warm compassion and committed friendships in the parish. Members and friends of All Saints drink from the life-giving water of Christ's love^{xvii} in frequent engagements of ministry and recreation. Laughter and children's voices greet those who stroll the gardens and grounds, as people of all ages meet together in various configurations of parish

life. Together, we serve as God's urgent invitation for others to participate in this communion of love. People often identify such intimate and affirming interaction as the *All Saints Way*.

The relationship of cooperation and interdependence between the parish and school exemplifies the *All Saints Way*. The parish and day school communities share rich relationships of mutual support. When someone mentions All Saints, people immediately think of both institutions in partnership. The school community experiences the parish as a resource in a variety of ways, including our classes on family living. The parish enjoys the presence of members of the school community, including their participation in the liturgy. Events for these sister communities take place on both campuses, as the school and parish enjoy God's mutual blessings.

SECTION FIVE: A MAGNET DRAWING OTHERS TO ALL SAINTS

Known as a community steeped in Christ's love, we become a magnet drawing others to All Saints. Local people take advantage of the resources of the parish, and vacationers include attending All Saints on their agendas. Classes and conversation groups meet in both the day and evenings, Monday through Saturday, while Sunday is reserved for worship, Sabbath rest, and time for nurturing relationships. The campus is well lit each evening from dusk until 10:00pm as hosts welcome visitors and members to the campus. People linger for conversation before and after class. A clutch of people sharing stories and concerns often congregates in the spacious, newly remodeled kitchen. People enter the chapel throughout the day to observe the stillness or to join in the daily prayers.

The annual Festival of Christian Spirituality has a similar feel to the Carmel Bach Festival. Extending over many days, the Festival includes some combination of lectures, workshops, discussions, practica, drama, performances, and liturgical experiences. Programs for children and teens are included. Each year's theme furthers the festival's mission of celebrating Christ's love and equipping people for healthy, life-giving relationships in the contemporary world. Each year we explore aspects of our relationship to God and to each other. Experts from diverse fields lead components of the Festival, drawing on the diverse traditions both within and beyond the Christian Faith. We join forces with Epiphany (Marina), Church of the Wayfarer (Carmel), and other local faith communities to host the festival. Simultaneous interpretation permits famous international thinkers, spiritual leaders, and politicians to participate in seminal discussions. Such guest speakers offer a wide range of opinions addressing life's deep and urgent issues.

People comment on how many years they have been attending the Festival of Christian Spirituality. The press identifies the Festival as a positive influence in the quality of relationships and occasionally speculates on its influence on key leaders in politics and industry. Friends and family members of all ages credit us with enriching significant relationships; occasionally, teens tell friends how we helped them respond to troubled relationships with their parents.

The influence of both the Festival of Christian Spirituality and our regular All Saints offerings extends well beyond people in Carmel. Groups meeting in diverse alternate locations participate in classes. Individuals and covenant groups use live podcasts, satellite broadcasting, and other

technologies to take advantage of the rich resources All Saints offers to the worldwide community.

SECTION SIX: DEMONSTRATING THE LOVE WE PROFESS

The wholesome and generative relationship of Jesus Christ to God the Father that we experience in the Eucharist underlies all of our transactions. Our Bible Study opens up the foundation of our reflections and practicum on relationships, as we seek God's wisdom and inspiration in the practice of wholesome relationships between well-differentiated individuals. All of our courses and conversation groups are integrative, breaking down the false dualities that fragment society. We are famous for increasing people's appreciation for diversity; our delight in differences engenders respect. We unashamedly base the content of our offerings on the Christian faith and demonstrate the love we profess by showing deep respect for other faith traditions and diverse opinions.

Key to our participation in God's love is our openness to change as individuals and as a parish. A commitment continuously to deepen our Christian faith^{xviii} is apparent to visitors and guests, who witness the transformative quality of relationships within the parish. This is a process of formation: as water conforms to the shape of a container, so God seeks to form us into the image of the Incarnate One. God intends for our lives to reflect the glory of Christ, both in the suffering love of the cross and in the redemption of the resurrection. Our dedication to healthy relationships bears the fruit of spiritual maturity and wisdom, which attracts others to join us. As we journey together into the heart of Christ, we learn by imitating one another, with Jesus Christ as the great exemplar.

Our dedication to integrity in relationships influences people near and far, but it begins with our spiritual leaders: not only our clergy and paid staff, but also our lay leaders and members. As saints, we dedicate ourselves to following the way of love revealed in Jesus Christ, knowing that saints are not without sin or shortcomings, but are those who strive to love God and neighbor.^{xix} As life-long disciples, we automatically serve as both followers and leaders. Leaders and followers together participate in the presence and power of God, as we embody God's invitation for others to join us in building bonds of love and respect. As an act of faith and obedience, we give ourselves to others and thereby present Christ to them. In this way, we serve as stewards of God's mysteries.^{xx}

The name *All Saints* describes our purpose and mission, which derives from the wholeness we experience in Holy Communion. Starting in the liturgy, spreading throughout the life of the parish and our missions, and extending beyond our imagination, we revel in God's transforming love. Through the power of the Holy Spirit,^{xxi} we have become a festival of Christian spirituality in an endless dance of love.^{xxii} This is the *All Saints Way*.

Praise the Father, the Word, and the Spirit,
the three who are one in heaven.
By the Spirit, the water, and the blood
we are saved and share in their life.

Questions to Guide Our Conversation

Where in this vision do you most clearly hear God speaking?

Does this sound like the All Saints you already know and love?

What in this statement makes you feel drawn deeper into the parish?

Is there any part of the vision that sounds inconsistent with your sense of who God wants us to become?

Is there something that might be in the heart of God for All Saints that is absent from this vision?

Would you invite friends to join the All Saints pictured in this document?

Endnotes

ⁱ The real presence of Christ in the elements of bread and wine reflects this same incarnational reality. The matter of bread and wine (the exterior sensory characteristics that Aquinas called the accidents) are wedded to the real presence of the risen Lord. Further, when we take the sacramental presence of Christ into our own body, we follow the Incarnate One who received into his body the anointing Holy Spirit. The Messiah (Hebrew) or Christ (Greek) who is present in the elements by virtue of the power of the Holy Spirit greets the Spirit that dwells with the baptized (i.e. Christians are those anointed by the Holy Spirit).

ⁱⁱ “Those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life” (John 4:14).

ⁱⁱⁱ The New Testament Greek word *koinonia*, which is translated “communion,” also means “fellowship” and “participation.”

^{iv} “There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High” (Psalm 46:5).

^v Parishioners serve as priests bridging the relationship between people and God. “For with your blood you have redeemed for God, from every family, language, people, and nation, a kingdom of priests to serve our God” (Canticle 18, Book of Common Prayer, page 94, and Revelation 5:10). See also, “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9). In ancient Israel, priests offered sacrifices to God on behalf of the people; Jesus transformed this priestly office into one of sacrificing himself for the sake of the world. God the Father received this gift of self-giving love, thereby making the way of the cross to be the way of life. Christians follow Christ’s example of sacrificial love, by taking up the role of “the priesthood of all believers”; See Philippians 2:1-11.

^{vi} Psalm 23:2.

^{vii} John 3:1-10 and Romans 6:3-10.

^{viii} The baptismal covenant is found on pages 304-05 of the Prayer Book, and is supplemented by the Examination (pages 302-03), the Prayers for the Candidates for baptism (pages 305-06) and the Prayer over the Newly Baptized (page 308).

^{ix} “O God, you are my God; eagerly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you, my flesh faints for you, as in a barren and dry land where there is no water” (Psalm 63:1). See also “My soul is athirst for God, athirst for the living God” (Psalm 42:2).

^x Jesus’ temptation is found in Matthew 4:1-11, Mark 1:12-15, and Luke 4:1-13.

^{xi} In his *Ascetical Homilies* Isaac the Syrian calls humility the royal road of the kingdom. See also “The fruits of the Spirit are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control” (Galatians 5:22-23).

^{xii} 1 Corinthians 13:1-13

^{xiii} Exodus 28:10-17 and Hymn 253 (Jacob’s ladder); also John 1:51.

^{xiv} “Holy Father, holy Son, Holy Spirit, Three we name thee, while in essence only One, undivided God we claim thee; then, adoring, bend the knee and confess the mystery” (Hymn 366. v.4).

^{xv} *Perichoresis* is the technical term that describes the relation of the three persons of the Trinity. It means to go around, make space for the other, or dance. The Trinitarian relationship is one of love, in which each honors the other and dwells in the other. Jesus’ message in John 17 reflects this perichoretic quality of interpenetration or co-inherence.

^{xvi} Gregory of Nyssa called this process of continuous growth and formation *epectasis*. Gregory writes, “Participation in the divine good is such that, where it occurs, it makes the participant ever greater and more spacious than before, bringing to it an increase in size and strength, in such wise that the participant, nourished in this way, never stops growing and keeps getting larger and larger. Indeed, as the Source of good keeps flowing and welling up without end, so too the participant, as it becomes larger, grows more and more in desire, by the fact that nothing that it receives is lost or left unused, and everything that flows in produces an increase in capacity. Thus the two are functions of each other: the potency that is nourished grows by the reception of the good, and the nourishing Source keeps overflowing as the increased store of goods becomes ever greater. It is clear, then, how large it can become, since there is no limit to stop its growth.” From *The Soul and Resurrection* quoted in *From Glory to Glory: Texts from Gregory of Nyssa’s Mystical Writing*.

^{xvii} “On the last day of the festival, the great day, while Jesus was standing there, he cried out, ‘Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, and let the one who believes in me drink. As the scripture has said, “Out of the believer’s heart shall flow rivers of living water”’ (John 7:37-38). The Oxford Annotated Bible makes (in part) the following comment about this verse, “For seven days water was carried in a golden pitcher from the Pool of Siloam to the temple as a reminder of the water from the rock in the desert (Num 20.2-13), and as a symbol of hope for the coming Messianic deliverance (Isa 12.3). Jesus is the true water of life, who turns the symbol into reality” (Isa 44.3; 55.1).

^{xviii} “Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Beloved, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but this one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3: 12-13).

^{xix} See Matthew 22:34-40 where Jesus gives the summary of the law and the prophets by quoting Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18. See also Matthew 19:23-26 for a teaching by Jesus on the relationship of our works to God's grace in terms of who can be saved. .

^{xx} "Think of us this way, as servants of Christ and stewards of God's mysteries" (1 Corinthians 4:7).

^{xxi} "The kingdom of God is not food and drink, but righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Romans 14:17).

^{xxii} "Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor" (Romans 12:9-10). "The kingdom of God is not food and drink, but righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Romans 14:17).

Report Submitted to the Vestry by the Vision Task Force – August 23, 2008

*Mike Thomas (facilitator), Nan Borreson, Sheila Camacho, Nancy Collins,
Lee Larimer, Leann Keaton, Michele Rench, Jim Shillinglaw,
Donald Williamson (representing the community at large), and Fr. Rick Matters*