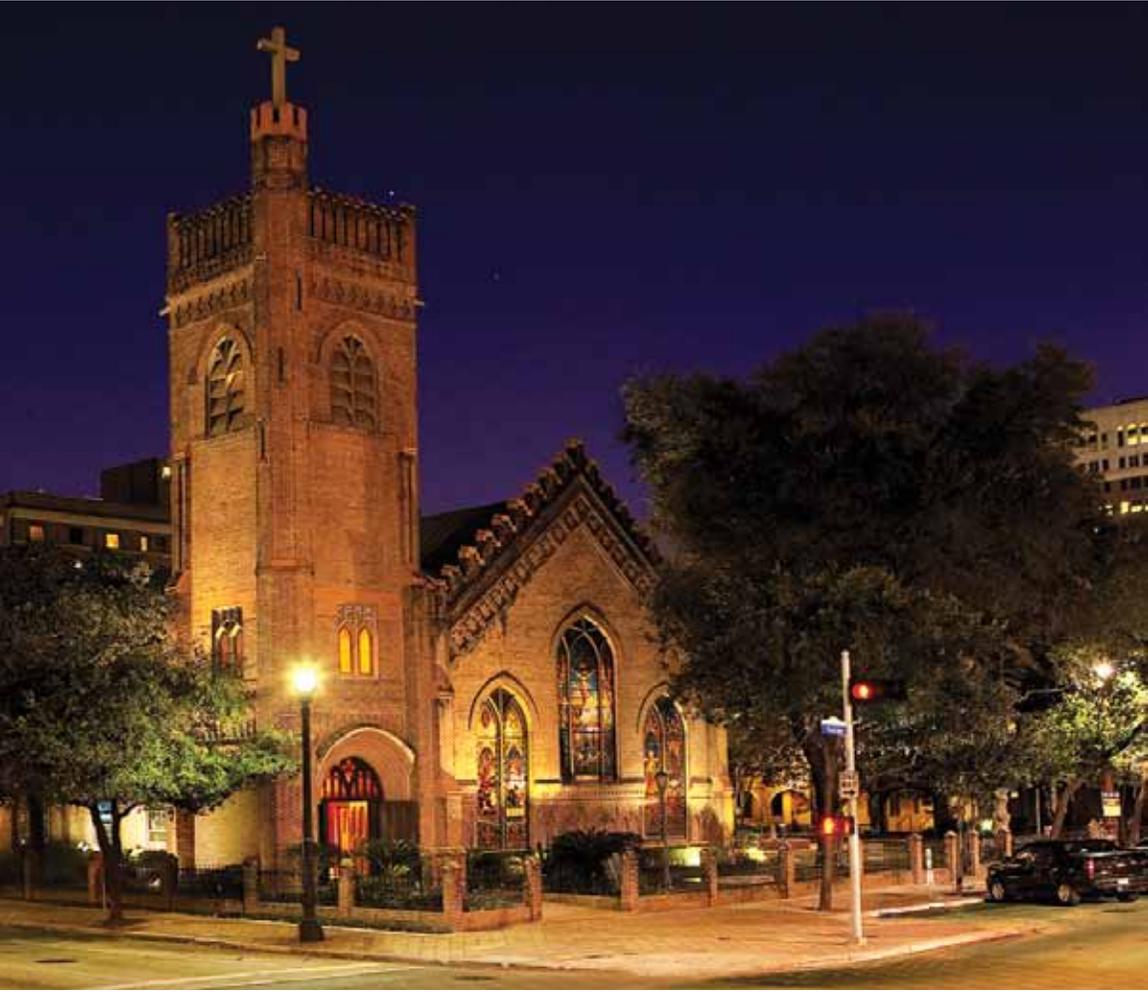




a future filled with hope



christ church cathedral  
vision action plan 2014 – 2015

**S**ince September 2013, Christ Church Cathedral has focused on a theme spoken by God to the Prophet Jeremiah: *“For surely I know the plans I have for you, to give you a future filled with hope.”* At Christ Church Cathedral, we have embraced God’s promise as our own. God has planned a bright and hope-filled future for us as a parish, as the cathedral of our Diocese, and as a beacon of God’s very presence in downtown Houston. Our responsibility to God’s promise is to engage in conversation and prayer about what God’s plans for us might include.

We have done exactly that. Last fall, more than 250 parishioners participated in our “visioning charrettes,” hosted by the Visioning Task Force. The charrettes were designed to discern God’s vision for Christ Church. Each charrette session was lively, and ultimately we gathered two thousand ideas from parishioners!

The Visioning Task Force prayerfully studied the charrette ideas and developed ministry initiatives from them, and on January 25, 2014, the Vestry adopted a two-year Vision Action Plan for the Cathedral’s future. The components that follow are the result of the earnest desires of the many who participated in the visioning charrettes, the careful and deliberate work of the Visioning Task Force, and the prayerful consideration of the Vestry.

This plan will succeed due to the faith of the Cathedral and the grace of God, who has prepared for us **“a future filled with hope.”**



## Pastoral Care

# nurturing a culture of vulnerability

**Target:** *Calendar Year 2014*

Last summer's "Vestry Comfort Calls" revealed dozens of pastoral care concerns and life transitions of which Cathedral clergy were previously unaware. Those calls led to heartfelt conversations about pastoral care during our visioning charrettes. Parishioners expressed a desire for what can be termed a "culture of vulnerability" in which pastoral care is understood as the sharing of life's joys and burdens rather than merely hospital visitation. Consequently, we are adding an additional staff member to assist our Canon Pastor, and we will launch a new lay pastoral care program in which a team of parishioners is extensively trained in one of several nationally recognized pastoral care formation programs. These trained lay pastoral caregivers will be assigned strategically to areas of the city in which clusters of parishioners live, so that pastoral care is always close at hand.

Additionally, we will create a "human resource database" for the Cathedral, in which parishioners with particular professional skills (attorneys, counselors, accountants, tutors, physicians, mechanics, etc.) can donate their time and expertise to fellow parishioners in need. The Canon Pastor's office will serve as the matchmaker for this program, ensuring that real need is met.

Finally, the Cathedral will introduce an After-Hours Emergency Pastoral Care Phone so that a priest is never more than a phone call away in case of true pastoral emergency.

## Community Life

# Reaching the neighborhoods

**Target:** *Calendar Year 2014*

The visioning charrettes revealed that many Cathedral parishioners outside of the downtown area crave ways to engage their faith within the Cathedral community, but find it difficult to travel downtown to the Cathedral on days other than Sunday. In response, we will launch a pilot program to "bring the Cathedral to the neighborhoods." Prayer groups, Bible studies and fellowship opportunities for Cathedral parishioners will be offered where you live, across the Houston metropolitan area.

## Welcome and Evangelism

# reaching out to downtown

**Target:** *Calendar Year 2014*

According to Central Houston, Inc., there are 25,000 people living within one-half mile of downtown Houston. Within the next five years, more than 2,350 additional residential housing units will be built downtown. Christ Church Cathedral is one of few downtown houses of worship.



The visioning charrettes underscored a desire to grow the Cathedral numerically by reaching out to downtown residents.

Through a coordinated welcome campaign, the Cathedral will reach out actively to downtown residents through a redesigned website, social networking, print media and other creative means. The addition to the Cathedral staff of a full-time Canon for Welcome and Evangelism will ensure that we have the human resources to support these efforts.

## Outreach

# expanding the BEACON'S mission

**Target:** *Calendar Year 2014*

The visioning charrettes reinforced that Cathedral parishioners support the essential ministry of the Beacon. In 2014, the Episcopal social service organization Community of the Streets (COTS) will redirect its resources and merge with The Beacon as part of an expanded effort to eliminate chronic homelessness in downtown Houston. The consolidation of leadership and financial support is the result of thoughtful planning



to realize greater efficiencies and create better client outcomes. Beginning in April, The Beacon will open two hours earlier, and will increase its operations to five days a week, providing an additional day of meals, laundry, showers and case management for our homeless clients. The Beacon's expanded case management services will be critical to Houston's Continuum of Care strategy to move chronically homeless people into permanent housing, with support services matched to their individual needs.

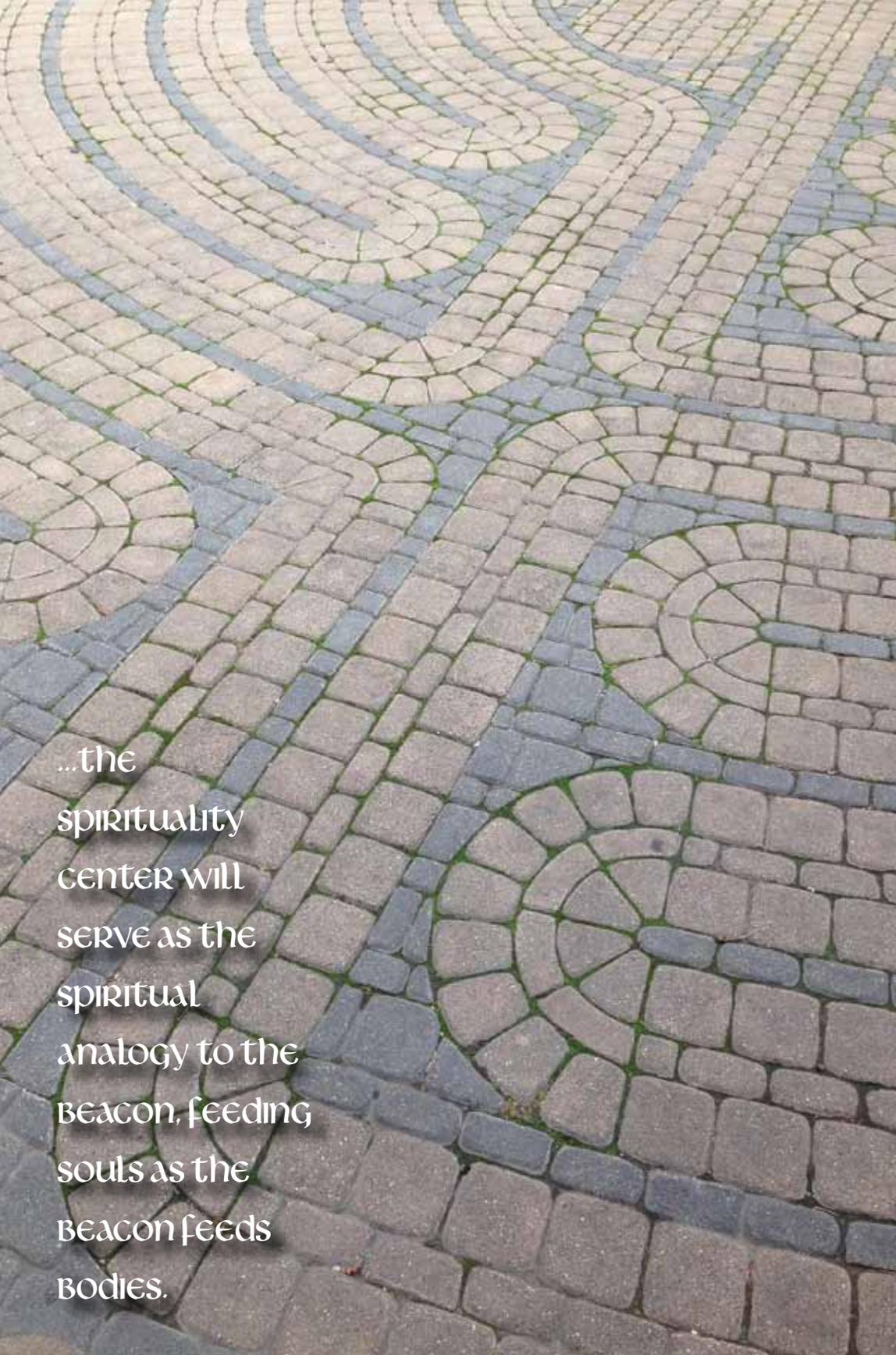
## Worship

# a new and ancient liturgy

**Target:** *Calendar Year 2015*

One of the most frequently mentioned ideas from the visioning charrettes was a desire for an additional weekend opportunity for worship, in addition to (and not instead of) our glorious Sunday morning Cathedral services. There was a remarkable consistency regarding what that alternative worship service should and should not include. Parishioners want worship that is contemplative, thoughtful, quiet and rooted in ancient Christian tradition, not a contemporary “praise and worship” service. The Visioning Task Force has begun investigating several successful Episcopal services offered in other cities, including a Celtic Eucharist and choral Compline. Dean Thompson will commission a committee of parishioners and staff to continue that study, and ultimately to plan and implement the new worship service. The most likely time for the new worship service is Sunday evening, and it will be accompanied by a weekly parish meal, so that parishioners can break bread together regularly in table fellowship. This new worship service will also serve as another method of reaching out to the influx of downtown residents.





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# Spirituality Center

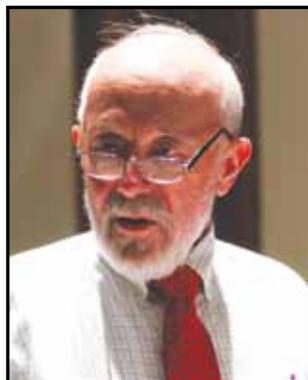
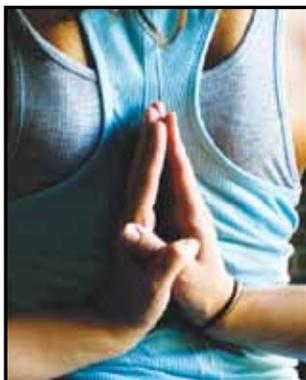
## OUR ENTIRE LIVES IN CONNECTION WITH GOD

Target: *Calendar Year 2015*

**m**ore than anything else, the visioning charrettes revealed the spiritual hunger of Cathedral parishioners. Participants expressed a desire to know more about God and to connect with God through spiritual practices such as labyrinth, iconography, centering prayer, Christian yoga and more. As a result, the most ambitious and forward-thinking part of the Vestry's Visioning Action Plan is the decision in principal to create a Spirituality Center for the Cathedral. Through its programs, the Spirituality Center will serve as the spiritual analogy to The Beacon, feeding souls as The Beacon feeds bodies.

Not only will the Spirituality Center provide opportunities for prayer and learning for our parishioners, it will also serve as a powerful evangelism tool to reach out to those who live or will soon live in downtown Houston. As Dean Thompson shared with the Vestry at its recent retreat, for the Millennial Generation (adults under age 35) the very notion of "membership" in organizations, including religious organizations, is changing. Young adults find their connection points in places other than traditional, weekly worship. The Spirituality Center, like the new contemplative worship service, will provide those connection points through its programs. The Spirituality Center will be at the leading edge of what it means to be the Church in the 21st Century.

The investigative and planning process for the Spirituality Center will be careful and extensive, in order best to ensure its success. We will seek and utilize the expertise of those who have established vibrant spirituality centers in other parishes to inform and help guide our plans. We will tailor our Center to serve the needs of the downtown community and our parish at large.





christ church cathedral  
1117 texas avenue  
houston, texas 77002  
[www.christchurchcathedral.org](http://www.christchurchcathedral.org)