

**CHURCH OF THE ADVENT,
EPISCOPAL**

*A bridge to a better life through
Christ*

**Parish Plan
2005-2007**

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THE GREAT COMMISSION

And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded them. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Matthew 28:18-20

OUR MISSION

To be the **very best we can be** at implementing *The Great Commission* in the Northwest Valley.

OUR VISION

Advent; a bridge to a better life through Christ.

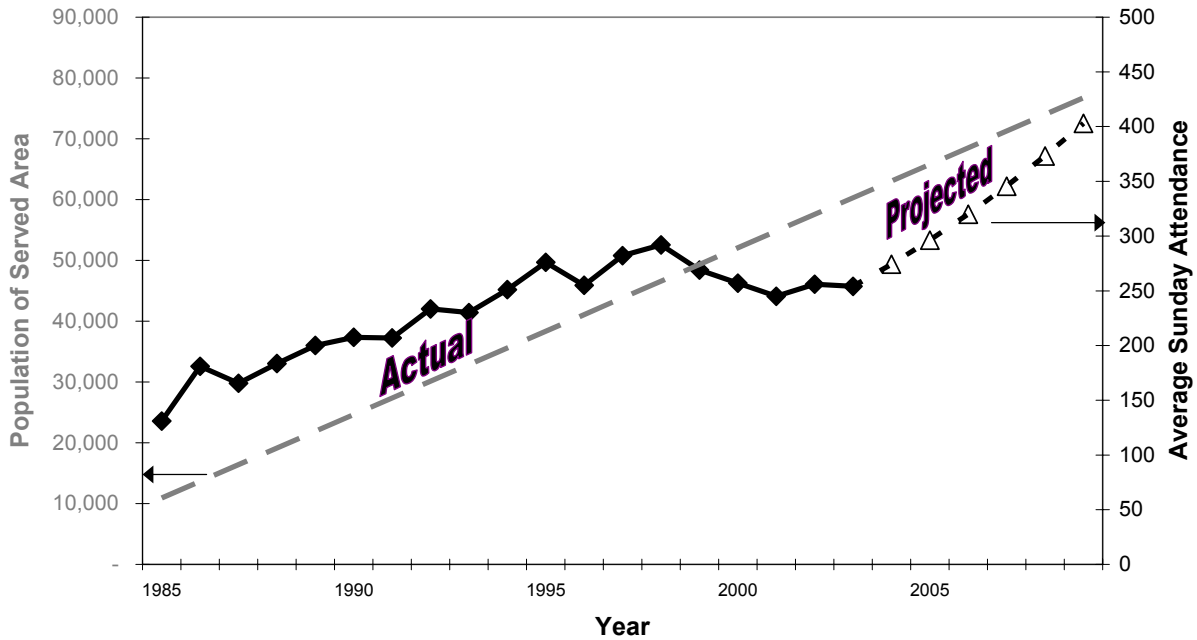
This bridge is realized through our worship, evangelism, ministry, outreach, study, fellowship, stewardship and fun -- as a family in Christ.

BACKGROUND

From its founding in 1979, Advent grew steadily at an average rate of over 10%/year in attendance and membership with corresponding growth in financial support. This growth mirrored the increase in population of the area.

Beginning in 1999 and continuing through 2004, there was a steady decline in attendance of approximately 4% per year. This occurred in spite of Advent's serving an area whose population has continued to grow at greater than 5%/year to the present. Figure 1 compares our attendance versus the population of our immediate area.

Figure 1
Population and Attendance

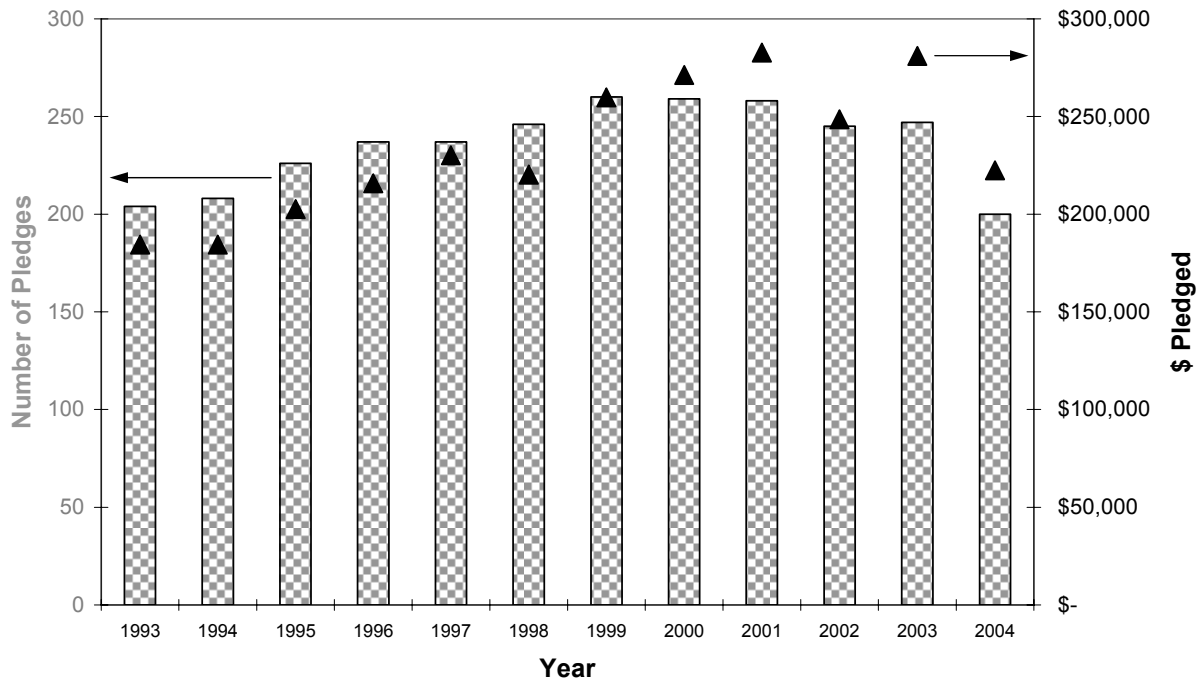


A corresponding decline in financial support resulted, culminating with a drop to \$225,000 in projected income for 2004. This is shown in Figure 2. In response to this decline, the Vestries of the past three years have cut expenses. As a result, we have come to a point where:

- We are having to postpone important maintenance and upkeep,
- We cannot afford an associate pastor whose services are needed to minister to the needs of our congregation,
- No funds are available for evangelism to sustain and grow our parish family,
- We have had to drop a significant portion of our outreach ministry,
- We have had to drop some important ministries for our parish family such as Good Mourning,
- We have not been able to meet our financial obligation to our Diocese.

If we do not move decisively to reverse the trends, the parish will not be able to sustain itself, let alone have the resources to find and call a new Rector. Many explanations for this change of fortune have been offered. Suffice to say that much is self inflicted, through internal issues within the parish. The objective of this plan is not to dwell on the reasons, rather to set forth a plan that implements the will of the parish family to renew its mission to spread God's word in the area we serve.

Figure 2
Pledge Statistics



THE OPPORTUNITY

It is clear that there is an opportunity for us, Church of the Advent, to re-energize ourselves with a renewed Mission and Vision. The current membership desires to grow in numbers and ministry. A demographic analysis of the area we serve, prepared by Percept Inc, that we serve verifies that:

- The majority of the population in our served area is retired or semi retired seniors, the strength of Advent's ministry.
- The financial resources to grow all aspects of our ministry are available, given that in 2002, the average family income of this area is over \$60,000/year.
- We can grow our Parish without counting on taking people from other denominations, given that the population is projected to grow from the present 55,000 to 90,000 in 2009
- Advent is the only Episcopal Church in this area and is in a convenient location, accessible within less than 15 minutes of the entire area.
- Of the people living in and moving into this area who are receptive to involvement in churches, the people who live in Sun City West are most likely to follow traditional worship style. The data seem to indicate that the people living in the other areas Advent serves have some preference for more contemporary worship style.

We, Church of the Advent, have done little to evangelize within the area we project to serve. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), with a similar worship style to the Episcopal Church, but with an active evangelism program, now has 3 parishes serving the same area as Advent. The first was founded in the same time frame as Advent and has average Weekly

attendance of approximately double Advent's. Two additional ELCA parishes have been founded since. The one in Sun City Grand is already at capacity with no room to grow and the newest ELCA church in Surprise just started with almost 300 worshipers on its first Sunday in September of 2004.

Referring to back to Figure 1, if we simply project that we can attract the same percentage of the population of our target area as we did in the past, it is clear that there is an opportunity for Advent to grow at 8 %/year in membership and attendance for at least the next 5 years.

We have a beautiful facility with worship space that can handle double the present Advent weekly attendance. As we grow and add a second clergy person, we can add services. We have sufficient land area to accommodate additional fellowship and learning space as well as additional worship space if needed.

We will succeed to the extent that we have the personal and corporate resolve to reach out to our entire community for new members. This means actively reaching outside Sun City West to the city of Surprise and unincorporated areas. In a recent polling of the congregation, the majority of those who responded expressed a desire

- To increase attendance and membership by over 50% over the next 3-5 years.
- To focus on ministries and programs for seniors.
- To continue and improve our Pastoral services to congregation.
- To add adult Christian Education to our parish programs.
- To continue and expand our fellowship opportunities.

The facility, the population growth, the will of the present members and other positive indicators point an opportunity to implement our Mission and achieve our Vision. We have the full support of our Diocese in this undertaking.

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

We have established a Mission and Vision for Church of the Advent. We understand our opportunity. We now deal with the specific action plan and timeframe to achieve those goals.

BECOME ONE –

- Confront and overcome the issues that divide us. The Vestry will hire an Interim Pastor to serve until a new Rector is selected. This person will have skills to assist us in this process. Our Interim will be in place in the first quarter of 2005.
- Unite behind
 - Our Parish plan
 - Our Search Committee
 - Our new Rector.
- Become One with Advent as our *Bridge to a better life through Christ*.

PASTORAL EXCELLENCE – We must minister to the needs of our Parish family as well as reach out to our community as ministers of Christ. To this end, we need to bring in spiritual

leaders that will minister with us, equipping us to implement our Mission as well as provide for our pastoral needs.

- **RECTOR** – Our most important task as we set out to implement this plan is to find the right person to be our spiritual and pastoral leader. We must understand that we desire a priest whose skills and experience will command a well above average compensation package. Our goal is to have our new Rector in place by mid 2006 but will take whatever time is necessary to select the right person for Advent. We have selected and commissioned a Search Committee that has committed to work diligently and prayerfully; we, the Church of the Advent are committed to unite behind them through daily prayer and encouragement. We anticipate the process to take up to 2 years and cost around \$60,000.
- **PASTORAL ASSOCIATE** – A pastoral associate is needed to minister to our needs and to assist with our mission. Addition of an Assistant to the Rector is projected for early to mid 2007. It is clear that we need an associate today. This need will become more acute as we grow our congregation.

EVANGELISM– Increased attendance and membership together are the key indicators of success in implementing our Mission, the Great Commission. At the same time, we must do all in our power to retain members who come to Advent. It will enable us to support our other ambitious goals.

- **Worship** – Consider implementing worship options that make people more comfortable with our worship at Advent.
 - Additional Service(s) such as Saturday or Sunday evening
 - Incorporate liturgy options and music into one or more services to broaden the appeal of Advent.
 - Retain the traditional style in some services to appeal to those to whom familiarity makes their worship meaningful.
- **Welcoming** - People who visit from the area and who receive follow up by lay people and clergy are almost 90% sure to return to the church according to several studies.
 - We must get our name in front of potential parishioners in order to get the first visit.
 - We will place advertisements in various local media as soon as the end of 2004 as part of this plan.
 - We will improve Advent Website by the end of 2004. Data indicate that a significant number of people now find their church on the Internet particularly in growing areas like we serve.
 - We will expand our evangelism ministry to develop programs to find and retain new members.
 - We will form a welcoming team, who will be charged with following up with potential parishioners to ensure that they become engaged in activities of the parish and exploring ways to reach out to additional potential parishioners.
 - The clergy will follow up as an integral part of the evangelism team.
 - Incorporation of new members is one of the keys to being welcoming. New members must be informed of the educational, ministerial and fellowship opportunities in Advent. To prospective members, we often appear to be unwelcoming, without meaning to, because we forget that they do not know what

is available and are not invited to join in. To this end, our evangelism team will prepare a prospective member package that will include the profile of the congregation, and descriptions of the Education, Ministry and Fellowship opportunities within Advent.

- Retention - We must ensure that we are meeting the spiritual, pastoral and fellowship needs of the family of Advent. The key here is to listen; be aware of, and provide for needs and concerns of parishioners.
 - Pastoral follow-up
 - Lay follow-up
 - Communication
 - Openness
 - Willingness for all of us, especially parish leaders, to address issues at early stages.

EDUCATION, MINISTRY AND FELLOWSHIP - Education is how we equip ourselves to be ministers of Christ's word and example. Ministry is carrying the knowledge we acquire into the community to implement the Great Commission. Fellowship is our interaction with each other reinforcing our community as Ministers of Christ. The three model the life of the early Apostles.

- **ORGANIZATION**- Church of the Advent has many wonderful ministries and fellowship activities. **“Working together, we are better”** is very appropriate to Advent. In order to be effective in our ministry, we must have our activities focused on our Mission and Vision. The Vestry has committed itself to coordinating the various activities to ensure that we are working together and that each is appropriately resourced and coordinated to the mission of The Church of the Advent. To accomplish this, the key activities within the parish have been grouped by common function and mission within the parish. A member of the Vestry is responsible for each group. At each Vestry meeting there will be a report on what is happening within each group and what resources are needed. Appendix 1 is the Ministry Group Organization Chart. By the end of the first quarter of 2005, each group and ministry will have a description of its mission, a description of its activities, its interaction with other ministries and its key objectives. This information will be included in the new member package as well as for the Vestry in coordinating the activities of Advent. The Goal of this effort is to make our existing Education, Ministry and Fellowship activities more effective. In particular, we will work to coordinate common ministry activities between various groups within our church.
- **NEW MINISTRIES** - We have identified some additional education, ministry and fellowship opportunities. These will be organized under the Ministry Group concept described previously.
 - Adult Forum – We will establish a regular program, led by clergy, for us to discuss and learn more about our faith, study current events, topics in the church and air concerns. This will be a key responsibility of our Interim Pastor.
 - Bible Study – Our Bible Study is inactive. It will be restarted.
 - Good Mourning – This was a powerful Ministry to those who lost a loved one. It was open to non members of Advent and was therefore also an outreach ministry. This was discontinued by the 2003 Vestry as a necessary budget cutting measure. This ministry will be restarted in 2005.
 - Worship – A team of people from music, liturgy, and the congregation will join the clergy to explore and make recommendations on improving and expanding our overall worship experience. This will be accomplished before the end of 2004.

- Education For Ministry (EFM) – Is a powerful education program that includes extensive study of scripture and teachings of the church. We will determine if there is a need and capability for this powerful opportunity to become more effective ministers of God’s word and practice.
- Stephen Ministry – Is an education program to equip lay people to assist fellow parishioners in pastoral situations. We will determine if there is a need and desire to incorporate important pastoral service for our congregation.
- Alpha– A ministry program to inform new Christians and reinforce the faith of those who are already Christians. Will it work at Advent?
- Newcomers Fellowship – There is a group in formation where newcomers to Advent meet once per month in an informal setting to share experiences, get to know each other and Advent. It is a valuable group to bring people into community with Advent and is a springboard to other activities.
- Others – The Parish profile process will identify specific additional education, ministry and fellowship areas to be explored.
- Organization – Any new ministry formed will have a Charter and functional description and work within our overall Ministry Organization under a Vestry liaison.

STEWARDSHIP- As people of God, we are obligated to practice Stewardship with our time talent and treasure to support God’s work through our Church, Advent. Likewise we as the Church of the Advent must practice stewardship through our Outreach. We are specifically commanded through scripture to give 10% off the top. Thus, we should Tithe before we take on other obligations. Likewise, as a parish, we should Tithe of our time, talent and treasure in our good works in and for the community.

- **OUTREACH** – Outreach is Stewardship! Advent will strive to Tithe to Outreach, that is, give 10% of its annual income to Outreach. The contributions of all groups within Advent will count toward this goal. In addition, Advent will continue and expand its tradition of time and talent outreach such as the work of the Craft Groups in ECW and the labor of Men’s Club to Habitat for Humanity. Outreach one key step in being Christ in the community and implementing the Great Commission. It is a cornerstone of our ***Bridge to a better life through Christ***. Our outreach activities of the organizations of the parish will be coordinated through the ministry organization described above as well as communicated to the community through our publicity committee. Outreach is a powerful tool for our Evangelism goals through its visibility in the community.
 - An overall coordinator for all of the outreach efforts now offered through Advent groups will be in place before the end of 2004.
 - Outreach will be a budget item for 2005. While our goal is 10%, 2005 and 2006 will be years where we work toward that goal, balancing other needs of Advent.
 - Our outreach projects will be limited in number such that what we give is enough to make a difference.
- **OBLIGATION** – In 2004, it was necessary to ask the Diocese of Arizona for partial relief from our Diocesan “Fair Share” Assessment due to our not having enough pledged money to cover operating expenses. The Bishop granted this request, asking us to put forth our best effort to give what is possible and make up the difference as soon as possible. The Diocese does a lot of outreach as well as supporting a number of Missions in areas that

cannot support a parish, thus our offering to this effort is important in our Mission as well as realizing our Vision of *Bridge to a better life through Christ*. At present, the estimated reduction of our 2004 Fair Share Assessment amounts to about \$15,000. We will repay the shortfall, in addition to paying our Fair Share by the end of 2007.

- ENDOWMENT – Building Advent’s endowment is a key goal of this plan. The endowment committee will develop a plan to accomplish this by the end of the first quarter of 2005, with specific steps to accomplish realistic goals.
- BUDGET - If we are to implement this plan, we must support it financially. For 2005, the amount will be \$380,000. Appendix 2 details our projected budgets for 2005-7. Clearly, we need to convince ourselves that this money will be spent responsibly and for the good of the Church and in support of its Mission.

Let’s look at the key elements of these budgets.

- Principal Clergy Expense - This number includes salary, housing, employers social security contribution, pension, health insurance, disability insurance, auto and church related out of pocket expenses. This may seem high; however, there is a well publicized shortage of clergy that has been confirmed by our diocesan deployment officer, Canon Greeley. Further, our standards for experience, preaching quality and overall administrative capability mean that this is a very likely number will put us at the upper end of the range, that is, if we really want the best
- Second Clergy Expense - Our workload is already sufficient where we really need a second priest to assist with pastoral care, teaching, home visitations etc. For the coming year, we will use supply clergy but will budget a full time associate for 2007.
- Facility upkeep, and upgrades – We have some major maintenance projects that have been postponed but that need to be addressed. If we do not address these, we could incur even greater costs in future years. For example, our carpet is old and needs replacement, the wall around the facility needs to be cleaned and painted, etc.
 - Our HVAC system is in need of some significant work to reduce noise that distracts our worship and to ensure that it doesn’t fail.
 - We need to begin building a reserve for major costs that are likely such as HVAC replacement, roof, paving etc.
 - General maintenance projects like refinishing the great doors, organ tuning and upkeep etc.
- General costs – Insurance, and utilities continue to rise in cost well beyond the general rate of inflation.
- Office expenses –
 - Our computers, software and peripherals are getting old and need to be upgraded to keep up with our growth.
 - Our work load is such that we will need to increase staff or outsource such tasks as producing the Luminary.
 - We need to resume monthly publication of the Luminary. This is our main communication tool with our congregation.
- Outreach – We need to think in terms of our strategic commitment to 10% of our income for outreach. With a \$380,000 budget, this would be \$38,000; however, we will work toward the goal at the end of the plan period.

- Evangelism – We are committing ourselves to an aggressive evangelism program that reaches out to our greater community. This means that we must let people know that we are here.
 - Promotion and Publicity– The Publicity Committee that deals with this is charged with developing a plan including ways to measure the effectiveness of these expenditures
 - Space Advertising in papers, phone books and community publications.
 - Web Page – more and more people are using the internet for finding everything including a new church. A good Web Page is also vital in the Rector Search Process. We need about \$10,000 to upgrade our web page, have it available on the internet and get it listed with the major search engines such as Google, Yahoo, etc. In future years, we need to count on at least \$3,000/year just to maintain it.
 - Print this plan, with the Parish Profile incorporated to both attract the right Rector as well as bring in new members.
- Diocesan support. – Our fair share assessment is 16.9% of our operating budget of the prior year. This will be \$54,000 for 2004. Our budget assumes that we will get further relief while we are in the expensive search process. We have committed to remit any unspent search cost to pay down our indebtedness to the Diocese.
- Search Cost – we are estimating that our search cost for a new Rector, including visits, relocation, advertising etc. will be some \$60,000.
 - Full exploration of the needs of Advent
 - Nationwide Search to open our selves to the range of candidates that are available, ensuring that we can attract the best.
 - Expenditures to ensure that the candidates are what they seem to be.
 - Visits to their present parish
 - Visits of the candidates to Advent
 - Thorough background and suitability checks to ensure the candidates are what they appear.
- PERSONAL STEWARDSHIP – To make this happen, we, Church of the Advent must do our part in sharing our Time, Talent and Treasure.
 - Our time and talent is needed to staff the aggressive evangelism, teaching and outreach goals. We will need many more hours of volunteer work to implement these aggressive goals. These goals are set forth as the necessary steps to achieve our vision.
 - As much as we do not like to talk about money, the simple fact is that to accomplish what we have laid out requires a budget of \$380,000 for 2005. If we cannot support this budget, we are back in the in having to do less that what we have said we want to do.
 - In 2004, the pledge commitment of the parish consisted of 204 pledges totaling \$225,000 or \$1,100 per pledge.
 - As recently as 2003, pledges totaled almost \$280,000.
 - Advent has about 375 families on its membership list.
 - The Episcopal Church national average pledge was \$1,726 in 2002 and is estimated to be in excess of \$1,800 per pledge for 2005.

- Percept, reporting on US Census data states that the average income of the 55,000 people that live in areas we serve, is just over \$60,000/year. This is about the national average income which is the basis of the average across the US for the Episcopal Church.
- If the same families that pledged for 2004, pledge the average for the Episcopal Church, we will have \$367,200 in pledged income, we can just barely fund this budget. If 50 people who didn't pledge in 2003 to pledge for 2005 and the average pledge is \$1,540 we can fund this budget. And so on.

Whatever the response, our need is well below what we are instructed by scripture to give and below the average giving for the Episcopal Church. If we hear the Holy Spirit and act, any extra money pledged will enable us to move up the schedule on the Associate Pastor and other needs of the Parish and the community.

MEASUREMENT – This is an ambitious plan for Advent. It is important that each of us understands how we are doing. Over the last quarter of 2004 and the first quarter of 2005, we will develop some key measures of our progress. The Vestry will post these on a special bulletin board called *“Building the Bridge.”*

CONCLUSION

What is set forth here is an aggressive but achievable plan to fulfill our Mission and realize our Vision. It is not business as usual! It will be hard but rewarding work to strengthen all aspects of our parish and community life. The two keys to this plan are,

- Evangelize in our broad community;
- Become better stewards of all that God has given us.

Through this plan, by 2007 we will have a parish serving the spiritual and pastoral needs of over 700 families and have an average weekly Eucharist attendance of over 350.

Advent's future is in our hands. With the God's help we are

A bridge to a better life through Christ.

And He said to them, “Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation.”

Mark 16:15