

**Report on Saturday Listening Workshop for Long Range Planning and  
Vision – Jan. 21, 2012  
Conducted by Jim Richardson**

Methodology: Participants read the summary of the task force report and then spent about 45 minutes discussing their observations and insights from reading it. They were asked to refrain from problem solving, and instead focus on the trends and issues they saw in the report.

Next, participants were asked to generate questions in writing from their previous discussion. The questions were then lumped by the participants into five categories. Participants self-selected to spend about an hour in a small group looking at the questions grouped in a specific category and boiling it down to a single question that encapsulated the issue.

Participants came back together to offer observations, insights and possible solutions to the categories. In the final session, participants were free to talk about their own category or any other. Here are the issue questions that were developed by each small group, followed by some of the comments in the final session that went with each questions:

**1. How do we keep the traditional strengths of liturgy while incorporating more experiential practices including more silence and progressive language and the arts?**

*“We should have a lay and clergy group look at changing liturgical language.”*

*“We should have more involvement at every level by lay people in the liturgy.”*

*“People talk too much during the preludes they should be silent for the prelude and postlude.”*

*“Longer silence during the ‘moment of silence.’ ”*

*“Faith is not left-brained you have to experience it.”*

*“We need more experiential worship.”*

*“We don’t have to fill every silence with music.”*

*“Experiential questions and generational questions are linked. Part of the shoals we are going over requires listening carefully to how different people of different generations experience God in worship – this is the central battleground of change in our community.”*

*“We need to incorporate new innovative technology in what we do in worship.”*

**2. How can we better foster encounters with the mystery of God, meeting people where they are in all their diversity – different generations; different religious traditions/church and unchurched; different learning styles – to enable and equip them on their spiritual journey? (everything else follows)**

*“Let’s connect more with people in their homes – it is more difficult for us to have large gatherings (because of parking). People could commit to meeting once a month in homes like what Community night does.”*

*“People feel overwhelmed with too much.”*

*“Older people become marginalized because they can’t get to church. We need to drive people to church.”*

*“The elderly population will double. We need to think about how we will serve them.”*

*“Move the annual meeting back to the daytime.”*

*“The way we speak and the way new generations are growing up are totally different. We need to learn a new language.”*

**3. How do we act boldly as a Church and as individuals in response to God’s call for social justice?**

*“We acted boldly on race years ago. It is time we acted boldly on social justice.”*

*“We need to do more with environmental stewardship.”*

**4. Is our mission primarily to the students of the University of Virginia, or does it include the larger University community?**

*“Do we neglect others in the University community? I would like our university ministry to integrate everything we do.”*

*“I would like us to hear student voices. Let’s focus more on students and not the whole university community.”*

**5. How do we connect and engage all generations – both individually and collectively – in the everyday life of St. Paul’s and use the schedule and facilities to their maximum?**

*“We aren’t very good stewards of the building in between the services. The building could be a playground to try interesting stuff.”*

*“People after the 8 am service could come back to do things.”*

*“We could have adult education in between the two morning services.”*

*“The walls are a big blank space. Let’s put a mural on the wall. Simple.”*

*“At St. Paul’s we are afraid of failure. We need a framework for experimentation and evaluation. We need room to try new things for a fixed period of time.”*