



INSTITUTE FOR THEOLOGICAL STUDIES AT ST. MARGARET'S

The Institute For Theological Studies at St. Margaret's

Five-Year Strategic Plan

2011-2015

January 1, 2011

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Mission and Identity

The Institute for Theological Studies at St. Margaret's is a ministry of St. Margaret's Episcopal Church, established for the benefit of the community and the wider church. Our overarching aim is to promote "faith with understanding." To that end, we hope that our Institute can become an important theological presence in our city of Little Rock, and a resource for intellectual and spiritual vitality in the Episcopal Church.

One could characterize our distinctive theological identity as "classical, with a little bit of cutting edge." By "classical," we mean that, in considering important questions, we look first to the great learning of the Christian theological tradition. Often, we find there a spiritual wisdom and intellectual acuity that can transcend our modern liberal-fundamentalist divisions. Theologians such as Thomas Aquinas, Julian of Norwich, and Richard Hooker still have much to teach us.

For "cutting edge," we have one of our areas of program emphasis especially in mind—the field of Theology and Science, in which our current director wrote his doctoral dissertation.

Structure

Why an "Institute"? The ITSSM supplies a structure for the planning, development and delivery of a variety of programs, for a diverse set of constituencies, both in and beyond the parish.

We have been chartered by the Vestry of St. Margaret's, and given our own officers and board. We operate a website, have our own budget, and a fund-raising vehicle in Spiritus, Inc., a non-profit corporation.

One of the first actions of the Institute was creation of the Guild. The Guild is a community of well-informed teachers and learners, joined by commitment to our goal of faith with understanding. Members are inducted after having completed the Guild Seminar, which offers an in-depth introduction to the Christian theological tradition.

Over the long-run, the Guild will become perhaps the most critical strategic component of this plan. First, this is because of the role the Guild plays as a source of teachers and program leaders. Our teaching ministry will be led by members who hold advanced degrees in theology, or who have completed Education for Ministry (EFM), or who have presented a Guild Paper on a topic relevant to the area in which they teach. Secondly, as will be seen below, the Guild will in due course assume responsibility for the ITSSM and the continuation of its mission.

By these means, the Institute can offer stability, financial reach, and a capacity for innovation that go beyond what could normally be expected of a parish Christian Education structure. Moreover, these components are designed to allow the Institute to exist and serve beyond the tenure of its current leaders, to the continued benefit of St. Margaret's, the community, and the wider church.

Constituencies and Program

In developing our program, the Institute will have four constituencies particularly in mind. They are (1) a theologically curious public; (2) a spiritually maturing congregation; (3) clergy; and (4) youth. Through this section, we will look at these groups and the kinds of programs we envision for each.

Four Constituencies



A Theologically Curious Public

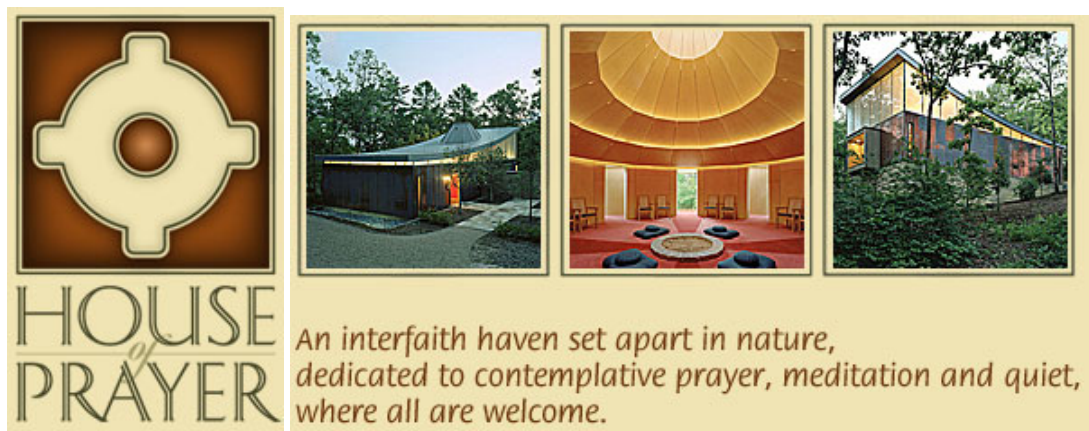
Whom might we have in mind?

We are thinking of people in central Arkansas, and elsewhere, who are curious about God. They may or may not believe in God, may or may not call themselves Christian, may or may not be spiritually committed. However, they could be interested enough to give an evening, perhaps several, to a program that promises to address their questions—and, perhaps, their latent hopes or needs. This curious, latently hopeful public is our broadest constituency for the ITSSM.

An Institute cannot be all things to all people. We lack the wherewithal to respond to theological curiosity across all fronts. Rather than try, we will focus on three topics that match our resources and expertise.

Our first focus is Theology and Science. Surely there are many people who, at some level, are more than a little curious about the relationship between religion and the natural sciences. They may silently wonder if Christian faith and Darwinian evolution truly are compatible and, if so, how? We can help with this, showing that they are indeed compatible, and how. In these next five years, we plan to offer a full menu of lecture series, seminars, book studies, and symposia—inviting the public to better understand both faith and science, exploring the basis for their deep complementarity.

Our second focus will be Theology of Prayer. Our situation practically begs for this as a point of emphasis. St. Margaret's is home to the Arkansas House of Prayer, a remarkable facility for prayer, contemplation and meditation, where all maintain a rule of silence. This resource invites questions from a curious public, who may wonder what prayer is and what it is thought to accomplish, while seeking practical direction in any of its many various expressions.



In the coming five years, we will address these interests through workshops on prayer and contemplation, and classes or symposia exploring how prayer has been understood and practiced in the Christian theological tradition.

Our third program focus will be Christian Theology and World Religion. At St. Margaret's, the House of Prayer expressly welcomes practitioners of all faiths, and representatives of several (including Jewish, Muslim, and Buddhist) participated in its dedication. Today there would be few people of good will who could not appreciate the importance of warm hospitality, open dialogue and cooperation between those of different religions. Naturally, this raises questions. One might wonder if a spirit of openness and hospitality requires diminution or dilution of central Christian doctrines. We find that the reverse is true and that, for example, the better we understand classical Christology, the more open we can be to a spirit of interfaith hospitality and cooperation. Here is another rich vein for theological exploration in the years ahead—through workshops in which interfaith dialogue is practiced, as well as classes and symposia exploring topics in religion.

In our three areas of emphasis, in order to reach the larger public with our programs, from time to time we will produce video, audio or web resources for wide dissemination. An example is our web production, in 2010, of Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori's Institute address, "A Scientist's Journey in Faith: A Holy Week Reflection."

That we may continue to produce such resources, and offer cutting-edge programs including expert-paneled, topical symposia, we will seek relationships both with funding and academic partners. With these partners, we plan also to develop a Visiting Scholar's program, to recurrently freshen our trove of academic expertise.

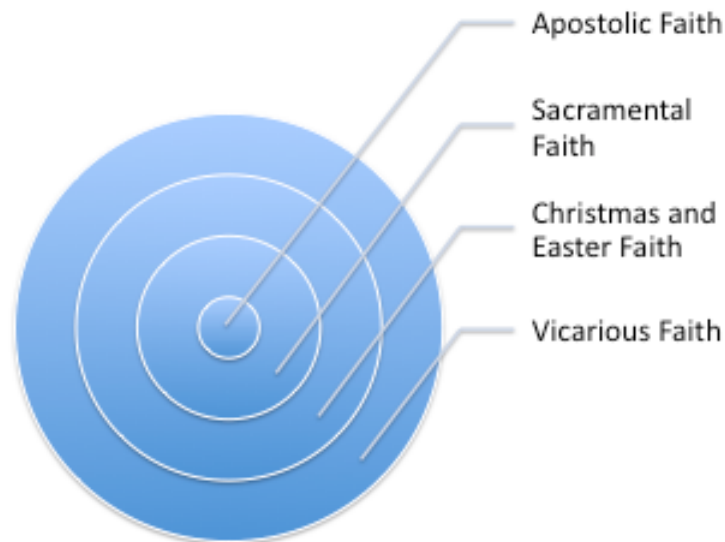
A Spiritually Maturing Congregation

Churches include people of widely different levels of interest, understanding, and commitment. St. Margaret's Church was founded, in 1991, on the understanding that, from the beginning, this would always be the case. Our motto would be, "Accept people where they are, invite them to go deeper."

This approach was based on a pastoral strategy developed in a book by Martin Thornton, *The Heart of the Parish: A Theology of the Remnant*. Thornton's book inspired a model for parish development taught by Robert Gallagher and Alice Mann, meant to guide those who work to deepen the intellectual and spiritual life of congregations.

The model is called "The Shape of the Parish."

“The Shape of the Parish”



In speaking of “apostolic faith,” Gallagher and Mann point to persons with a “relatively disciplined spiritual life” and “full Christian faith and practice.” These are the ones Thornton referred to as “the heart of the parish.”¹ A principle task of pastoral ministry is to develop and nurture this core group, who then become a resource for the vitality of the broader congregation.

Having “sacramental faith” means being “relatively regular about Sunday worship” and “possibly beginning to see [one’s] own vocation and gifts.” Such a person accepts the church’s view that “outward, visible, physical, particular things” are means God uses to draw us into a deeper relationship.

¹ Martin Thornton, *The Heart of the Parish: A Theology of the Remnant* (Cowley, 1989); For the Shape of the Parish Model: Robert Gallagher and Alice Mann, “The Shape of the Parish,” unpublished material offered through the Parish Development Institute, General Theological Seminary, New York, 1987.

What is meant by “Christmas and Easter Faith?” According to Gallagher and Mann, these are members of the church who do not, however, accept or practice a “sacramental” understanding of religion. To their mind’s eye, faith in God does not entail worshipping God on Sundays.

And “vicarious faith?” Here Gallagher and Mann call our attention to persons who are not members, who are never seen at worship, but who may in some sense think of a parish as “their parish,” and who may well be influenced, probably unconsciously, by its ministry and life.

With this model in mind, we identify our second constituency for the ITSSM: a “Spiritually Maturing Congregation,” i.e., St. Margaret’s Church, regarded as a whole. On the outer rings, this would include any of the “theologically curious” who now are prepared to explore and practice faith from the inside, as a matter of intellectual, spiritual, and moral commitment. They are ready to be Christian. Closer to the center of our model, it includes the already committed, who want now to live more deeply into the meaning of their faith.

We offer the ITSSM as a resource for, and partner with, St. Margaret’s Rector and Christian Formation Team. They are the people who have responsibility for Christian Education within the congregation. We would like to be of help. As may suit the needs of the parish, the ITSSM stands ready to develop programs that would invite, welcome and orient persons to Christian faith, that can assist with their full incorporation into the church, and that will equip and send them back into the world as faithful witnesses.² That is what churches do.

We have a series of three programs especially in mind. Each is envisioned as opening a path from an outer ring of faith’s understanding and commitment to participation at a deeper level.

The first is an Inquirers Program, a lecture and discussion program that offers a curious public an opportunity to take a closer look at the meaning of the Christian faith. This program explains what faith is, and what commitment to faith means for those who are ready to accept it.

The second is a Foundations Program, which uses lecture, discussion, and small group reflection to assist those who are prepared to step into a “sacramental” level of commitment.

The third program is the Guild. The Guild Seminar requires a high level of commitment, using reading, lecture, and discussion to introduce participants to deeper levels of theological reflection. Guild members are equipped to become

² Here we follow the model of incorporation outline by Alice Mann, *Incorporation of New Members in the Episcopal Church* (Philadelphia: Ascension Press).

leaders and resources in their own right, able to assist people from across the full spectrum of the congregation, “accepting people where they are, inviting them to go deeper.”

Clergy

One important way the ITSSM can become a resource for the wider church is through assistance to the clergy. Effective pastoral leadership is a well-spring for healthy congregations. We believe that continuing theological education can be a source of guidance, solace, strength and inspiration for these leaders.

We do not believe an Institute like ours can substitute for seminary training. Today the church is living into an increasingly challenging social and intellectual milieu for ministry. In our view, this is no time to back away from the normal expectation of a masters-level education for Episcopal priests. Our role, therefore, is not to replace seminary education, but rather to refresh it—to renew and replenish the clergy in the midst of their busy working lives.

Clergy are of course welcome to participate in programs designed for general audiences, such as symposia and lectures in theology and science; but we also offer certain programs with them especially in mind.

The Ecumenical Clergy Book Study Series invites clergy to discuss contemporary scholarly works in a collegial environment. The books are on topics of current interest both to the clergy and members of their congregations. One recurrent topic is the “quest” for the Jesus of History, and its significance for Christian faith. Another is, again, the relationship between theology and science.

In addition to the Book Study series, we plan to offer Clergy Workshops as a resource for those planning their parish programs for Christian education. For example, we could help clergy plan for Inquirers programs, or religion and science classes, for their congregations.

Youth

Our fourth constituency is “youth,” having in mind young people beginning perhaps at age fourteen, continuing through high school. We think many young people are both theologically curious and, potentially, ready to take steps forward into deepening faith and spiritual maturity. We have a program in mind to engage this intellectual curiosity, and tap this spiritual potential.

We envision a unique form of ministry to young people: a Student Theological Debating Society. Through this program, we will offer gifts and tools of several kinds: tools for thinking, knowledge of the theological tradition, fun, fellowship, and the promise of a deepened and more thoughtful faith.

The debate component of our program will stress thoughtfulness and care, as measured by classical standards of rhetoric and argumentation. We will also teach habits of heart and mind, including learning to “speak the truth in love.”³ While our plan includes a place for public demonstrations—i.e., “competitions”— even here we emphasize our common goal of working together toward the discovery of “a truth,” as the theologian Karl Barth once put it, “that is greater than us all.”

This will be a high involvement, high reward activity. The commitment level will compare with what might be expected of members of a school athletic team, theater troupe, or musical performance ensemble. There will be a summer trip or camp experience, an after-school component, and practice leading to the public competition.

Participants will come away with what we think will be a uniquely meaningful experience. They will have been given very useful tools for thinking, rare knowledge of the Christian intellectual tradition, and cutting-edge exposure to questions about religion and science. They will have learned to think on their feet and speak in public. This program should serve them well through high school, college, and beyond.

The pilot program is planned for launch in the summer of 2012. We believe this concept holds potential for expansion beyond our original program, to become a large society with chapters throughout our region, or beyond.

To create the program and realize its potential, we will need partners. We will seek a funding partner who sees its value and potential, as well as an academic partner who does likewise and who might want to host our group or assist with curriculum development and training.

³ Ephesians 4:15

ITSSM Strategic Five-Year Plan
January 1, 2011

How do these various program pieces fit together? A skeletal program year is shown on the next chart, color-coded to reflect the various constituencies the ITSSM intends to serve. Red shows programs for our “theologically curious public”; blue stands for the “spiritually maturing congregation”; purple is for the clergy; and orange is for youth.

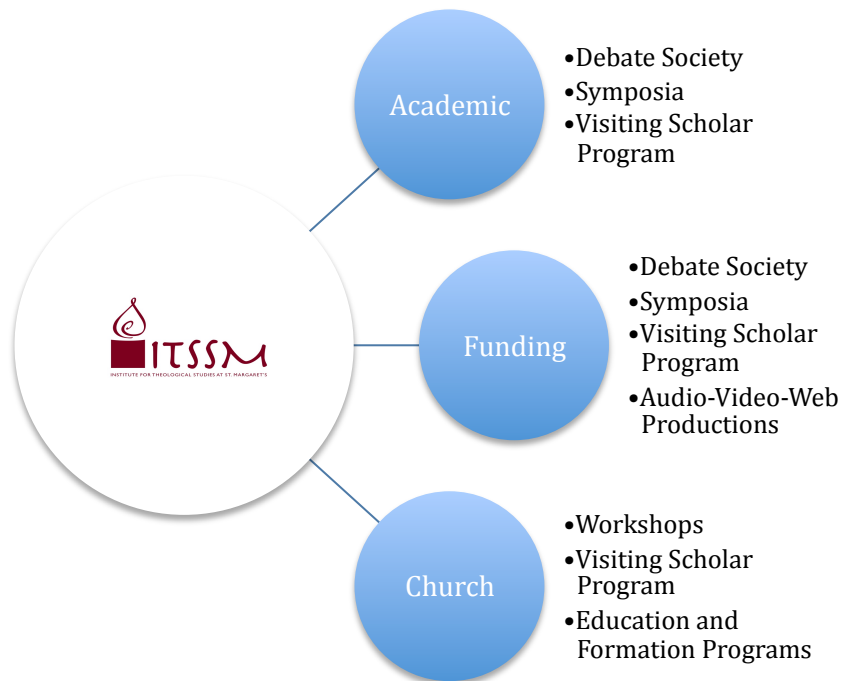
A Year in the Life of ITSSM

Winter	Spring	Summer	Fall
	Annual Symposium Resident Scholar Lecture Series		--Inquirer's Program
	Foundations Program		Guild Seminar and Retreat
Book Study	Book Study	Summer Workshop	Book Study
		--2 Week Day Camp --1 Week Trip	After School Theology and Debate: 2 Hours a Week for 10 Weeks
After School Theology and Debate: 2 Hours a Week for 8 Weeks	4 Weeks Debate Preparation Public Debate		

Partners

The Institute will need partners to develop our programs and extend their reach. We will work to build fruitful relationships with partners of three kinds: Academic, Funding, and Church.

Partnerships



Academic Partners

The ITSSM wants to be a church-based entity with academic connections. We think we can better build certain of our programs in partnership with colleges, seminaries, or other graduate institutions.

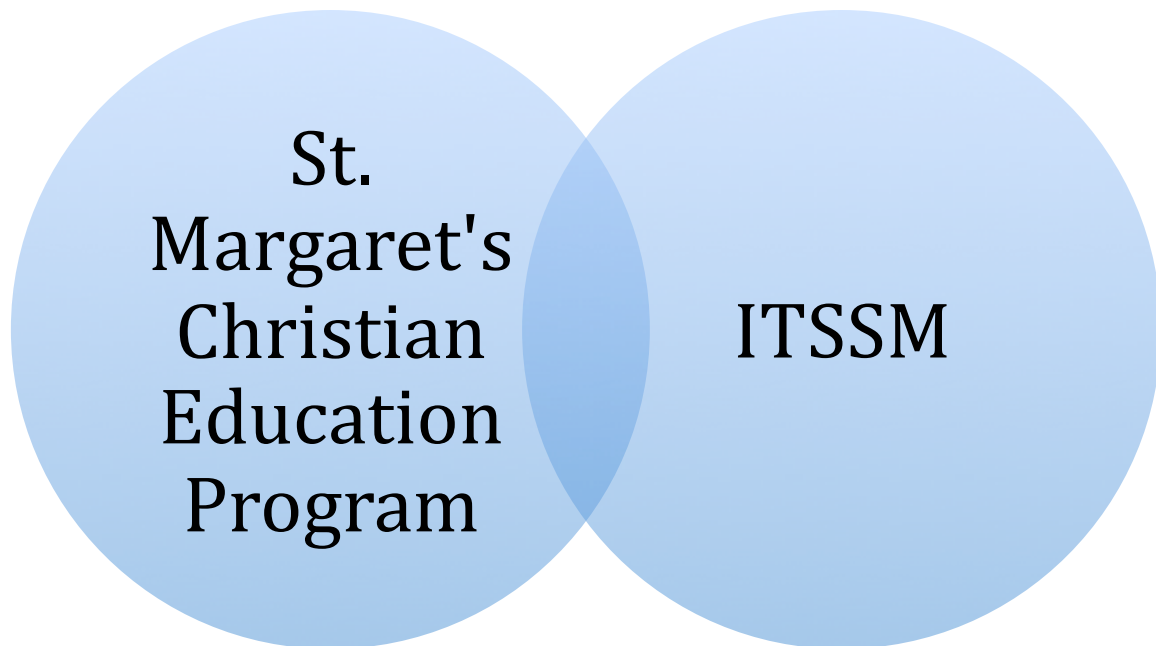
The Student Theological Debating Society is a prime example. The Debate Society will need a location for its summer camp, and for that a college campus might be ideal. Beyond that immediate need, we imagine long-term potential for the spread of the Debate Society into new chapters. That will require curriculum development, systematic training, and institutional oversight at a level that is probably beyond the capacity of the ITSSM. If our pilot project proves successful, we may seek an academic “friendly takeover,” yielding the program into the hands of a larger institution. Here our models are the DOCC and EFM programs, both church-based programs now administered through the School of Theology at Sewanee.

Academic connections will be important for other programs as well. Informally, we look to draw from colleges and seminaries for guest lecturers and visiting scholars. We look to sponsor symposia on topics such as theology and science, which would ideally include formal involvement and co-sponsorship from academic institutions.

Church Partners

Our principle partner is of course St. Margaret's Episcopal Church in Little Rock. The original vision of an ITSSM sprang from the mind of St. Margaret's late Vicar, The Rev. Peggy Bosmyer. Fulfillment of that vision will depend on continued support and involvement from St. Margaret's Rector and Vestry. From the outset, the ITSSM has enjoyed an important, close relationship with the St. Margaret's Christian Education Team. This team has responsibility for a comprehensive parish program for Christian formation in children and adults.

The ITSSM was not created to direct Christian education for St. Margaret's, but one of our most important services is to be a resource for those who do carry that responsibility. The Guild is a deep pool of potential teachers and program leaders. The Institute's class offerings are also a Christian Education resource in their own right. Our Inquirers and Foundations classes could be integral components of a comprehensive Christian Education program. We look forward to working with the Rector and Christian Education team to blend Institute and parish programs into a rich menu of well-coordinated offerings.



Funding Partners

The ITSSM has a grant in hand to fund this five-year build-up. We have a \$200,000 total commitment, payable over five years. Payment will start at a level of \$50,000 in 2011, declining by steps to a final annual installment of \$30,000 in the fifth year.

For the Institute to continue beyond the life of this initial grant, St. Margaret's will need gradually to phase in financial support through the parish budget. Both near and long-term, however, ITSSM goals reach beyond the capacity of a parish Christian Education budget. Therefore, we will also seek support from other funding partners.

These will likely include participants in some of our programs, who may wish to offer annual donations as "Friends of the ITSSM."

For our larger programs, we will seek grants from foundations, church institutions, and individuals who may find a given project compelling and want to help us make it happen. Academic symposia, clergy workshops, audio-visual productions, and, most certainly, the Student Theological Debating Society, will all depend on partners of this kind.

We already have a fund-raising "corporate partner" in Spiritus, Inc. Spiritus is a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation. It was established by St. Margaret's, with the ITSSM prominently in mind, to facilitate grant-writing and fund raising beyond the scope of parish operations.

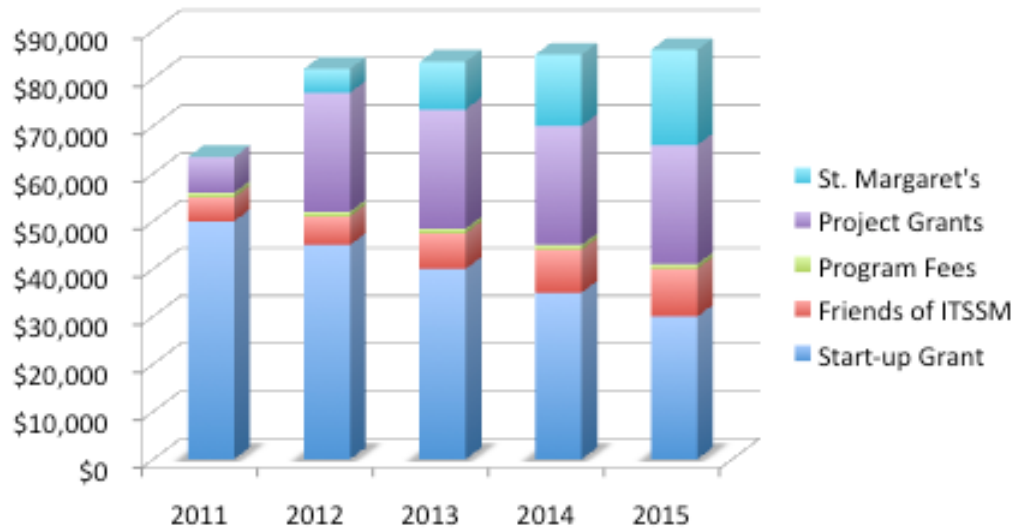
Funding

The \$200,000 start-up grant will be deposited with Spiritus in 2010-11, for use by the ITSSM as follows:

- 2011: \$50,000
- 2012: \$45,000
- 2013: \$40,000
- 2014: \$35,000
- 2015: \$30,000

The chart below offers a model for funding through the five-year period. Other than the start-up grant, the numbers are hypothetical. Actual dollar amounts will vary of course depending on decisions yet to be made—by the ITSSM regarding our program and its funding requirements, and by potential donors regarding their interest in assisting our efforts.

Funding Model



Funding Model Numbers

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Start-up Grant	\$50,000	45,000	40,000	35,000	30,000
St. Margaret's	\$0	5,000	10,000	15,000	20,000
Program Fees	\$1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000
Friends of ITSSM	\$5,000	6,000	7,500	9,000	10,000
Project Grants	\$5,000	25,000	25,000	25,000	25,000
Total	\$61,000	\$82,000	\$83,500	\$85,000	\$86,000

Calendar of Strategic Actions

To realize our vision for the Institute, certain things must happen in timely fashion. The plan requires that we create effective structures of oversight. It depends on our building fruitful relationships with church, funding, and academic partners. Above all, the Institute must prove its value through the delivery of a series of transparently beneficial and successful programs.

The following table charts a progression of actions that will keep us moving toward the realization of our mission.

Calendar of Strategic Actions

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Winter	Recruit Design Team for Student Theological Debate Society Begin outreach to Academic and Funding Partners	Apply for Grant: Resident Scholar's Program Recruit Debate Society	Launch Resident or Visiting Scholar's Program		
Spring	Paid Administrator Comes on Board	Launch Foundations Program	Present First Theology and Science Symposium		
Summer	Apply for Grants: (1) Debate Society (2) Theology and Science Symposium	Launch Debate Society: St. Margaret's Chapter		Present First Annual Summer Clergy Workshop	
Fall	Launch Inquirer's Program Create "Friends of ITSSM"		Present First Annual Summer Debate Camp		

Oversight

Responsibility for building and directing the ITSSM through this 5-Year Start-Up period will rest initially with a team of officers who, with the Rector of St. Margaret's, also constitute the board.

Our initial officers are:

The volunteer *Director*, appointed by the Rector of St. Margaret's, is the Rev. Canon Christoph Keller, Th.D. The *Administrator*, appointed by Dr. Keller, is the Rev. Cindy Fribourgh. Beginning in June, 2011, she will receive a salary for $\frac{3}{4}$ time employment by the ITSSM. Our volunteer *Secretary-Treasurer* is Mrs. Jan Thames.

God willing and health permitting, Dr. Keller plans to serve as Director through the five-year period, and then to retire to writing books. Some of the more important strategic questions for the Institute have to do with planning for a future without an ordained, volunteer director with an advanced degree. Such a person might be difficult to replicate.

Perhaps it won't be necessary to do so. If we succeed with our plans, we will have established patterns and partnerships that can be expected to endure and prosper into the future. Rather than building a program from the ground, from that point forward the task involves administration of a set of established, proven programs. That may allow for stewardship, and oversight, of a different kind.

As this document is being written, St. Margaret's prepares to call a new Rector. At the discretion of the Rector and Vestry, five-years hence the ITSSM may warrant and optimally require continued clergy or staff leadership of some kind. There are various possibilities for doing this. For example, a growing St. Margaret's might bring in a second full time priest, whose job description would include a role in the ITSSM. Or, a full or part-time administrator might still be invaluable.

We also envision stewardship of the Institute for Theological Studies as an important function of the Guild and that, by the year 2016, the Guild will have been structured and prepared to handle this responsibility. Answering questions such as whether and how the ITSSM will continue, would become the Guild's responsibility under the broader oversight of St. Margaret's Rector and Vestry. Five years leaves all parties plenty of time to carefully think through the structure, terms and details of this arrangement.

Through the five-year period, oversight responsibility will begin to shift toward the Guild. This transition will be marked through a series of milestone events each fall, at the annual Guild Retreat. Every year at that time, members of the Guild will gather to review the progress of the Institute and plan for the future. This will also be a time for community building, where new members who have completed the seminar are welcomed into the Guild.

By fall of 2012, the Guild will establish a charter and select officers, perhaps for two-year terms. By fall 2015, the officers will be prepared to accept authority and responsibility for the ministry of the Institute for Theological Studies.

This next chart shows a process of transition.

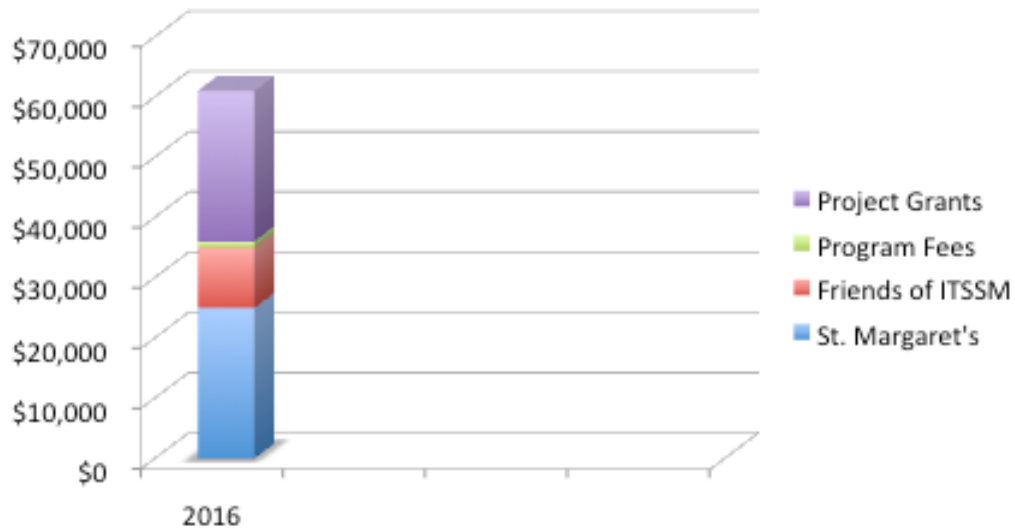
Oversight Transition

Fall 2011	Fall 2012	Fall 2013	Fall 2014	Fall 2015
Welcome New Members to Guild	Welcome New Members to Guild	Welcome New Members to Guild	Welcome New Members to Guild	Welcome New Members to Guild
Review Progress/Make Plans	Review Progress/Make Plans	Review Progress/Make Plans	Review Progress/Make Plans	Review Progress/Make Plans
	Elect Officers for 2 Year Terms	Begin Work on Next 5-Year Strategic Plan	Elect Officers for 2 Year Terms	Retire Director
			Adopt Strategic Plan: 2015-2019	Guild Assumes Stewardship of ITSSM

If the ITSSM is to continue as a significant ministry of St. Margaret's beyond the five-year period, St. Margaret's will need to begin to include ITSSM support in its annual budget. As the start-up grant declines, the program support from St. Margaret's can be phased in.

Such a decision rests, of course, with the St. Margaret's Rector and Vestry. Provided that the Rector and Vestry see value in continuation of the Institute, it seems reasonable to imagine a stable funding model that might look as follows:

Beyond the Start-Up



Project Grants:	\$25,000
Program Fees:	\$ 1,000
Friends of ITSSM:	\$10,000
St. Margaret's:	<u>\$25,000</u>

TOTAL:	\$61,000
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Project grants are a great variable in this model. If, through the next five-years, we have been successful in establishing partner relationships and delivering effective programs, we might well imagine a larger program with a larger budget than is depicted here.