

Gracious God, as we continue this journey of renewal and service, we humbly ask for your guidance and strength. Help us to see this journey as a gift, a path of growth and transformation, and not just a task to be completed. Open our hearts and minds to the possibilities that lie ahead and help us to discern your will for our lives and for your church. Strengthen our faith, renew our spirits, and deepen our connection with God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit, that we may be faithful witnesses of your love and grace in the world. May we be open to new ideas, new ways of working, and new opportunities for ministry, all for the glory of your name. Amen.

RENEWALWORKS REPORT TO THE VESTRY

Prepared by the Christ Episcopal Church RenewalWorks Leadership Team

Table of Contents

How the RenewalWorks Process Works 2

Part One – Who Took the Survey? 3

Part One - Spiritual Continuum Profile 4

Part One – Importance of Beliefs, Practices, Faith in Action 5

Part One – RenewalWorks Staff Remarks About Our Survey Results 6

Part One – Best Practice Principles 7

Part Two – Our Recommendations to the Vestry 8

A Closing Prayer – Lead Us by Faith 10

RENEWALWORKS REPORT TO THE VESTRY

Prepared by the Christ Episcopal Church RenewalWorks Leadership Team

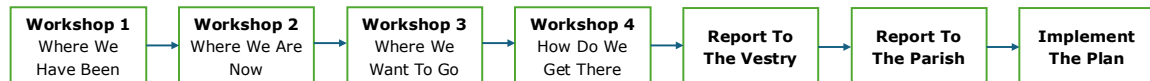
How the RenewalWorks Process Works

The RenewalWorks process leverages more than fifteen years of research that reveals key characteristics of vital congregations. The process begins with an anonymous, confidential, and thought-provoking online survey called the Spiritual Life Inventory, or SLI, which congregants are invited and encouraged to complete. The SLI explores the individuals' spiritual life and the church's role in supporting it. When the congregation's responses are viewed as a group and benchmarked against data gathered from more than 1,800 churches for over a decade, the SLI provides a snapshot of the spiritual vitality of the congregation.

A workshop team is formed to explore spiritual growth and work with the SLI findings. Using a guided methodology that involves self-reflection, sharing, and discussion, the group meets in four workshop sessions that begin and end with prayer. Workshop team members consider research-based best practices of vital congregations and explore ways those practices might take root in their own congregations. Leveraging the findings, congregations implement changes in ways that make sense for their church and context.

Our RenewalWorks Process

- Our process began on January 26th with an anonymous, confidential, online survey called the Spiritual Life Inventory, (SLI), which all parishioners were invited and encouraged to complete.
- Our SLI closed on February 16th with 75 of 90 parishioners completing the survey.
- We established a twelve-member Workshop Leadership Team to conduct the four workshops required by the process - team members included:
 - Greg Cleary, Margaret Clinch, Peter Homeyer, Bruce Huntsbarger, Terry Huysman, Tom Ioanes, Emily Sexton Joyce, Gary Kuziinsky*, Terry Murray, Suniti Nelson, Greg Sammons, and Chip Williamson **Team Facilitator*



3

[Table of Contents](#)

RENEWALWORKS REPORT TO THE VESTRY

Prepared by the Christ Episcopal Church RenewalWorks Leadership Team

Part One – Who Took the Survey?

Eighty percent of our survey respondents were 50 years of age or older and fifty-one percent had been at Christ Church for at least ten or more years. The table below compares Christ Church with the Episcopal Norm and the All Church Norm.

CHRIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH SLI DEMOGRAPHICS			
CATEGORY	CEC	EPISCOPAL	ALL CHURCH
AGE 19-29	5%	3%	10%
AGE 30-49	15%	20%	40%
AGE 50+	80%	77%	50%
TENURE <1 YEAR	5%	5%	9%
TENURE 1-5	36%	25%	36%
TENURE 6-10	8%	15%	18%
TENURE 10+	51%	55%	37%

[Table of Contents](#)

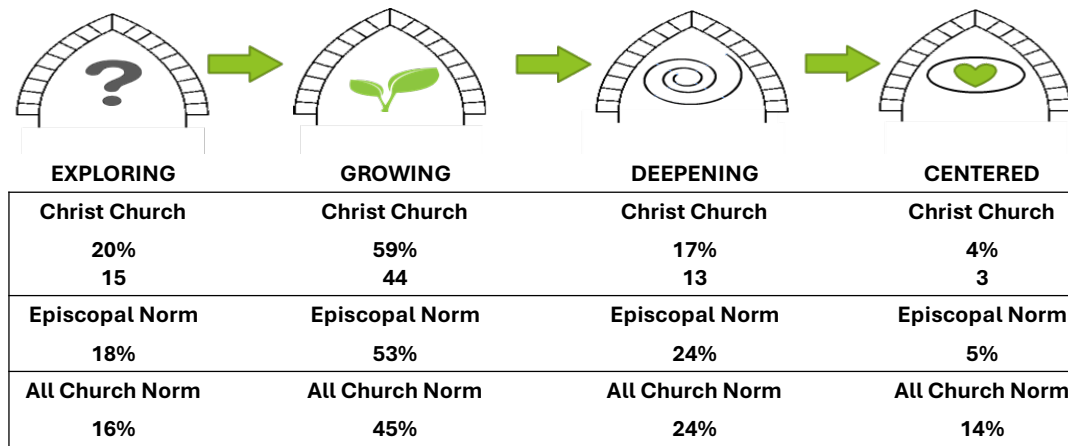
RENEWALWORKS REPORT TO THE VESTRY

Prepared by the Christ Episcopal Church RenewalWorks Leadership Team

Part One - Spiritual Continuum Profile

This chart profiles how our parishioners view their place on the spiritual continuum. Comparison to the Episcopal Norm and the All Church Norm is provided. The booklet *Footsteps* by Jay Sidebotham offers detailed information about the four stages in the continuum. Remember that the continuum represents the path of an individual's relationship with Jesus. Our hope is that parishioners will continue to deepen that relationship and continue to move along the continuum.

Spiritual Continuum CEC - SLI Results



17

Exploring 20%	People in this first stage are exploring the basic beliefs expressed in the Episcopal tradition - drawn to the beauty of the liturgy, particularly Holy Eucharist. They are eager for a deeper understanding of the sacraments and for help from the church in that regard. They affirm belief in God, though they are not sure what faith claims they would make about Jesus. Faith is not a significant part of their life on a day-to-day basis.
Growing 59%	People are committed to the Christian faith, but they still have many questions and would not speak of having a personal relationship with Jesus. Growth requires the development of this relationship - an authentic vision of this relationship can often be accomplished by exploration of personal spiritual practices during the week, when people are not in church. Such practices may include prayer, time in solitude, and reflection on scripture.
Deepening 17%	They describe having a personal relationship with God, and they are moving toward a place where they value that personal relationship with God even more than their church membership. They feel close to Jesus and depend on him daily for guidance.
Centered 3%	A personal relationship with Jesus is the most important relationship in their lives.

[Table of Contents](#)

RENEWALWORKS REPORT TO THE VESTRY

Prepared by the Christ Episcopal Church RenewalWorks Leadership Team

Part One – Importance of Beliefs, Practices, Faith in Action

Three distinct components—beliefs, practices, and faith in action make up the measurement of the spiritual vitality of our parish. A key element to understanding spiritual vitality is the extent to which people understand, embrace, and value the importance of core Episcopal beliefs. How do people understand the Eucharist, the language of the Trinity, the role of scripture, the Baptismal Covenant, spiritual growth, or the notion of salvation by grace? For parishioners in the first two stages of the spiritual continuum, the church and church-led activities are crucial to moving their spiritual journey forward.

CEC IMPORTANCE OF BELIEFS IN RELATION TO EPISCOPAL NORM*	
Grace 49% 47%	Baptismal Covenant 20% 26%
Trinity 37% 55%	Spiritual Growth 43% 47%
Role Of Scripture 12% 17%	Creeds 21% 40%
Holy Communion 29% 42%	Interfaith Conversations 60% 49%
* Green meets or exceeds; Yellow falls short - percentages indicate importance level	

CEC IMPORTANCE OF DAILY PRACTICES IN RELATION TO EPISCOPAL NORM*	
Reflection On Scripture 17% 14%	Prayer For Love Of God 33% 38%
Bible Reading 12% 12%	Prayer To Confess Sins 20% 24%
Reading The Prayer Book 7% 6%	Prayer To Seek Guidance 25% 40%
Prayer For Others 41% 46%	Solitude 42% 48%
Tithing 21% 14%	
* Green meets or exceeds; Yellow falls short - percentages indicate importance level	

CEC IMPORTANCE OF FAITH IN ACTION IN RELATION TO EPISCOPAL NORM*	
Sunday Service Attendance 80% 73%	Spiritual Conversations 27% 34%
Satisfied With Sunday Service 59% 60%	Serving Those In Need On My Own 41% 39%
Small Groups 45% 37%	Spiritual Mentors 17% 19%
Spiritual Friendships 48% 39%	Help Others Grow 13% 17%
Serving at Church 59% 58%	Serving People in Need Through the Church 40% 30%

[Table of Contents](#)

RENEWALWORKS REPORT TO THE VESTRY

Prepared by the Christ Episcopal Church RenewalWorks Leadership Team

Part One – RenewalWorks Staff Remarks About Our Survey Results

Your data shows that overall, there is a strong sense of complacency that has engulfed parishioners. They express interest in maintaining the status quo over challenging and furthering themselves in a spiritual journey. In fairness to them, it is hard for one to know they are stalled if they are not aware that there is a journey, or what that journey may entail. This is a familiar archetype for many Episcopal churches, especially those whose majority parish tenure is greater than 10 years, are highly educated, suburban or urban with higher average annual incomes. We often say that the Episcopal Church is rooted and restless but mostly rooted.

On a positive note, parishioners have positive feelings towards your leader. This credibility will be crucial to jumpstarting, rejuvenating and renewing the overall health of the parish. Please note that leader means the rector, staff, vestry and ministry lay leaders. This group may consider a retreat, planning session to explore this concept and their overall church mission further. It is not enough for a church to be welcoming, it must teach and challenge its parishioners to go further in their journey to love God and neighbor which will require study, active participation and curiosity. The leadership team must model this belief and be united and inspired to own the idea of spiritual growth as a priority.

Introducing or emphasizing the idea of discipleship may help the parish understand that the spiritual journey is never ending and requires practice, energy, reflection and commitment from them personally and through church activities. Shoring up core Episcopalian beliefs and practices will be key. Bold, church-wide initiatives could be welcomed and could create energy for refocusing on the church mission. Examples may include deeper engagement and understanding of the eucharist, encouragement of public/private morning and evening prayer or a church-wide bible reading campaign.

[Table of Contents](#)

RENEWALWORKS REPORT TO THE VESTRY

Prepared by the Christ Episcopal Church RenewalWorks Leadership Team

Part One – Best Practice Principles

In years of work with congregations and in extensive research with over 2,000 congregations and almost half a million church-goers, researchers noted a number of churches that excel at helping their people grow in their love of God and others. Certain themes emerged, which were identified as Best Practice Principles. In the RenewalWorks process, we engaged with these principles, to use them as a measure of what we are doing and what we might feel called to do.

The Heart of the Leader - The heart of the leader is key, the critical element. The leader (primarily we are talking about the rector, but also other clergy and lay leaders like wardens and vestry members) must single-mindedly champion spiritual growth as the priority for the parish. The rector is CSO: Chief Spiritual Officer. Implicit in this leadership role is modeling of discipleship and spiritual sustainability.

Get People Moving - This is about communicating to all members of the congregation that they are on a spiritual journey and to foster a living, vital dynamic community. It's an invitation and a challenge to all members to take the next step in that journey. The leader guides this effort, but this philosophy must be part of the culture; the expectation of spiritual growth for all, especially those who are stalled or dissatisfied, must be central to the congregation.

Embed the Bible - Embedding the scripture moves people in each stage of the spiritual continuum and is the single most transformational factor for spiritual growth. In the same way that scripture is woven throughout *The Book of Common Prayer*, so the Bible should be woven throughout the life of the congregation, providing guidance, comfort, and challenge. The leader teaches and preaches, but each parishioner is called to discover scripture's rich meaning for his or her own personal spiritual journey. The congregation's life will thereby be shaped by scripture in a cultural shift that embeds the Bible in meetings, service projects, and social events for all groups and ministries of all ages.

Create Ownership - Life in the church is not a spectator sport. It is not entertainment. It is not a product to be consumed. Everyone has "skin in the game." Each member has both the freedom and responsibility for pursuit of his or her own spiritual growth. Leaders guide in this process by elevating the expectation that every member of the community will grow in relationship with the church, in personal spiritual practice and in service. As one church put it, "If you come here, you will grow."

Pastor the Community - Jesus came to serve and a relationship with him is deepened through a commitment to service, in the church and in the neighborhood. Jesus calls his disciples to go out into the world, proclaiming good news through word and example. A big part of this effort is knowing what God is up to in the neighborhood already, listening to the voices encountered there, including interfaith dialogue and work for justice and peace wherever the needs surface. Service is often a strength for Episcopal congregations—the growth opportunity is connecting that service to faith and finding ways to deepen faith through that service.

[Table of Contents](#)

RENEWALWORKS REPORT TO THE VESTRY

Prepared by the Christ Episcopal Church RenewalWorks Leadership Team

Part Two – Our Recommendations to the Vestry

Based upon the results of our Spiritual Life Inventory, we recommend a combination of initiatives that use four of the Best Practice Principles – *Get People Moving*, *Embed the Bible in Everything*, *Create Ownership*, and *the Heart of the Leader*. *Pastor the Community* is already a strong Best Practice Principle for us and does not have a separate initiative. Each initiative is described along with the Best Practice Principles that are used. The next steps for our congregation may well be programmatic initiatives (a new ministry, a new course of study, a new staff person) and/or they may also be a change in culture, with no impact on staff or calendar or budget but simply a change of heart and intention.

Initiative # 1: Encourage daily Bible reading and reflection through supporting the use of *Forward Day by Day*. *Forward Day by Day* inspires people who want to be more like Jesus and encourages them to spread his love in the world. They **READ** the daily meditation and accompanying scripture. They **REFLECT** on the other Bible readings appointed for the day. They **RESPOND** by sharing something that has changed their perspective with family members or friends. They **PRAY** about what is on their heart and listen for what may be on God's heart.

Best Practice Principles Used: *Get People Moving, Embed the Bible in Everything*

Initiative # 1a: They can **RESPOND** by sharing something that has changed their perspective with family members or friends by using Monday Matters/RenewalWorks updates through parish emails.

Best Practice Principles Used: *Create Ownership, Heart of the Leader*

Initiative #2: Beginning this Fall, offer a congregation-wide opportunity to read the Bible together using lay-led programs like *The Path*, *The Bible Challenge*, or *The Story* – *we have several lay volunteers willing to lead the selected program*.

Best Practice Principles Used: *Get People Moving, Embed the Bible in Everything, Create Ownership*

Initiative # 3: Embed Bible study, prayer, and spiritual intention in all church ministries starting with Foyers – introduce our spiritual intention through conversation starters to be used by our Foyer conveners. *Exploring Transforming Questions, a curriculum from Forward Movement, for use by our conveners*

Best Practice Principles Used: *Get People Moving, Embed the Bible in Everything, Create Ownership, Heart of the Leader*

Initiative #4: Our Vestry should develop a plan for both Vestry and parish-wide retreats in 2026 that will communicate to everyone in the congregation, new and not so new, that they are on a spiritual journey. It's an invitation, a call, and a challenge to take the next step, wherever they are in that journey. The leaders offer guidance, but spiritual growth as an expectation needs to be part of the culture.

Best Practice Principles Used: *Get People Moving, Embed the Bible in Everything, Create Ownership, Heart of the Leader*

[Table of Contents](#)

RENEWALWORKS REPORT TO THE VESTRY

Prepared by the Christ Episcopal Church RenewalWorks Leadership Team

A Closing Prayer – Lead Us by Faith

O GOD, by the leading of a star you manifested your only Son to the Peoples of the earth: Lead us, who know you now by faith, to your presence, where we may see your glory face to face; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen. —The Book of Common Prayer, p. 214

[Table of Contents](#)