

RenewalWorks™

Facilitator Guide

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All workshop products including the Facilitator’s Guide, Workshop Design, Participant’s Workbook, and Templates are the intellectual property of RenewalWorks, a ministry of Forward Movement. This includes sequencing of exercises detailed in the Facilitator’s Guide, all assignments, exercise descriptions and processes outlined or described.

Additional materials can be found online at: [www.renewalworks.org](http://www.renewalworks.org)

# Welcome to RenewalWorks

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the RenewalWorks process as facilitator for your church's workshop team. RenewalWorks helps congregations focus on spiritual vitality, making spiritual growth a priority in their life and mission. And by spiritual growth, we mean increasing in love of God and love of neighbor. A decade of research exploring key characteristics of vital congregations and involving a great variety of churches provides the foundation for the RenewalWorks process. Along the way, that work has been adapted to better fit the traditions of The Episcopal Church.

Beginning with a congregation-wide Spiritual Life Inventory and followed by four workshops for your church's workshop team, we believe this process will encourage, inspire, and challenge your congregation and its leadership to get moving on their spiritual journeys and to grow in love of God and neighbor. This Facilitator's Guide gives you an outline and materials for the four workshop sessions. Used in conjunction with the Participant's Workbook, it provides a guided methodology that includes self-reflection, homework, sharing, and workshop discussions to help you and your workshop team discern where God is calling your church to grow.

After reading this guide, we recommend you visit our website [www.renewalworks.org/](http://www.renewalworks.org/) resources for a series of pre-recorded webinars that offer further preparation for the four workshops.

Welcome to this powerful conversation. We are grateful for your participation and leadership. Our prayers are with you.

The Rev. Jay Sidebotham  
Director, RenewalWorks

## GETTING STARTED

Every journey begins with the proverbial single step, and saying “yes” to your clergy leader was yours. Your second is to explore what’s ahead for you in this guide. It is designed to help you develop a collaborative, caring team and take them through the four RenewalWorks workshop sessions. By now your workshop team members have been named, and you have a schedule for the launch of the Spiritual Life Inventory and the four workshop sessions that follow. Your team of nine to twenty-four members represents a cross section of your church community. The rector or clergy leader is a member and other, selected clergy may participate as well, but they do not lead in this process. It is designed to call equally on the faith, hope, and creativity of every member of the team.

Your role as facilitator is to create a working environment that encourages robust conversation and collaboration. You’re responsible for managing the overall process, introducing material, and moving from one exercise to the next. Breakout groups are self-managed to help the team develop ownership and hold themselves accountable for their work together.

### A few basics

Seek a balance between steering the workshops and welcoming creative ideas and insights from your team. Just like in a jazz combo, a little improvisation opens the door to innovation and fresh ideas.

Do your homework and go through the exercises well in advance of each workshop, so you’ll be familiar with the material and able to guide the group. Use the handy checklist at the back of each workshop to help you keep track as you prepare.

Check in with your clergy leader before the sessions to get his/her insights.

Be clear about when you are speaking in your role as facilitator and when you’re joining in the discussion as a team member.

Have a relentless timekeeper. Stay on schedule.

Don’t act as the scribe but do have someone capture the work on flip charts or templates that can be transcribed and summarized for the group before the next session.

Take ten minutes after each workshop to debrief with key leaders from the breakout groups. Note what went well in their small groups and offer suggestions for improvement where needed.

Model strong spiritual practices. Begin and end each session with a prayer, and encourage all members of the workshop team to pray for this effort.

## Some pre-reading to help orient you to the RenewalWorks process

*Footsteps* by the Rev. Jay Sidebotham outlines the philosophical and empirical basis behind the RenewalWorks understanding of spiritual formation. It's the first homework assignment for your workshop team, and we recommend it for anyone participating in this process. (Please see "Getting ready for Workshop 1" for information on ordering copies from Forward Movement for you and your workshop team.)

Brian Taylor's introduction to *Strength for the Journey* by Renee Miller, found in the Appendix of this guide.

## Practical matters — Room setup, pre-meeting organization, and ambiance

Your workshops can be conducted in just about any room or space. Use the following guidelines to set up your working space:

Have a table and chairs for each breakout group. Breakout groups should consist of three to eight participants, depending on the size of your workshop team. Plan on three groups unless noted. Try to make the groups of equal size, and mix them up so people are not always in the same group.

Find a space with good visibility to display templates during the workshop—a wall at the front of the room, for example, works well. They are available at [RenewalWorks.org/resources](https://renewalworks.org/resources).

Some churches provide a meal before workshops to encourage fellowship and make things easier for people coming directly from work.

Don't be surprised if your team becomes a close-knit group. That's often an unexpected gift in this effort.



## Get the jump on the poster-size templates

Have the poster-size templates needed for each workshop copied and ready to go before Workshop 1. The template files, scaled to size, can be downloaded at [RenewalWorks.org/resources](https://RenewalWorks.org/resources) and printed at a local copy shop like FedEx Office and UPS Stores. A number of the templates are used again, so don't throw them away at the end of a session. Here's a list of the templates needed. Single copies for each, except for Template 1.4. These can also be projected, and we can provide a PowerPoint file, if that is helpful.

### Workshop 1

- *Template 1.1, RenewalWorks: An Overview of the Process*
- *Template 1.2, Life-line Exercise*
- *Template 1.3, Spiritual Growth Framework*
- *Template 1.4, Our Church and the Spiritual Journey (four copies)*

### Workshop 2

- *Template 2.1, Parish & Community Demographics*
- *Template 2.2, Key Takeaways*
- *Templates for the Episcopal Beliefs and Practices Dot Exercise (4-up so they need to be cut at the copy shop)*

### Workshop 3

- *Template 3.1, Best Practice Principles*
- *Template 3.2, Get People Moving*
- *Template 3.3, Embed the Bible*
- *Template 3.4, Create Ownership*
- *Template 3.5, Pastor the Community*
- *Template 3.6, Overall Priorities*

### Workshop 4

- *Template 4.1, Next Steps*

## An assistant or two can make this easier

There's quite a bit of preparation and set up for this workshop series, as well as the need to keep each session moving smoothly. Inviting someone (or a couple of people) to serve as administrative assistant/s can be a great help. Among the tasks that person or persons might do are:

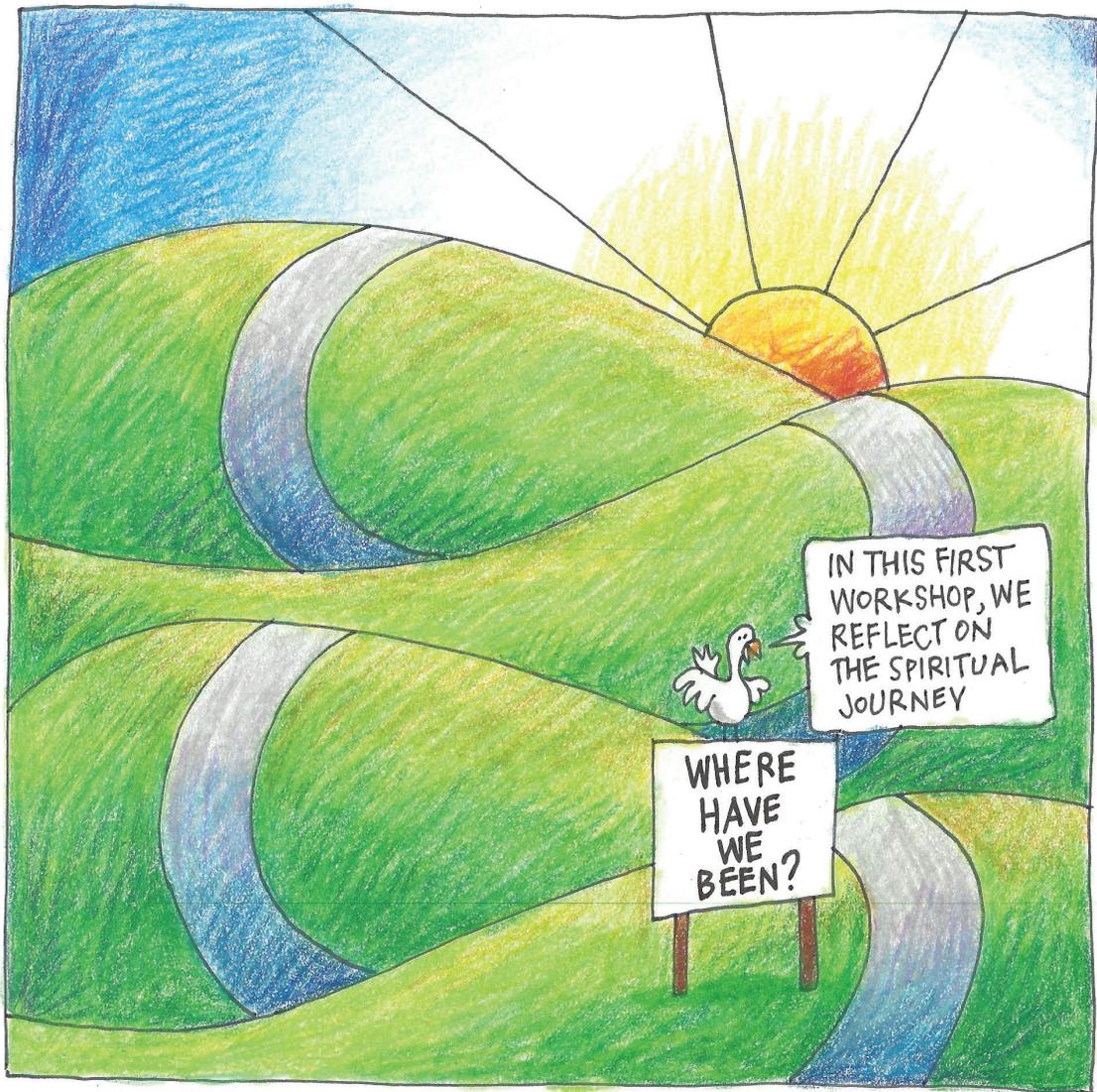
- Work with church staff to arrange for meeting rooms and setup
- Make any copies needed for each workshop
- Provide supplies—markers, newsprint pads, pencils and pens, etc.
- Arrange for refreshments
- Serve as a timekeeper
- Take notes during discussion
- Other support as needed

## Your workshop team has a job to do, too

Your team has been selected by your church's leadership and entrusted with a significant ministry of discernment. The basic requirements for them are to:

- Show up and participate actively in each of the four workshops
- Arrive on time
- Complete the assigned homework
- Hear and respect the experiences, opinions, and ideas shared by teammates
- Pray for this process

Your team's deeper requirement is to bring their hearts and best selves to this work. Remember to thank them at each and every workshop session.



# Workshop 1

## Where have we been?

With Workshop 1, your work as facilitator begins in earnest. Your group takes its first steps toward becoming a strong team—sharing stories, learning together, building trust in the RenewalWorks process and each other.

The main topic for discussion is spiritual growth. The basic research presented in *Footsteps* is introduced along with key terms: spiritual continuum and spiritual growth catalyst. Workshop exercises help participants reflect on the dynamic nature of their own faith and the role played by their church and clergy in supporting and encouraging spiritual growth.

# GETTING READY FOR WORKSHOP 1

*Use the checklist at the end of this workshop to help you prepare.*

## Before the workshop:

- Obtain copies of *Footsteps* for each member of your workshop team from Forward Movement ([www.forwardmovement.org](http://www.forwardmovement.org)). Your church's participation in RenewalWorks means that the first three are free, and copies after that are available at a discount when you use the special code at checkout.
- Distribute *Footsteps* to your workshop team, and ask them to read it before the first session. The booklet provides valuable background on the thinking and research behind RenewalWorks. It's a quick read—worth reading twice, in fact.

## For this workshop session, you'll need to provide:

- One poster-size copy each of Templates 1.1, 1.2, and 1.3 (before the workshop, fill in an example or two from your own life on Template 1.2 to help the team understand the Life-line Exercise)
- Four poster-size copies of Template 1.4, three for the breakout groups and one to post
- Two or three flipcharts on easels for taking notes
- Markers in different colors
- Masking tape

## Workshop 1 agenda

*In fifteen-minute segments, except where noted*

- Welcome and workshop overview
- Prayer and reflection
- Exercise 1: Personal experience discussion
- Exercise 2: Spiritual life continuum
- Exercise 3: Spiritual growth catalysts
- Small group sharing
- Exercise 4: Role of the church (20 minutes)
- Small group sharing
- Group reflection, homework, and closing prayer (10 minutes)



## Welcome and workshop overview (15 minutes)

Welcome your team members. Thank them for their presence and their willingness to take part in this RenewalWorks process at the church. Ask them to give their names and to answer two questions:

*How long have you been a part of our church?*

*What did you have to leave (or flee) to join us today?*

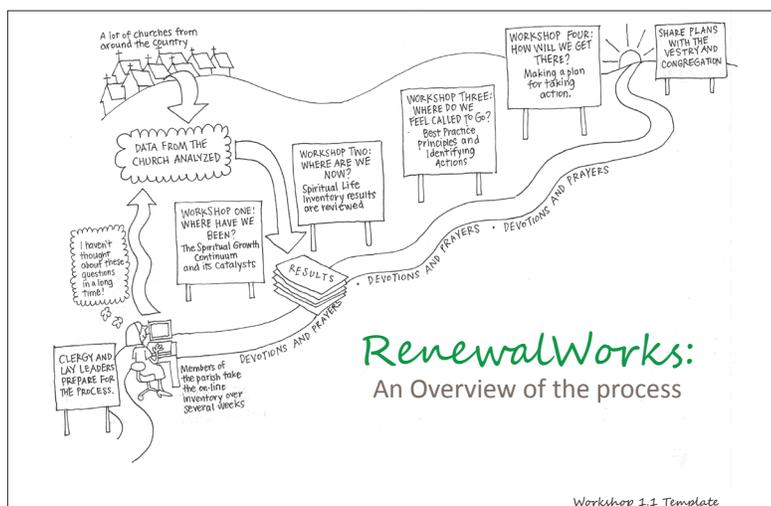
Even when team members seem to know one another, this simple introduction tells everyone that their voice and presence matter to the group.

Explain that as facilitator, you will guide the process but the outcome will be collaborative. Point out that the ideas, experiences, and reflections of every member will be important, from those who come barreling in with an armload of ideas to the folks who need time to sift through what is said before contributing their thoughts. You're in this together.

There's a lot to do in four meetings, and a few ground rules can ensure that each person's time and contributions are valued. Your team may have some additions, but we suggest that your list include:

- Smartphones off
- Stick to the schedule
- Focus on the work at hand (no working ahead)
- Listen carefully to others, fully present to what they have to say
- Respect the uniqueness of everyone's spiritual journey
- Share what you are learning about RenewalWorks and spiritual growth outside the workshops, but keep the personal stories and views of your team members confidential

Offer a short introduction to the four workshops using Template 1.1 to help the team visualize the process. Point out that the road we're on may curve, but it keeps moving forward and does not stop. Finishing the tasks of each workshop is vital, as they build on each other.



## Workshop 1: Where have we been?

This workshop explores the spiritual journey. Team members discuss their individual spiritual journeys and the role the church has played. Empirical findings discussed in *Footsteps* are reviewed. The spiritual continuum with its four distinct stages is described, along with the catalysts that get us moving toward a deeper spiritual life. Together, they serve as a basis for understanding the inventory findings in upcoming workshops.

## Workshop 2: Where are we now?

This workshop addresses the first half of the report from your church's Spiritual Life Inventory. The data is summarized several ways and benchmarked against more than 1,600 churches that have also taken the online survey. The resulting profile of your church's spiritual health and vitality provides a clear picture of where the congregation is now and a baseline for planning future growth initiatives. Exercises are designed to help the team begin to chart next steps. Episcopal beliefs and practices are reviewed, and the team identifies those they care most about and where they'd like to grow.



## Workshop 3: Where do we feel called to go?

Best practice principles based on vital congregations from around the country are described, and the second part of the Spiritual Life Inventory report, which corresponds to those principles, is discussed. The last phase of this intensive workshop is about imagining what your church could look like.

## Workshop 4: How do we get there?

This workshop is about priorities and specific plans—both for the church and for the workshop team. It includes an opportunity for participants to reflect on the ways they hope to move forward in the spiritual journey. In the end, a clear plan and action steps should emerge, ready to share with the vestry and ultimately, the congregation. This planning is not so much about new programming or ministries as it is about a cultural shift that refocuses your church's life and ministry on spiritual growth.

## Prayer and reflection (15 minutes)

Prayer and reflection on scripture, included in each workshop, provide a way to center as a group and to invite God to be present in your work together. In this first session, ask the team to open their Participant's Workbook and join in saying the Prayer of Self-Dedication from *The Book of Common Prayer* (p. 832), found at Workshop 1, Prayer and Reflection.

*Almighty and eternal God, so draw our hearts to you, so guide our minds, so fill our imaginations, so control our wills, that we may be wholly yours, utterly dedicated to you; and then use us, we pray, as you will, and always to your glory and the welfare of your people; through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.*

Ask different members of the group to read the verses that follow the prayer in the workbook:

*The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to till it and keep it.*  
—Genesis 2:15

*What are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them?  
Yet you have made them a little lower than God and crowned them with glory and honor.*  
—Psalm 8:4-5

*For we are what God has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life.*  
—Ephesians 2:10

*Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.*  
—1 Corinthians 12:27

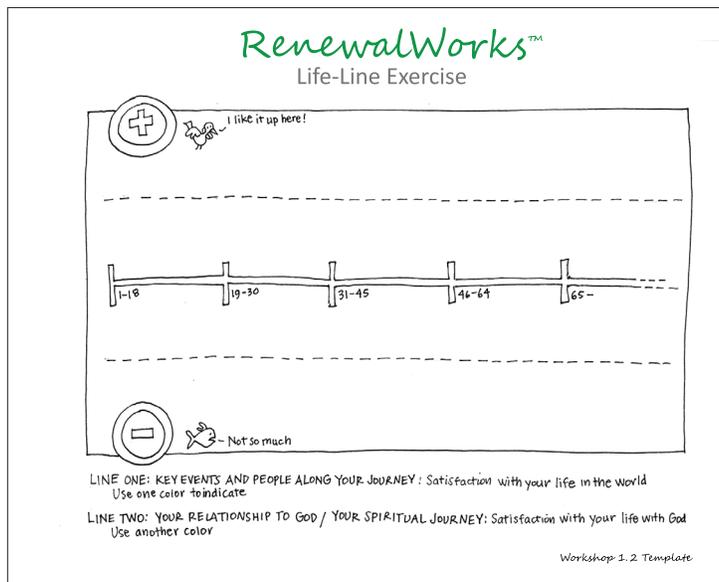
*Nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.*  
—Romans 8:39b

Ask participants which words or phrases resonate with them. Don't worry about writing them down. You'll want to keep this to five minutes or less, as you have lots still to do in this workshop.

The variety in the group's responses shows the different ways we hear and interpret the Bible, based on our experiences and beliefs. Share that insight as you transition to the life-line exercise below.

## Exercise 1: Personal experience discussion (15 minutes)

Introduce the Life-line Exercise, using the poster-size copy of Template 1.2. Keep the introduction brief.



Explain that the first step in this session's exploration of spiritual growth is to consider our own spiritual journeys. That work begins with Exercise 1: Your Life-line, which comes next in the workbook. The exercise asks us to map some of the significant events and people in our lives, both positive and negative, and then to trace the ebbs and flows in our relationship with God.

Point out that the middle line represents the middle ground or status quo in our satisfaction with our lives at various ages. Ask participants to follow the instructions in their workbook, noting the positive,

growing times in their lives and their relationship with God above the midline, and times involving loss or diminishment, below it.

Let them know they have five minutes for the exercise, and then will break into groups of four for discussion.

Life-line exercise instructions in the Participant's Workbook:

1) Take some time to think back over your life. Select five to ten key events and people that have had an impact on you, for better or worse, and place a word or symbol for each in the appropriate place on the drawing. The middle line divides your life-line into segments by age and represents the middle ground or status quo in your satisfaction with it. If an event or person brought growth and positive movement in your life, put its word or symbol somewhere above the line at the appropriate age range. If the opposite is true, if it had a negative impact, place that word or symbol below the line. Once you have indicated the most important five to ten events in your life, connect the events with a line.

Notice the path the line takes in relation to the middle line.

2) Look at the life-line again and consider your relationship to God over the course of your life. Take a different color marker and draw a new line that represents the story of your relationship with God. It should move above the midline to mark the times when you were growing closer to God and below it when God (or perhaps you) seemed distant or absent.

Take a moment to note where key events and people on the first line are related to your experience of the nearness or absence of God.

*Give the group a generous five minutes to complete the life-line exercise, helping anyone who appears to have a question. Then divide them into breakout groups of four. This part of the exercise should take ten minutes.*

Reassure any participants who feel they've not completed their life-line that it's okay. This is thoughtful work, sometimes intense, but we need to honor everyone's time and keep sessions moving. (Plus, there's no prohibition against digging into the exercise a little more deeply when you get home.)

**In the breakout groups, ask participants to:**

- *Focus on where you were five years ago: share a description of your life at that time with the group, including major events and the way your faith journey weaves through them (two to three minutes for each person).*
- *Listen for common drivers in the ways faith grows or diminishes as each person speaks.*

**When everyone has spoken, ask the breakout groups to consider the following questions:**

- *Is anyone in the same place they were five years ago?*
- *Find a word or two to describe the difference in your faith today compared to five years ago.*

*Summarize with the group as a whole*

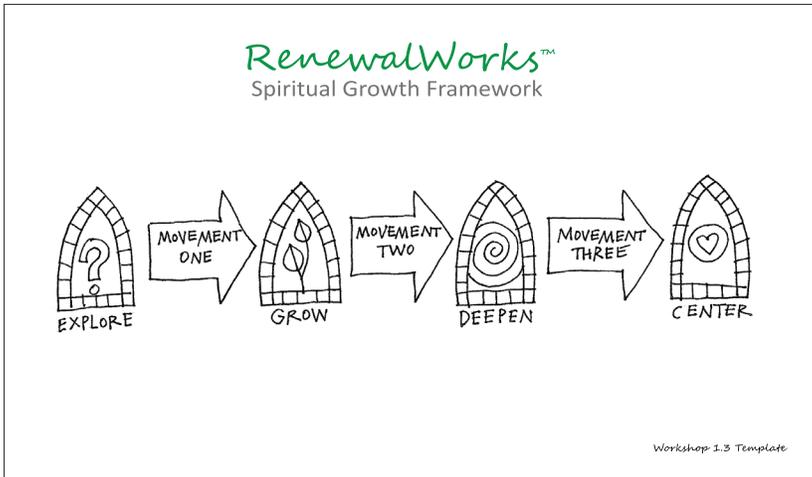
In this exercise, we've begun thinking about our individual spiritual journeys, the way they are woven through the changes and chances of our lives. We've heard from other team members, and we've looked for commonalities in what moves us toward or away from God.

We've seen that none of us are precisely where we were five years ago. Our lives as individuals are dynamic, always in motion. And we've also been reminded that our faith is dynamic as well. We're all on a spiritual journey. Our journeys matter to God, and they matter to the church.

Think about how this life-line exercise can be used beyond this workshop. How can it help you understand where you are in your faith journey? How can you use the life-line exercise as a team to assess the ways your church is helping people grow in love of God and neighbor?

## Exercise 2: Spiritual life continuum (15 minutes)

Call the workshop team back together. Using Template 1.3, offer a short introduction to the spiritual continuum described in the third chapter of *Footsteps* (five minutes max). The material below may help you prepare.



“The process of growing as disciples of Christ—spiritual growth—requires that we always are growing in love of God and love of others.”

—Jay Sidebotham, *Footsteps*

The Spiritual Life Inventory is based on research that began at a large, non-denominational church in 2003. Since 2009, we have been applying that research and studying Episcopal congregations to better understand the attitudes and behaviors linked to spiritual growth and to discover what helps people grow in love of God and neighbor.

Contrary to expectations, the research has shown that activity and longevity in a congregation have only limited impact on spiritual growth. When researchers looked past their assumptions and analyzed the survey data, they observed four distinct stages along a continuum that describe the way we grow in love and discipleship. They also identified catalysts that help us move to the next stage in our spiritual journey.

### The four stages on the spiritual continuum are:

#### Exploring Life with God (about 19% of Episcopalians surveyed)\*

In this first stage, people are taking their first steps in an intentional spiritual journey, exploring basic beliefs and practices in the Episcopal tradition. They believe in God but may not be sure who Jesus is for them. Their faith is probably not yet a significant part of their life.

#### Growing a Life with God (about 54% of Episcopalians surveyed)\*

The people in this group are more committed to their Christian faith, but still have a lot of questions. (No surprise there—Episcopalians love questions.) They believe in Jesus and are working on what it means to follow him. Their faith is closely linked to their church community.

\*Percentages as of December 2018 data

### Deepening in Life with God (about 23% of Episcopalians surveyed)

This group is more dedicated to personal spiritual practices outside of the church (reading the Bible at home, taking time in prayer and solitude). They feel close to God and depend on God's power and presence in their lives.

### Life with God in the center (about 4% of Episcopalians surveyed)

For people in this fourth stage, faith is at the center of life and guides everything they do. They may talk about giving their life to Christ or becoming his disciple.

*\*Percentages as of December 2018 data*

*At this point, it's a good idea to say a little about how RenewalWorks understands the spiritual journey:*

The Spiritual Life Inventory and RenewalWorks are not about putting people (or churches) into boxes. The goal is to refocus our lives and the life of the church on spiritual growth, to show how faith grows along a continuum and to provide a roadmap for going deeper. We can all go deeper.

RenewalWorks is well aware that spiritual growth, like all growth, is not always linear. The longing for a deeper relationship with God is at the heart of our lives as Christians, but we all backtrack now and then or wander off. The spiritual continuum is a tool that can help us sort out where we are as individuals and as a church so that we can better encourage one another in our life with God.

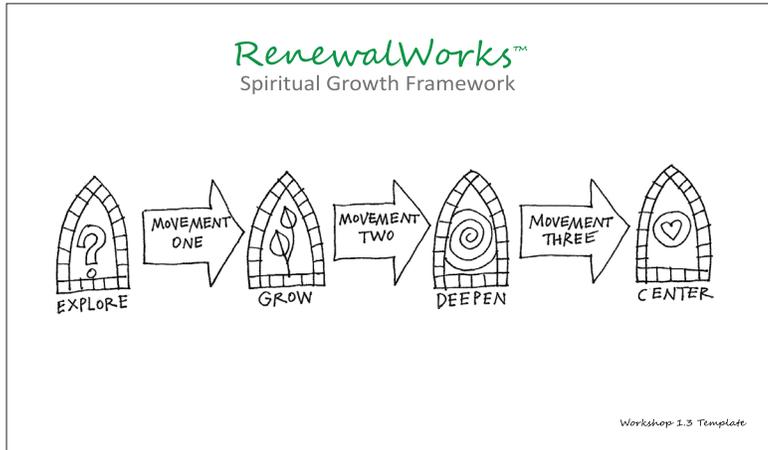
*If your team has more than eight members, divide into small groups. This exercise should take ten minutes.*

Ask the groups to discuss the ways in which the spiritual continuum describes their own experiences of spiritual growth.



## Exercise 3: Spiritual growth catalysts (15 minutes)

Call the team back together, and offer a short description of the spiritual growth catalysts (five minutes max). Use the poster-size copy of Template 1.3. The material below may help you prepare.



The four stages of the spiritual continuum give us a tool for understanding spiritual growth, but they don't answer the question: what gets people moving from one stage to the next? That's an important question for churches. When the Spiritual Life Inventory results were studied with that question in mind, a series of drivers (or catalysts) was identified—key beliefs and practices that move us from exploring to growing, from growing to deepening, and from deepening to a life centered on God.

At every stage along the spiritual continuum, the single, most important driver for spiritual growth was time spent reflecting on scripture. For Episcopalians, the eucharist was a significant catalyst. Prayer and service also were found to play a powerful role in keeping people moving forward.

### Catalysts for moving from Exploring to Growing

This transition is about building trust in God through beliefs. Coming to grips with core ideas like grace, the Trinity, and the notion of a personal God help people make the decision to follow Jesus. Participation in the eucharist, giving thanks in prayer, serving in a church ministry, helping those in need all help people in this stage grow in faith. Often the church and clergy serve as primary helpers and teachers.

### Catalysts for moving from Growing to Deepening

Personal spiritual practices are important in the move from growing to deepening. People heading into this transition still depend on the church and its clergy for encouragement, but they begin to build their own practice. They reflect on scripture, seek guidance through prayer, spend time in solitude, and give proportionally or tithe to deepen their spiritual knowledge and faith. Regular Bible reading, participating in a small group, praying for others, and serving those in need all serve as catalysts that help move people toward a deeper life with God. This group often says that spiritual growth is more important than church membership.

## Catalysts for moving from Deepening to Centered

Faith in action in the world is key for this transition. This group speaks of falling in love with God and being able to talk about that relationship with others. They take responsibility for their own spiritual growth. Solitude, reflection, prayer for guidance, and loving God are all catalysts that help people move toward a life centered on God. This group looks to the church to encourage them in their practice and challenge them to keep learning and growing. They expect church leaders to be authentic about their spiritual lives.

When you have finished describing spiritual growth catalysts, remind the group that the spiritual journey does not necessarily proceed along a straight line. Point out that RenewalWorks' research indicates that busy lives—not crises—are the principal reason we become stalled or regress along the spiritual continuum. We lose our focus on faith because we're too busy with other things. That's why RenewalWorks believes it is crucial that churches make it their priority to create and communicate ways to help stressed, busy people continue growing in faith and discipleship.

*Ask participants to return to their small groups to discuss the questions below.*

- *Do the catalysts make sense, based on your experience?*
- *What do the four stages along the spiritual life continuum and the catalysts that get people moving tell you about spiritual growth? What fosters it? What gets in the way?*

## Small group sharing (15 minutes)

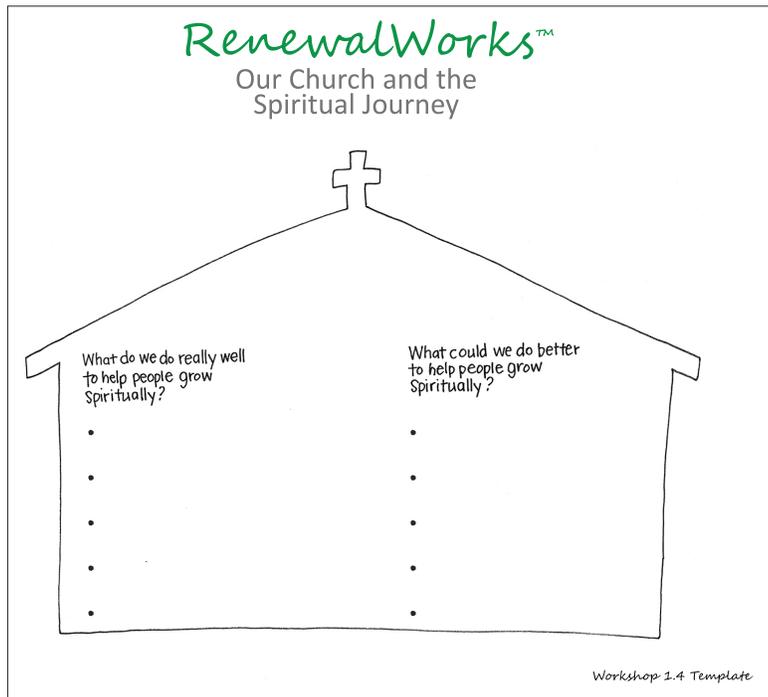
*Ask the groups to report their findings to the team as a whole.*

*If there's still time when groups have finished reporting, you may want to discuss the questions below.*

- *What commonalities and differences did you notice in the group reports?*
- *What is your biggest learning/takeaway from this workshop so far?*

## Exercise 4: Role of the church (20 minutes)

Introduce Exercise 4, using one of the poster-size copies of Template 1.4.



Explain that we've been exploring individual spiritual journeys up to this point in the session. We've heard how important the clergy/church role can be in nurturing that journey, especially for people in the first two stages of spiritual growth—exploring and growing. With that in mind, we'll take a look at how our church is doing at supporting and encouraging spiritual growth in the last exercise for this workshop.

Organize the team into three new breakout groups. Provide each with an easel and a poster-size copy of Template 1.4, and give them twenty minutes to answer the questions on the template. When the twenty minutes is up, bring the group back together for small-group sharing.

## Small-group sharing (15 minutes)

Ask the breakout groups to report their findings to the group as a whole. Listen for common themes and emerging issues and note them on a flip chart.

If there's time after the groups have finished reporting, lead the team in a discussion. Questions you might ask include:

- What are some commonalities and differences across the groups?
- What did you learn from this activity?

## Group reflection, homework, and closing prayer (10 minutes)

*Ask the group to turn to Workshop 1, Group Reflection and Closing, in the workbook. Give them a couple minutes to reflect and write down their key takeaways from this session.*

*Then invite them to turn the page and consider the passage of scripture below:*

*Therefore, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed me, not only in my presence, but much more now in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and work for his good pleasure.*

—Philippians 2:12-13

*Invite the team to reflect on the following questions:*

- *How does this passage intersect with your life?*
- *Think of an example of the ways God calls you to “work out your salvation”?*
- *Think of an example that shows how God has been “at work in you”?*
- *What are the challenges in your life of faith? What can you do to overcome those?*

*Share one minute in silent reflection on our life with God.*

Assign the homework for Workshop 2. Explain how and when participants can receive their copies of the materials:

- *Read your church’s demographic, community, and ten-year trend profiles.*
- *Read Part One of the Data Findings Report for your church’s Spiritual Life Inventory*
- *Read Brian Taylor’s introduction to Strength for the Journey by Renée Miller, found at Workshop 2 in your Participant’s Workbook*
- *Read the Episcopal Beliefs and Practices document, found at Workshop 2 in your Participant’s Workbook*

Remind the Workshop Team of the next meeting date and time. Encourage them to pray daily for this effort.

*Close with the Lord’s Prayer.*

# Workshop 1: Checklist and materials

## Before the workshop

*Obtain copies of Footsteps for your workshop team from Forward Movement ([www.forwardmovement.org](http://www.forwardmovement.org)) Your church's participation in RenewalWorks means that the first three are free, and copies after that are available at a discount when you use the special code at checkout.*

*Distribute the copies to each member of the team and ask them to read it before Workshop 1.*

\_\_\_\_\_ *Footsteps* (copies ordered, received, and distributed to the team)

## Materials needed for the workshop

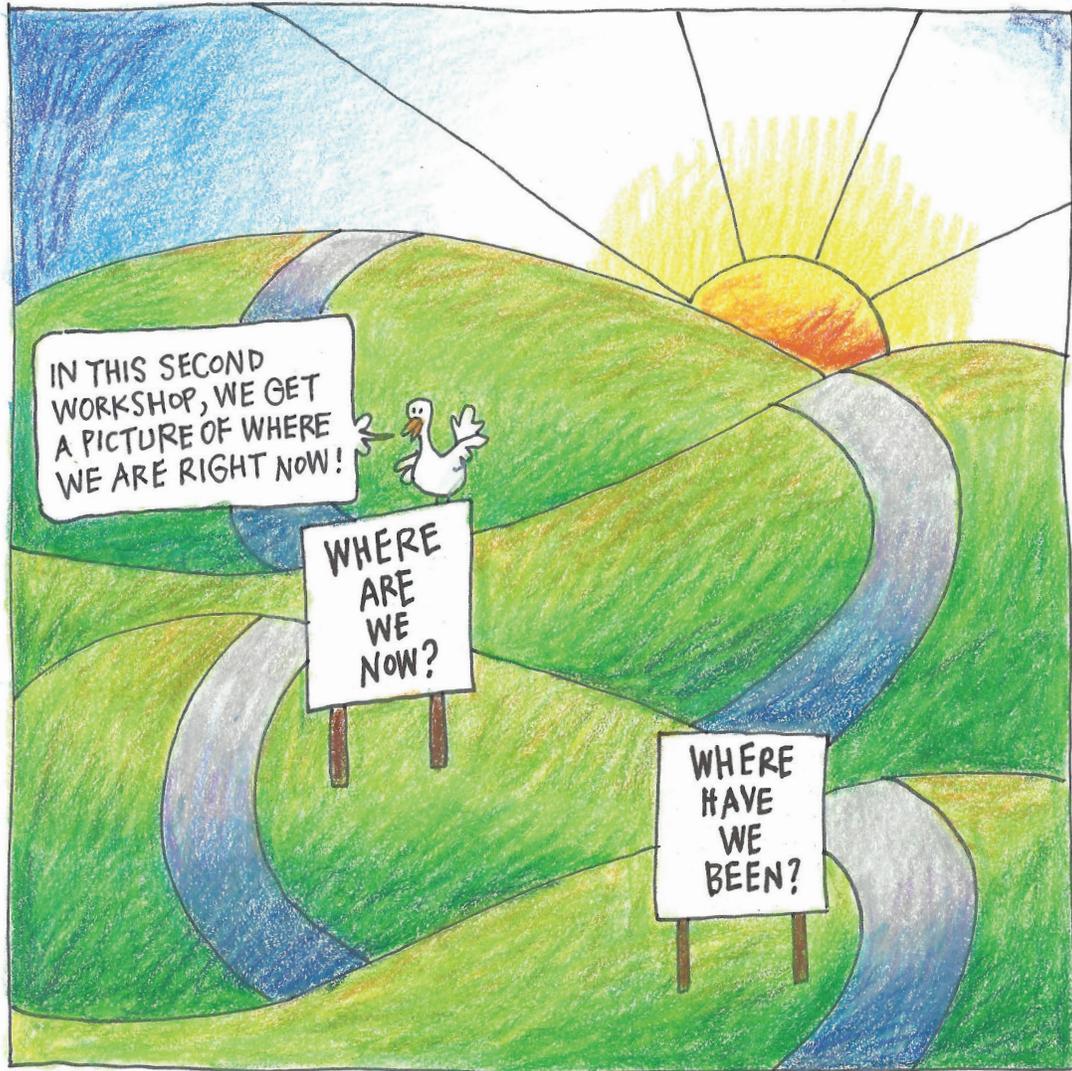
*These templates are scaled to poster size and ready for your local copy shop in the separate Workshop Templates file. You need single copies for Templates 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, and four copies for 1.4.*

\_\_\_\_\_ Template 1.1, RenewalWorks: An Overview of the Process

\_\_\_\_\_ Template 1.2, Life-line Exercise (*before the workshop, fill in an example or two from your own life to help the team understand the exercise*)

\_\_\_\_\_ Template 1.3, Spiritual Growth Framework

\_\_\_\_\_ Template 1.4, Our Church and the Spiritual Journey (*four copies for this one!*)



# Workshop 2

## Where are we now?

In this second session, the workshop team takes a first look at the Spiritual Inventory data, along with the information contained in the Community Profile, Parish Profile: 10-Year Trend Data, and Parish Demographic Profile. This helps determine where the church is now. Working with the Data Findings Report: Part One, the group will discuss what the Spiritual Life Inventory reveals about the congregation's spiritual health and vitality. The team will also look at Episcopal beliefs and practices that support and encourage their spiritual growth.

At the end of this session, the team should have a clear picture of where the congregation is now, a snapshot they can use in the last two sessions to dream and plan new ways to help their church grow in love of God and neighbor.

## GETTING READY FOR WORKSHOP 2

*Use the checklist at the end of this workshop to help you prepare.*

Prepare the Community Profile, Parish Profile: 10-Year Trend Data and Parish Demographic Profile. (Forms for this are found in the Appendix.) You can complete these forms yourself or enlist the help of your church's parish administrator or a volunteer. A lot of this information will come from recent parochial reports. Your parish office will have these. Information on the community and some parish data can be found at [www.episcopalchurch.org/research-and-statistics](http://www.episcopalchurch.org/research-and-statistics). It may be difficult to pin down all the information on the forms. Do the best you can.

### Distribute the following materials to each workshop team member:

- Community Profile
- Parish Profile: 10-Year Trend Data (includes some community trends as well)
- Parish Demographic Profile
- Data Findings Report: Part One

### For this workshop session you'll need to provide:

- Single poster-size copies of Templates 2.1 and 2.2
- Templates for the individual items in Episcopal Beliefs and Practices to post around the perimeter of the meeting room. Do this before the workshop begins, as it can take a while.
- Red and green stickers for the Beliefs and Practices dot exercise—five red and five green for each participant
- Two or three flipcharts on easels for taking notes
- Markers in different colors
- Masking tape

### Workshop 2 agenda

*In fifteen-minute segments, except where noted*

- Welcome and workshop overview
- Prayer and reflection
- Exercise 1: Parish and community profiles
- Data Findings Report: Part One (10 minutes)
- Exercise 2: Breakout groups explore Data Findings Report: Part One
- Breakout groups report
- Episcopal beliefs and practices dot exercise
- Homework and closing prayer (5 minutes)



## Welcome and workshop overview (15 minutes)

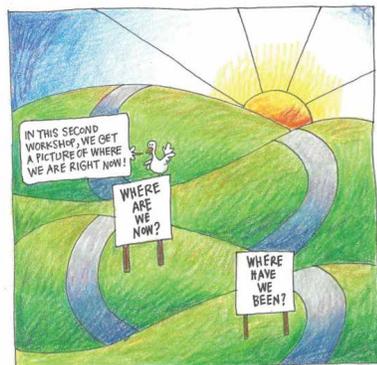
With the first workshop under their belts, your team members know that they're in for a busy evening. Take a few minutes to relax and focus on the group as you convene the session. Thank participants for coming—for doing their homework and for their prayers between workshops. Invite them to give their names again, and ask them to tell the group what they do with the bulk of their time.

After this brief introduction, remind the group of the guidelines adopted in the first session:

- Smartphones off
- Stick to the schedule
- Focus on the work at hand (no working ahead)
- Listen carefully to others, fully present to what they have to say
- Respect the uniqueness of everyone's spiritual journey
- Share what you are learning about RenewalWorks and spiritual growth outside the workshops, but keep the personal stories and views of your team members confidential

Provide an overview of the session. Explain that this second workshop is focused on developing a clear picture of where the congregation is now. The team will work briefly with the profiles received before the workshop and then delve into Part One of the Data Findings Report developed from the congregation's Spiritual Life Inventory. They'll also consider Episcopal beliefs and practices to determine which are most important to them.

Remind the team that this workshop is not about solving issues they may see in the Data Findings Report. Workshops three and four are devoted to problem solving and looking ahead.

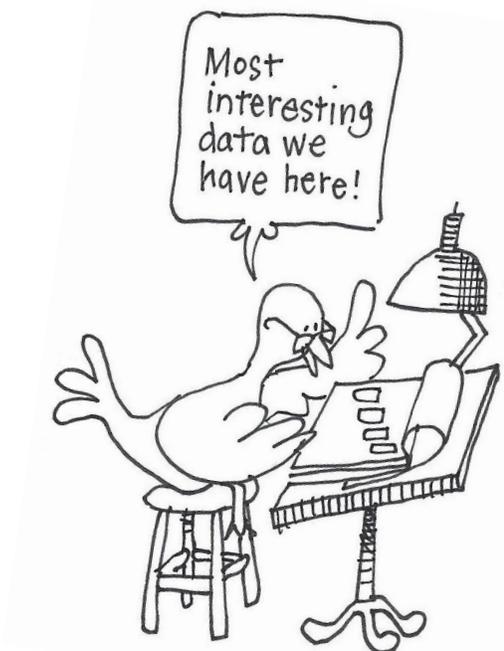


Where are we now?

**RenewalWorks™**  
Spiritual Life Inventory Data Findings for  
St. Swithin's

Part 1: For use with Workshop #2

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## Prayer and reflection (15 minutes)

*Prayer and reflection come next. Invite the Spirit into your work together and take a moment to help people center and focus on the work ahead. Ask the team to open their Participant's Workbook to Workshop 2, Prayer and Reflection, and join in saying the Prayer for the Church from The Book of Common Prayer (p. 816):*

*Gracious Father, we pray for thy holy catholic Church. Fill it with all truth, in all truth with all peace. Where it is corrupt, purify it. Where it is in error, direct it; where in any thing it is amiss, reform it. Where it is right, strengthen it; where it is in want, provide for it; where it is divided, reunite it; for the sake of Jesus Christ thy Son our Savior. Amen.*

*Then invite the group to read and reflect on the scripture passage, Ephesians 4:11-16, that follows. You may want to ask someone to read it aloud.*

*The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ. We must no longer be children, tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine, by people's trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming. But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knitted together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love.*

*Ask group members to share their reflections on the questions below—in small groups or as whole, depending on the size of your team:*

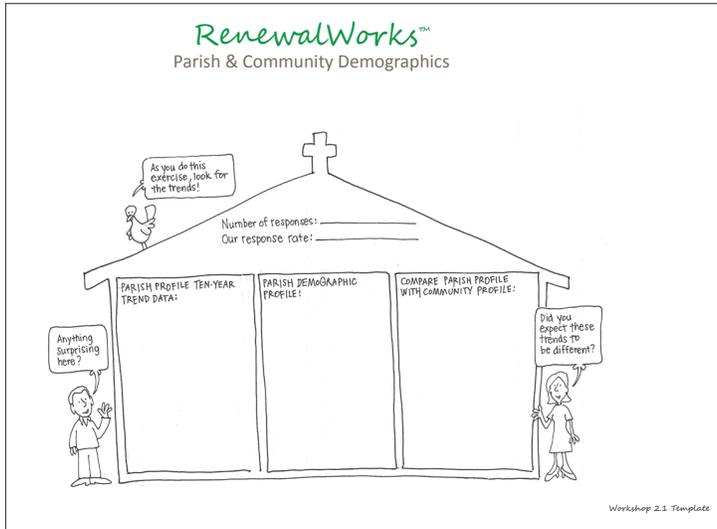
- What word or phrase strikes you from this passage? (Just the word or phrase.)
- What does this passage tell us about spiritual growth?
- What does this passage tell us about the work we are doing in this process?

*Conclude with a brief prayer, giving thanks for this gathering and asking God's blessing on your work together.*



## Exercise 1: Parish and community profiles (15 minutes)

*Tape Template 2.1, Parish & Community Demographics, on the wall at the front of the room, and write in the group's observations during the exercise. Have a few extra copies of the completed profile documents in case someone forgets theirs.*



Ask group members to pull out their copies of the Community Profile, the Parish Profile: 10-Year Trend Data, and the Parish Demographic Profile. Explain that this exercise is meant to help us identify some outstanding trends in our church and community. The exercise will also provide some background for our work with the Data Findings Report that follows.

Beginning with the Parish Profile: 10-Year Trend Data, ask team members to comment on how the parish and the surrounding community have grown, shrunk, or changed over the ten-year period. Note the findings on Template 2.1.

Next look at the Parish Demographic Profile, identifying the places where your numbers are strong, where they are not, and anything else the data indicates about your church community. Then compare your church's profile with the Community Profile to see where your church reflects the composition of the community and where it is different. Record your observations on Template 2.1.

When the group has considered all three reports, take a moment to review what they've found. See if the exercise has revealed any trends showing growth or decline, connections or disconnects, in your church and community.

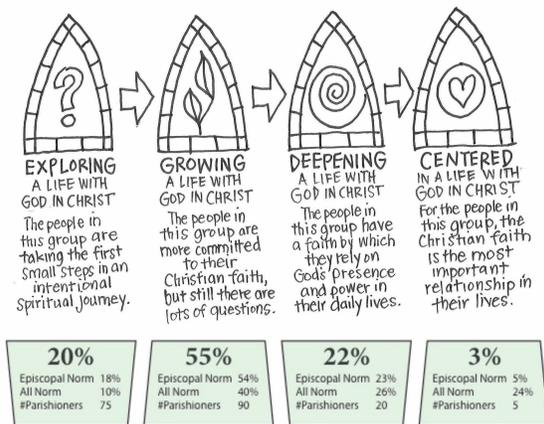
## Data Findings Report: Part One (10 minutes)

Make sure you have a few extra copies of the relevant sections from Part One of the Data Findings Report, in case anyone needs one.

Take the group through the sections of the Data Findings Report addressed in this workshop:

### Spiritual Continuum Profile

This chart profiles how your 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 God. Our hope is that parishioners will continue to deepen that relationship and continue to move along the continuum.



As you guide your workshop team through this first part of the report, begin with the reminder that the focus on spiritual growth is as old as the Bible, running through scripture as a consistent theme. Remind the team that the report represents the vantage point of parishioners. Encourage them to look for trends, and to avoid getting bogged down in individual data points. You'll need to move quick. Explain that there are two different databases for the sake of comparison, one reflecting Episcopal congregations, the other representing all churches in the database. Review response rate and demographics.

Then review the Spiritual Continuum Profile, presented in Workshop One. Indicate where parishioners see themselves in relation to the four stages. Knowing this will be helpful, because drivers or catalysts that get people moving spiritually vary from stage to stage. What are the trends? Do the majority of your parishioners exist in one or two categories? Is the congregation spread across three or four groups?

The conversation then shifts to the three distinct components of the spiritual vitality of your parish: beliefs, practices and faith in action. Touch on each of these quickly. Remember, you have limited time in this exercise.

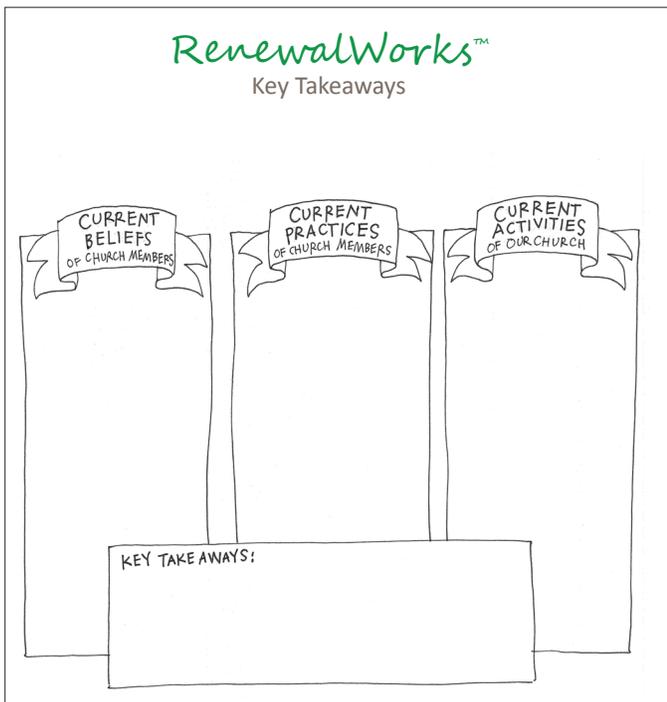
Consider Episcopal beliefs that parishioners find most important. Note key trends without getting bogged down in debate about these beliefs. Talk about the spiritual practices of congregants, how they practice their faith not only on Sundays, but throughout the week. Finally, notice insights about the ways parishioners put faith into action in service.

Finally, highlight the key themes of the spiritual profile of your church, based on the combination of these three components. What is the level of satisfaction with the church's role in spiritual growth? What are the priorities indicated by those who are looking for more?

Sum up with words about the Spiritual Vitality Index, meant not as a grade, but as a snapshot of where the members of your congregation are in their spiritual journey, all intended to help you build a culture focused on spiritual growth. It's a lot to cover in a short period of time.

## Exercise 2: Breakout groups explore Data Findings Report: Part One (15 minutes)

*Break the team into three subgroups and assign one of the following questions to each:*



*What have we learned about the current beliefs of the congregation?*

*What have we learned about current practices of the congregation?*

*What have we learned about current church activities of the congregation?*

Explain that they have fifteen minutes to work on their question, using information from *Footsteps*, the Data Findings Report: Part One, and the Community/Parish Profiles. Ask the groups to designate a reporter to share their conclusions with the workshop team.

## Breakout groups report (15 minutes)

*Ask the designated reporter from each breakout group to share the group's conclusions with the full team. Document their findings on Template 2.2, Key Takeaways.*

## Episcopal beliefs and practices dot exercise (15 minutes)

*Distribute five red stickers and five green stickers to each member of the team, and introduce the exercise.*

Point out that this exercise builds on what we've learned about our congregation's beliefs and practices from the Data Findings Report. Explain that churches often find it important and helpful to think about the core tenets of our faith and life as Episcopalians.

Ask the team to read the compilation of Episcopal beliefs and practices found in the appendix of their workbook in silence, and then to select the five beliefs or practices that they care most about and five in which they would like to grow deeper.

When three to five minutes are up, instruct the group to find the beliefs/and or practices they care most about on the posters displayed around the room. Ask them to place their red stickers on those statements

to show where they give their heart (another way to describe belief). Tell them that it's okay to put multiple stickers on one belief or practice. Then ask the group to put their green stickers on the posters with the beliefs or practices in which they would like to grow or go deeper.

When everyone has placed their stickers, invite the team to talk about what the placement of the dots tells them. Use a flipchart to take notes on the discussion.

*Are there predominant beliefs or practices that are important or that call us to go deeper?*

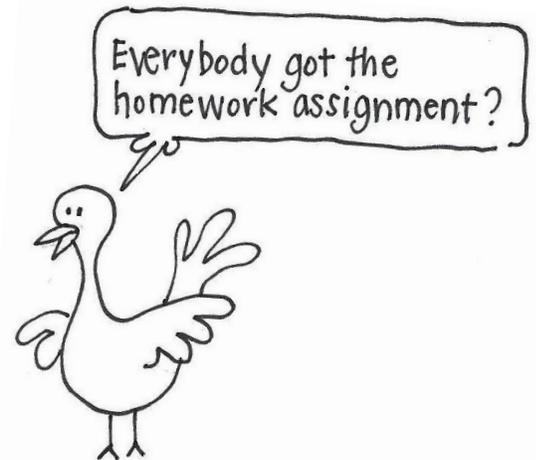
*What themes or trends do we see?*

*How do our results for this exercise correlate with the Data Findings Report?*

## **Homework and closing prayer** **(5 minutes)**

Assign the homework for Workshop 3:

- *Review the notes from this workshop, which will be distributed before the next session*
- *Read Part Two of the Data Findings Report, Church Profile, which will also be distributed before the next session*
- *Read “Spiritually Vital Congregations: Best Practice Principles,” included at Workshop 3, Getting ready, in the Participant’s Workbook.*



Remind the team of the next meeting date and time. Encourage them to pray daily for this effort.

*Close by rereading the Ephesians passage and the prayer for the church.  
End with the Lord’s Prayer.*

## **Facilitator’s homework:**

Select one to three people to prepare a beginning draft for the workshop team’s report to the vestry. The subgroup will be announced at the end of Workshop 3 and will need to distribute their draft to the team prior to Workshop 4. Work on the report will continue in that last workshop and beyond.

Let the clergy leader and wardens know that they will need to hold a separate discussion on the Heart of the Leader best practice principle and report their conclusions during Workshop 4.

## Workshop 2: Checklist and materials

### Before the workshop

*Using the forms found in the Appendix, and with the help of the parish administrator and/or a volunteer, prepare the profile information below. Then distribute copies of the completed forms and the first part of the Data Findings Report to each team member before Workshop 2.*

- \_\_\_\_\_ Community Profile
- \_\_\_\_\_ Parish Profile: 10-Year Trend Data (includes some community trends as well)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Parish Demographic Profile
- \_\_\_\_\_ Data Findings Report: Part One

### Materials needed for the workshop

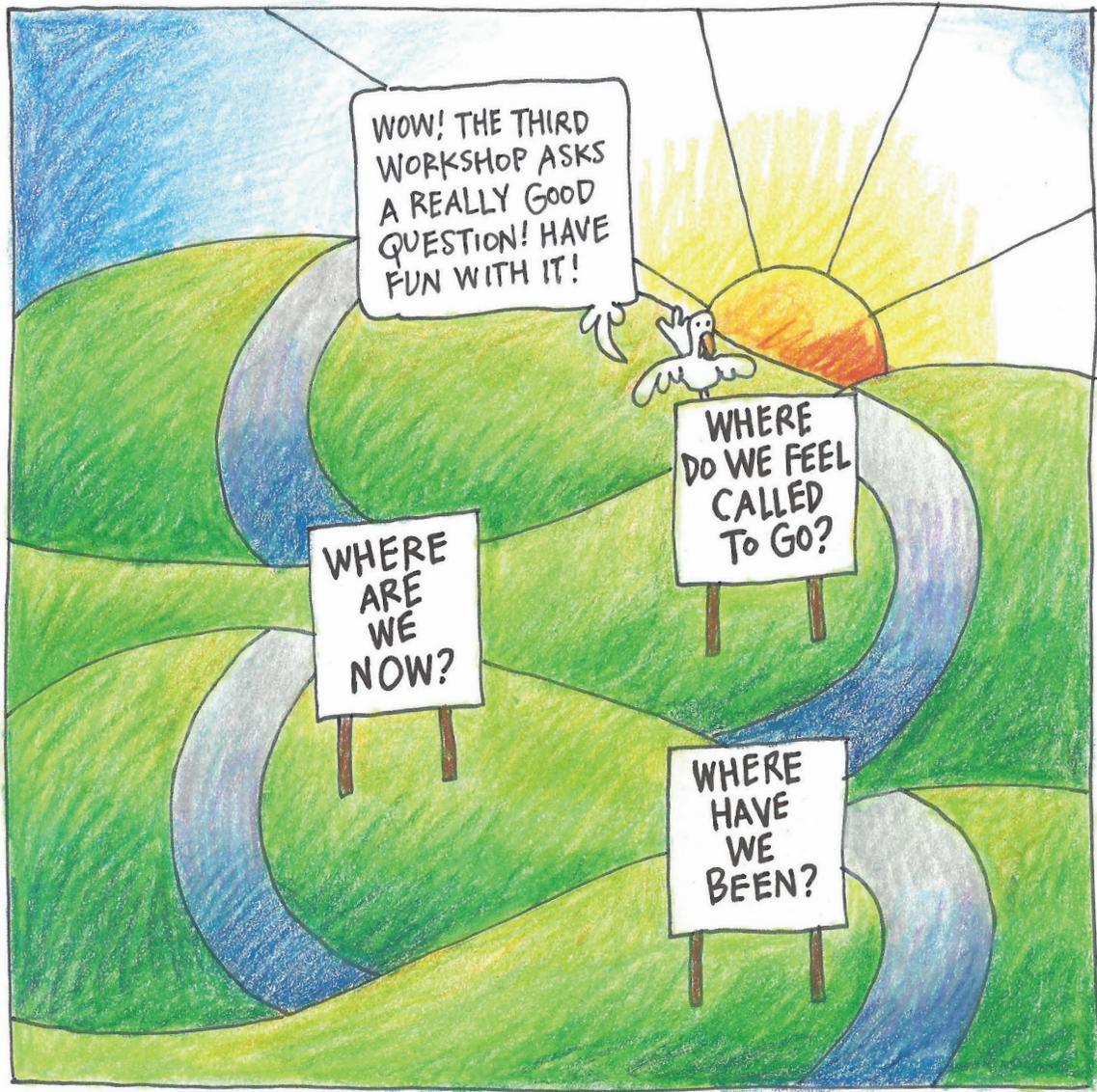
*These templates are scaled to poster size and ready for your local copy shop in the separate Workshop Templates file. The dot exercise templates are four to a template and need to be cut apart. You need single copies for each.*

- \_\_\_\_\_ Template 2.1, Parish & Community Demographics
- \_\_\_\_\_ Template 2.2, Key Takeaways
- \_\_\_\_\_ Templates for the Episcopal Beliefs and Practices dot exercise (these are 4-up and will need to be cut at the copy shop)

### Pre-reading for Workshop 2

*See the Appendix. These readings are also found in the Participant's Workbook.*

- \_\_\_\_\_ Brian Taylor's introduction to *Strength for the Journey* by Renée Miller
- \_\_\_\_\_ Episcopal Beliefs and Practices



# Workshop 3

## Where do we feel called to go?

Building on what was learned in Workshop 2, this session looks at what RenewalWorks research and your congregation's data tells you about how your church can encourage and support spiritual growth. Turning to Part Two of the Data Findings Report, the team explores five best practice principles found in the top five percent of spiritually vital churches and considers how those principles can be applied in the congregation. By the end of the workshop, they will have explored one to three (maybe four) of those principles as pathways to increased spiritual growth as a congregation and as individuals. They will also learn about the subgroup that will begin drafting their report to the vestry.

## GETTING READY FOR WORKSHOP 3

*Use the checklist at the end of this workshop to help you prepare.*

### Distribute the following to each workshop team member for their review before Workshop 3:

- Spiritual Life Inventory Data Findings Report: Part Two
- Notes from Workshop 2, which should include:
  - 1) Your congregation's composition on the spiritual continuum from the Data Findings Report: Part One
  - 2) Takeaways identified in the breakout group discussions of the Data Findings Report: Part One (recorded on Template 2.2)
  - 3) Significant observations and trends in your church and community noted in the Parish Profiles discussion
  - 4) Results of the Beliefs and Practices dot exercise

### For this workshop session you'll need to provide:

- Single poster-size copies of Templates 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5, and 3.6
- Two or three flipcharts on easels for taking notes
- Markers in different colors
- Masking tape

### Workshop 3 agenda

*In fifteen-minute segments, except where noted*

- Welcome, review, and workshop overview
- Prayer and reflection
- Best practice principles: What are they? (20 minutes)
- Breakout groups on best practice principles (20 minutes)
- Breakout groups report: Overall priorities (20 minutes)
- Group reflection, homework, and closing prayer



## Welcome, review, and workshop overview (15 minutes)

By now your team should be feeling more comfortable with one another and with their work together, but they still need to hear that you're glad to see them and grateful for their presence in this third workshop. Ask group members to give their names (yes, again) and to mention something they are thankful for this evening.

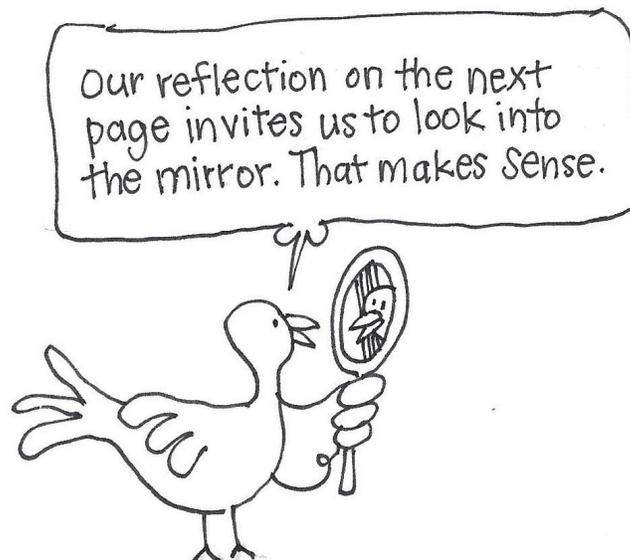
Remind people again of the guidelines agreed upon at the first workshop:

- Smartphones off
- Stick to the schedule
- Focus on the work at hand (no working ahead)
- Listen carefully to others, fully present to what they have to say
- Respect the uniqueness of everyone's spiritual journey
- Share what you are learning about RenewalWorks and spiritual growth outside the workshops, but keep the personal stories and views of your team members confidential

Briefly review the key information from Workshop 2, distributed to the team before this session:

- Congregation's composition on the Spiritual Continuum
- Observations and trends in the church and community noted during the profiles discussion
- Takeaways from the breakout groups' work with the Data Findings Report: Part One
- Beliefs and Practices Dot Exercise results

Explain that this workshop will look at the best practice principles of churches that have been identified as vibrant and healthy in RenewalWorks research. Team members will also consider what the Data Findings Report says about where their congregation wants to grow and determine pathways that will encourage and support that growth.



## Prayer and reflection (15 minutes)

*Open with a brief introduction to explain the context for the scripture reflection, followed by the Collect for the Parish (The Book of Common Prayer, p. 817) or another prayer, if you prefer.*

Point out that a mirror appears in scripture in several places. The image we see in a mirror may be distorted or clear, depending on its quality or our vision. Suggest that the data we're seeing is like a mirror held up to our life as a congregation. We need to take an honest look at what it tells us and let what we learn lead us, with God's help, to a more faithful and vibrant future.

In our reflection this evening, we want to do more than just read scripture. We want it to read us, to open us up to what we are learning about our congregation and ourselves.

*Almighty and everliving God, ruler of all things in heaven and earth, hear our prayers for this parish family. Strengthen the faithful, arouse the careless, and restore the penitent. Grant us all things necessary for our common life, and bring us all to be of one heart and mind within your holy Church, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

*Break into small groups of four or five to read and discuss the following passage, found at Workshop 3, Prayer and Reflection, in their Participant's Workbook.*

*But be doers of the word, and not merely hearers who deceive themselves. For if any are hearers of the word and not doers, they are like those who look at themselves in a mirror; for they look at themselves and, on going away, immediately forget what they were like. But those who look into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and persevere, being not hearers who forget but doers who act—they will be blessed in their doing.*

—James 1:22-25

**Ask the groups to consider these questions:**

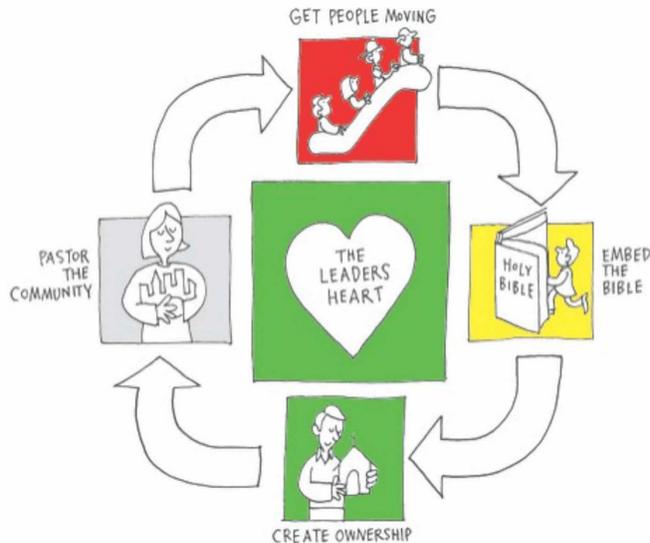
- *What word or phrase strikes you?*
- *What makes a church a “hearers only” church?*
- *How can we become a church that is more responsive, one that takes action?*
- *What does this passage mean in light of the findings in the second workshop, specifically, the data emerging from the inventory?*

End this time with prayer for the work before you in these final two workshops. You could ask someone to lead the prayer, or invite the team to pray as they are moved, saying, “I ask God that \_\_\_\_\_.”

## Best practice principles: What are they? (20 minutes)

*You can present this yourself, work with a co-presenter, or ask another team member to prepare the presentation. Begin by introducing the material from Part Two of the Data Findings report, using Template 3.1 as a visual.*

Best Practices Summary for St. Swithin's



Explain that RenewalWorks research identifies five best practice principles that show up consistently in the top five percent of churches identified as spiritually vital and healthy. Those five principles are:

- Heart of the Leader
- Get People Moving
- Embed the Bible in Everything
- Create Ownership
- Pastor the Community

Use the section “Best Practice Principles” in the Data Findings Report: Part Two to introduce best practice principles. Describe some of the

ways these principles have been put to work in other Episcopal churches. Point out that there’s no recipe for a spiritually vital congregation, but seeing what’s working in other places can help us see new possibilities for helping our congregation move forward.

Move on in Part Two of the report to consider what the data says about how your church is doing in each of the five categories. As you discuss these results, make sure the team understands the meaning of the colors used in the report:

- **Red** ■ — *The biggest opportunity area’s for your church.*
- **Yellow** ■ — *An opportunity area for your church*
- **Gray** ■ — *Not an area you need to focus on*
- **Green** ■ — *An area of strength, but possibly over-resourced*

Then review the color-coding on your church’s Best Practice Summary (found near the end of the report). Point out where it shows areas of opportunity. Invite questions and conversation on the Part Two information. Collect key comments on a flip chart.

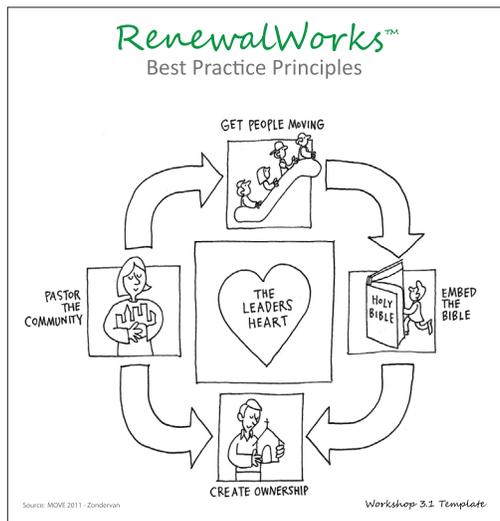
Before dividing into groups for this next important discussion, remind the team of the takeaways that emerged at the end of the second workshop, and ask them to consider where each fits into the best practice principles. Do the same with the Episcopal Beliefs and Practices dot exercise. If the exercise

showed that engagement with scripture is important, the Embedding the Bible group needs to include that in their discussion. If the dot exercise demonstrated a high value placed on service, the group working on Pastoring the Community needs to take that into consideration.

**Please note:** Before this third session, you'll join in a conference call with your clergy leader and RenewalWorks to discuss the Data Findings Report. Because your congregation's data may suggest that working with two or three of the best practice principles has the greatest potential for refocusing on spiritual growth, you'll also consider which principles to address in the next exercise.

## Breakout groups on best practice principles (20 minutes)

*In this exercise, you'll divide the team into breakout groups for each of the best practice principles you've decided to focus on. It will be two to four depending on your conference call prior to the workshop. Request that the rector and wardens meet separately to reflect on the Leader's Heart principle. (See Leader's Heart Breakout Tips in the appendix for details.)*



*Place the relevant Best Practice Principle template at each designated breakout group's area.*

Explain that we've come to a common understanding about these basic best practice principles and seen some of the ways other Episcopal congregations have put them into practice. We've considered what Part Two of the Data Findings Report tells us about how these principles are at work (or not) in our church. Now we'll divide into separate groups to consider the principles that our data and RenewalWorks' experience suggest would be most effective. Each group will brainstorm how one of these principles might be put to work in our congregation. The rector and wardens will discuss the Heart of the Leader in a separate session and report back in Workshop 4.

*Invite team members to join the group working with the best practice principle in which they have the greatest interest or knowledge. Ask the groups to:*

- Begin with what we learned about our congregation and community in Workshop 2 and build out from there.
- Discuss how your group's principle might be put to work in the congregation, maybe as a program or a shift in culture or an idea from "Spiritually Vital Congregations: Best Practice Principles," found in the appendix of your Participant's Workbook. The conversation may point you toward new program initiatives, but equally important, it may take you to culture shifts that have no impact on budget or staffing—things like beginning and ending all meetings with prayer, having prayer partners on the vestry and other committees, adding scripture reflection to outreach efforts, etc.

- Resist the temptation to come up with a long list of ideas that no one will have the time or energy to accomplish. Identify just a few ways to apply these principles to help your congregation move forward.

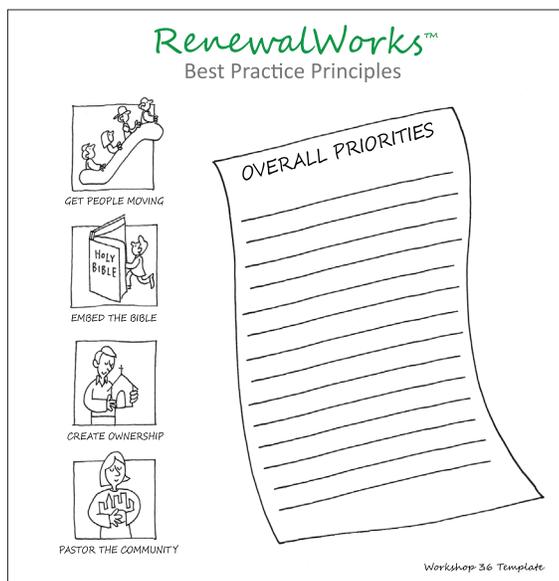
*Tell the groups to spend fifteen minutes on this discussion, and provide a five-minute warning before reconvening for their reports.*

## **Breakout groups report: Overall priorities (20 minutes)**

*Each group offers a five-minute (or less) summary of their discussion to the whole team. Take notes on the poster-sized Template 3.6, Overall Priorities.*

When the reports have all been given, summarize the main conclusions.

If there's time after the reports, invite the team to share their impressions of this workshop. You might ask:



- *What have we learned tonight that is important? If your spouse or partner or friend asked you what was most significant this evening, what would you say?*
- *What are you thankful for in this conversation?*
- *What do you find interesting or exciting about what we've discussed?*
- *What do you think will be challenging?*
- *What gives you hope?*

By the end of this session, a group plan or vision should be emerging.

## Group reflection, homework, and closing prayer (15 minutes)

*This workshop touches on our deep hope and desire for our life in the church. It can be pretty intense. You might want to light a candle, have a minute of silent prayer, or do something else to mark the end of the workshop and the transition to this time of reflection and prayer.*

*When you are ready to begin, ask the team to turn to the reading from First Corinthians at Workshop 3, Group Reflection and Closing, in their workbook, and introduce the reflection:*

We began our conversation this evening with the image of a mirror as a way to see ourselves. As we conclude, and in the spirit of embedding scripture in all we do, consider these words, written by Saint Paul to the church in Corinth:

*When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways. For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known.*

—1 Corinthians 13:11-12

Ask team members to spend five minutes in silence, reflecting on their first, childlike faith, how it has grown and changed, and how they hope to continue to grow. Encourage them to jot down their reflections below the reading in their workbook.

Then invite them to take another five minutes to share their thoughts in groups of two or three (or as a whole).

When that discussion ends, thank the group for their participation and invite them to hold this process in their prayers in days ahead.

Explain that a subgroup will work on a beginning draft of the team's report to the vestry, outlining what the team has learned and the priorities they have found for making spiritual growth the focus for their church's life and mission. Give the names of those on the subgroup, and tell the team that they will receive a copy of the draft before Workshop 4 to review as their homework. Ask them to bring the draft to the next session, where it will be the focus for the first discussion.

Announce the next meeting time and place, and invite people to come fifteen minutes early to get settled and greet one another.

*Close with the prayer used at the beginning of this workshop, the Lord's Prayer, or both—or substitute another prayer or devotion if you wish.*

## Workshop 3: Checklist and materials

### Before the workshop

*Distribute copies to each team member.*

\_\_\_\_\_ Data Findings Report: Part 2, Church Profile

*And the following notes from Workshop 2:*

\_\_\_\_\_ Your congregation's composition on the spiritual continuum from the Data Findings Report: Part One

\_\_\_\_\_ Significant observations and trends in your church and community noted in the Parish Profiles discussion

\_\_\_\_\_ Takeaways identified in the breakout group discussions of the Data Findings Report: Part One

\_\_\_\_\_ Results of the Beliefs and Practices dot exercise

### Materials needed for the workshop

*These templates are scaled to poster size and ready for your local copy shop in the separate Workshop Templates file. You need single copies for each.*

\_\_\_\_\_ Template 3.1, Best Practice Principles

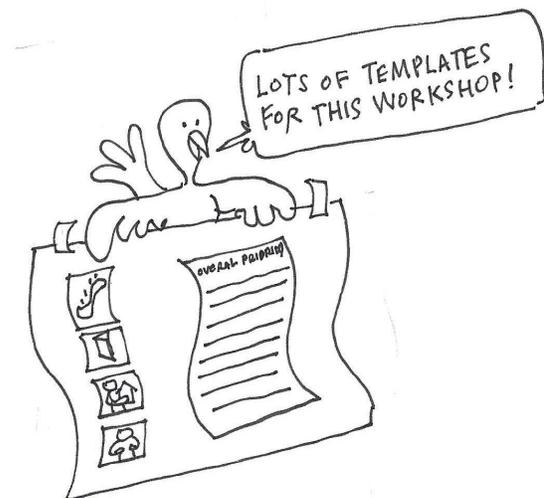
\_\_\_\_\_ Template 3.2, Get People Moving

\_\_\_\_\_ Template 3.3, Embed the Bible

\_\_\_\_\_ Template 3.4, Create Ownership

\_\_\_\_\_ Template 3.5, Pastor the Community

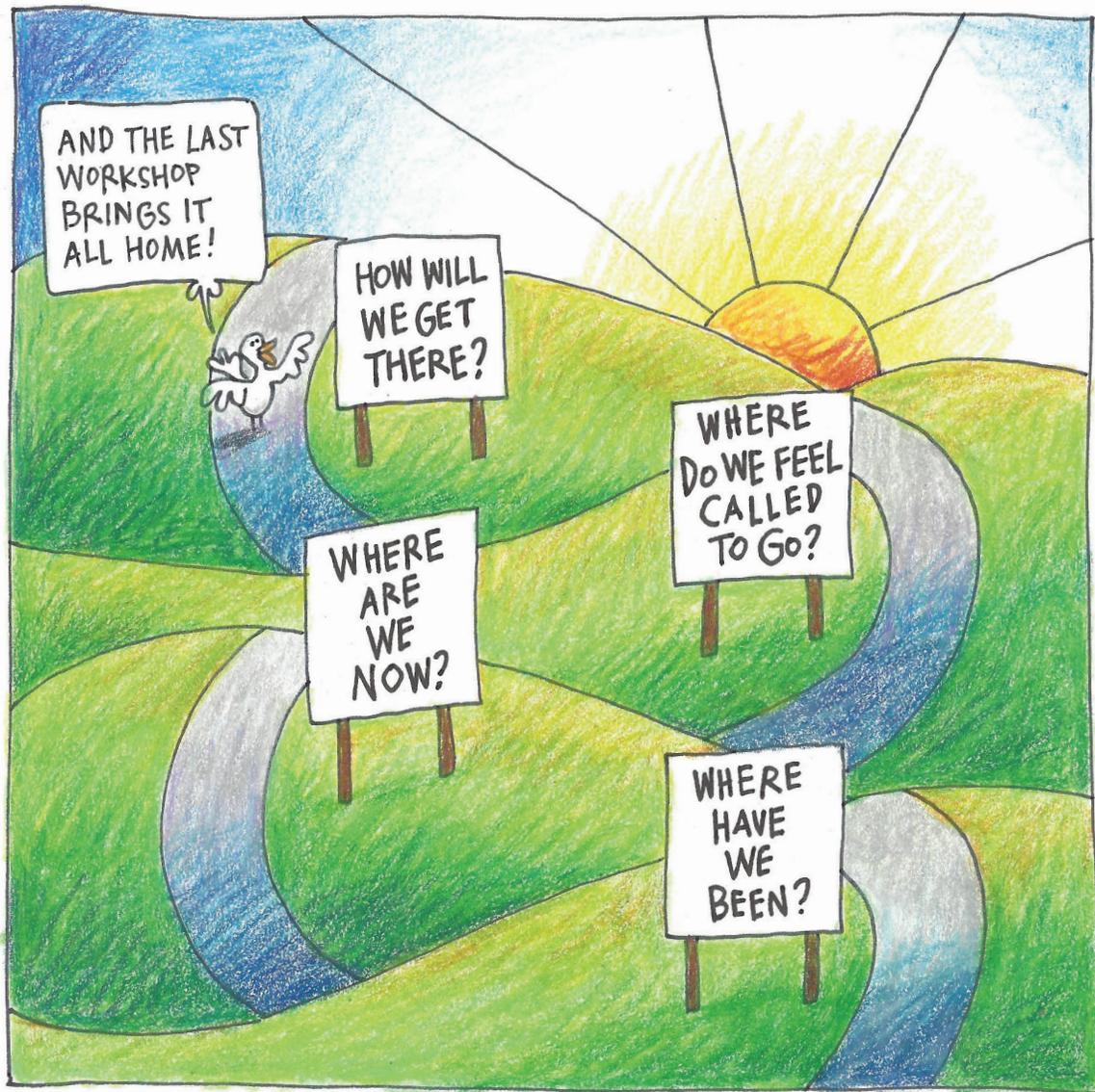
\_\_\_\_\_ Template 3.6, Overall Priorities



### Pre-reading for Workshop 3

*See Appendix. This reading is also found in the Participant's Workbook*

\_\_\_\_\_ Spiritually Vital Congregations: Best Practice Principles



# Workshop 4

## How will we get there?

Workshop 4 brings you to the final gathering in this process to help your congregation make spiritual growth a priority in its life and mission. As facilitator, you've put a great deal of effort into building a collaborative, caring team and keeping each workshop session on track—no small tasks. In this final session, you'll take the team through a review of what you've all learned about spiritual growth and your congregation. Together, you'll develop concrete next steps for refocusing on spiritual growth and work on a report for the vestry and congregation. You'll all take a look at your individual commitments to spiritual growth, and close the end of the workshop series with thanksgiving to God for this time and work together and with hope for its impact on your church's future.

## GETTING READY FOR WORKSHOP 4

*Use the checklist at the end of this workshop to help you prepare.*

### **Distribute to each workshop team member for their review before the workshop:**

- The beginning draft of the report to the vestry

### **For this workshop session, you'll need to provide:**

- Single poster-size copies of Template 1.1, 1.3, and 3.1 (post these before the meeting begins)
- The poster-size templates with the notes from the Best Practices and Overall Priorities discussions in Workshop 3
- Poster-size Template 4.1
- Prayer books for each team member, if you are concluding with a eucharist and renewal of the Baptismal Covenant, as well as the items needed for the eucharist.

### **Workshop 4 agenda**

*In fifteen-minute segments, except where noted*

- Welcome, review, and workshop overview (20 minutes)
- Prayer and reflection
- Group discussion: Overall priorities (30 minutes)
- Group discussion: Recommended next steps (30 minutes)
- The leader's heart: An individual exercise
- Sharing of individual plans and reflections on this work (20 minutes)
- Closing prayer, reflection and next steps (30 minutes)

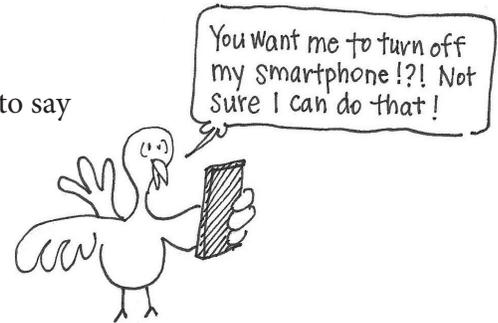


## Welcome, review, and workshop overview (20 minutes)

Your welcome sets the stage for this final workshop. Clearly, you don't need a fourth round of introductions, but it is still useful to begin with a question to help everyone transition to the work ahead. You might ask team members to identify a ministry in the church that has meant something to them, one that has helped them grow. Or you could invite people to share something they learned in this process or a hope for the impact this work will have on the congregation. (Remind them to keep comments brief—suggest they think in terms of tweets, 140 characters.)

Then take a moment for a final reminder of the guidelines you have been following:

- Smartphones off
- Stick to the schedule
- Focus on the work at hand (no working ahead)
- Listen carefully to others, fully present to what they have to say
- Respect the uniqueness of everyone's spiritual journey
- Share what you are learning about RenewalWorks and spiritual growth outside the workshops, but keep the personal stories and views of your team members confidential



### *Provide an overview of the session, explaining that it's focused on where we go from here:*

Building on what we've learned so far about spiritual growth and our congregation, our last task in this process is to come up with recommendations for concrete actions that can make spiritual growth the center of our church's life and mission. In doing that, we'll keep in mind what the research has taught us—vital congregations learn to do fewer things better.

We'll build on what we've done so far to develop specific recommendations for action, based on best practice principles and designed to move the congregation forward in love of God and neighbor. We'll revisit our own spiritual journeys, too, and consider the steps we can take to grow in faith as individuals. And finally, we'll celebrate and give thanks for this work and time together.

But first, we'll review what we've learned in the previous workshops.

### *Prepare a review of the three previous workshops that includes:*

- Spiritual Life Continuum discussion from Workshop 1
- Key takeaways that emerged at the end of Workshop 2
- Insights from the Episcopal Beliefs and Practices discussion in Workshop 2
- Reports from the small groups in Workshop 3 (this will be revisited more fully later in the workshop)

## Prayer and reflection (15 minutes)

Divide the team into small groups and explain that we begin this time of prayer and reflection with the Prayer of Self-Dedication, which was offered at our first gathering. Ask everyone to join in saying the prayer at Workshop 4, Prayer and Reflection, in their workbook.

*Almighty and eternal God, so draw our hearts to you, so guide our minds, so fill our imaginations, so control our wills, that we may be wholly yours, utterly dedicated unto you; and then use us, we pray, as you will, and always to your glory and the welfare of your people; through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.*

Explain that the scripture reflection this evening is on trust and wisdom. Ask the groups to read and reflect on this passage from Proverbs.

*Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not rely on your own insight. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.*

—Proverbs 3:5-6

### Talk about trust:

- *What does it mean for us to trust in the Lord in this process?*
- *Where do you sense the need for trust?*
- *Where have you sensed that need in your own life?*
- *How can we acknowledge God in this process?*

### Then ask them to read and reflect on a second passage:

*By wisdom a house is built, and by understanding it is established; by knowledge the rooms are filled with all precious and pleasant riches.*

—Proverbs 24:3-4

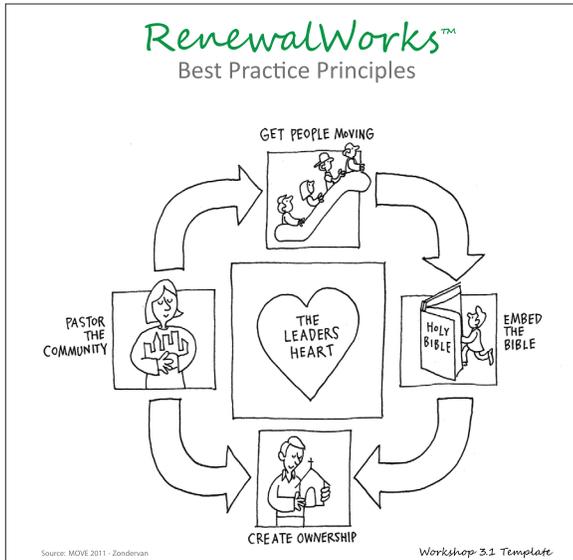
### Discuss wisdom:

- *How does wisdom differ from knowledge?*
- *We've all gained some knowledge from the data we've received. What will it take to apply that knowledge wisely?*
- *What does wise planning look like for our church at this point in the process?*
- *What will be needed to help us move forward?*

Conclude with a prayer asking God's blessing on your work together this evening.

## Group discussion: Overall priorities (30 minutes)

Post the templates from the Best Practice Principles exercise and the Overall Priorities discussion in Workshop 3. Have some extra copies of the draft vestry report for anyone who has forgotten to bring a copy.



Using the draft report, lead the team in a discussion about what they have learned and where they see the greatest potential for moving forward.

This first exercise gives us a chance to reflect on our report to the vestry. (This is also a good time to thank those who were willing to wade in and give the team something to work from this evening.) The draft provides a vehicle for our final task, to develop a few clear and achievable recommendations for the vestry and the congregation based on what we've learned.

This first rough draft sums up the last workshop's efforts to identify overall priorities that fit with the best practice principles and our congregation's data. It outlines key learnings from our work up to now and identifies areas where refocusing on spiritual growth will help the church move forward. This discussion also provides an important opportunity for a report from the clergy and wardens' Heart of the Leader discussion and a second look at the work done in small groups in Workshop 3.

*Have the clergy leader present the results of the Heart of the Leader discussion and a member from each of the Best Practice Principles breakout groups recap the results from their discussion. When all are finished, move to this part of the exercise:*

We can't do everything on the lists from Workshop 3, so the challenge now is to determine the best next steps for moving our congregation forward. We'll do that in the next exercise, but before we're ready for that conversation, we need to make sure we're not leaving anything out:

*What have we learned from this study of spiritual growth and our congregation?  
Does this beginning draft cover our most important and relevant learnings?  
What is missing?*

*Are we comfortable with the overall priorities, based on the best practice principles identified in Workshop 3? Do they represent the areas with the greatest potential for supporting and encouraging spiritual growth in our church?*

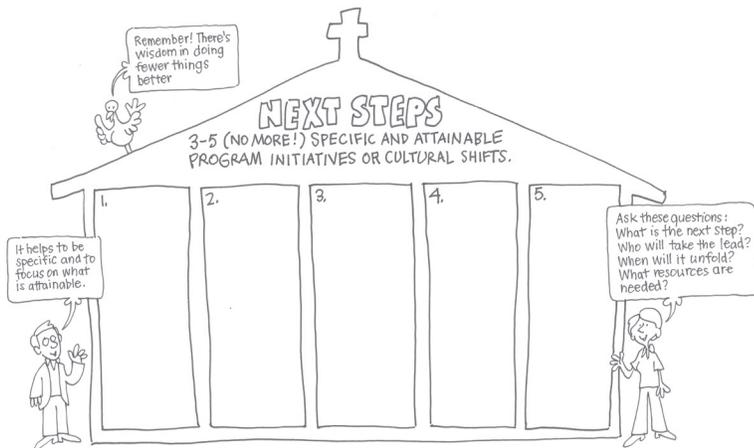
## Group discussion: Recommended next steps (30 minutes)

*Use Template 4.1 to record the recommended next steps generated by this discussion*

In this exercise, the goal is to develop three to five specific, attainable next steps in the form of program initiatives and culture changes that address the key priorities discussed and agreed upon in the previous exercise. Using what we have learned from the Data Findings Report about where the congregation wants

to grow, we'll brainstorm about how these steps might be implemented.

This work can be done with the whole group (depending on its size), or in small groups organized around each of the priorities or best practice areas. If you break into groups, have them report back to the full team, before moving on to the next exercise. Record the next steps the team recommends on Template 4.1.



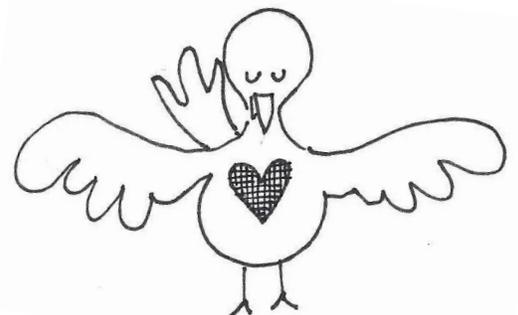
The results of this exercise will be incorporated in the next draft of the team's report to the vestry, which will be prepared by a small group following this last workshop. It will be circulated to the team for comments before it is finalized for distribution to the vestry and the congregation.

At the end of this discussion, invite a member of the team to ask God's blessing on this work.

## The leader's heart: An individual exercise (15 minutes)

As you introduce this exercise, explain that everyone on this team is a leader in this congregation and this renewal effort. One of the calls of the leader is to model discipleship and to work on our own spiritual journey. As the series ends, we'll each consider our own commitment to spiritual growth and discipleship.

*Ask the team to turn to The Leader's Heart exercise at Workshop 4 in their workbook and to take ten minutes to reflect on the questions it asks. Explain that there will be an opportunity to share their thoughts in the conversation that follows if they wish.*



## Leader's Heart Exercise instructions in the Participant's Workbook:

As a leader in this congregation, you have been called to model discipleship. Using as many of the questions below as you wish, consider the next steps for your own spiritual journey.

- What steps will you take in the coming year to grow spiritually?
- What Episcopal beliefs do you connect with?
- What Episcopal beliefs do you wish to grow in?
- What personal spiritual practices do you want to strengthen?
- What ways can you serve in the church?
- What ways can you serve outside the church?

## Sharing of individual plans and reflections on this work (20 minutes):

After participants have had a chance to complete these individual exercises, give them an opportunity to share, either with the whole group or with one other person or in a small group, as you think best.

## Closing prayer, reflection, and next steps

Thank the team for their presence and participation in this process. Each has given a gift to the congregation. Each has been a gift in this process.

Identify a small working group to expand the beginning draft to include the team's recommendations for the vestry. The report should be distributed, probably by email, to the rest of the workshop team for comments before it is finalized. Samples of vestry reports are available on the RenewalWorks website ([renewalworks.org](http://renewalworks.org)).

We recommend closing with a service of Holy Eucharist, either in your meeting place or in the church. It offers a moving way to conclude this work, one that is grounded in our tradition and our principal act of worship. You might want to ask team members to share their individual spiritual plans in the context of the service or before it begins, as an offering to God. You could also include the Renewal of Baptismal Vows, from *The Book of Occasional Services* (p. 139-141).

If you are not ending with the eucharist, take some time to go around the circle, asking each person to share what this process has been like for him or for her. Finish with the prayer of self-dedication.

### *And before everyone heads out the door:*

Remind the workshop team that the work is just beginning. Change takes time in the life of a congregation and may come slowly. As we read in *Footsteps*, "Episcopal congregations are both rooted and restless, but often mostly rooted." Encourage them to make it a daily practice to pray for the fruitfulness of this work.



# Workshop 4: Checklist and materials

## Before the workshop

*When the subgroup has completed the draft, distribute copies to each team member*

\_\_\_\_\_ Beginning draft of the report to the vestry

## Materials needed for the workshop

*Template 4.1 is the only fresh template for this session. It is scaled to poster size and ready for your local copy shop in the separate Workshop Templates file. The other templates were used in earlier workshops, and should be in your (by now, quite hefty) collection of workshop materials.*

\_\_\_\_\_ Template 1.1, RenewalWorks, a Four-Part Process

\_\_\_\_\_ Template 1.2, Spiritual Life Continuum

\_\_\_\_\_ Template 3.1, Best Practice Principles

\_\_\_\_\_ Template 3.2, Get People Moving (with Workshop 3 notes)

\_\_\_\_\_ Template 3.3, Embed the Bible (with Workshop 3 notes)

\_\_\_\_\_ Template 3.4, Create Ownership (with Workshop 3 notes)

\_\_\_\_\_ Template 3.5, Pastor the Community (with Workshop 3 notes)

\_\_\_\_\_ Template 3.6, Overall Priorities (with Workshop 3 notes)

\_\_\_\_\_ Template 4.1, Next Steps (the only new template used in this session)

\_\_\_\_\_ Prayer books for each team member, if you are concluding with a eucharist, and renewal of the Baptismal Covenant, as well as the items needed for the eucharist (available from your church)

# Appendix

Community Profile form—p. 49

Parish Profile: 10-Year Trend Data form—p. 50

Parish Demographic Profile form—p. 51

Brian Taylor's Introduction to *Strength for the Journey...*—p. 52

Episcopal Beliefs and Practices—p. 56

Spiritually Vital Congregations: Best Practice Principles—p. 58

Leader's Heart Breakout Tips—p. 65

# Community Profile

Topic	2016
Age	
• Age 18 and under	
• Age 19-24	
• Age 25-29	
• Age 30-39	
• Age 40-49	
• Age 50-59	
• Age 60-69	
• Age 70 and older	
Gender	
• Male	
• Female	
Marital Status	
• Single	
• Married	
• Partnered	
• Divorced	
• Widowed	
Education	
• Completed some high school	
• Completed high school/G.E.D.	
• Currently in college/some college	
• Completed Associates degree	
• Completed four year college degree	
• Currently in post-graduate or profession school	
• Completed post-graduate or professional degree	
Living Environment	
• Own	
• Rent	
• Other	
Income	
• <20,000	
• 20 - 45,000	
• 46 - 75,000	
• 76 - 125,000	
• 126,000+	

website link for local church community profiles:  
<http://www.episcopalchurch.org/page/studying-your-congregation-and-community>

# Parish Profile: Ten-Year Trend Data

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Compiled by: \_\_\_\_\_

Enter a number in each field

Topic	2004	2008	2012	2016	2018
Parish Lifestage					
• All Members					
• Births					
• Confirmations					
• Marriages					
• Deaths					
Parish Attendance					
• Pre-School					
• Sunday School					
• Confirmation					
• Youth Group					
• Study/Small Groups					
• Choir					
• Weekend Service					
• By Age Break					
Parish Giving					
• Annual Pledgers					
• New Annual Pledgers					
• Average giving/pledger					
• By Age Break					
Community Census					
• Population					
• Growth Rate					
• Lifestage					
• Diversity					
Other					

# Parish Demographic Profile

Topic	2018
Age	
• Age 18 and under	
• Age 19-24	
• Age 25-29	
• Age 30-39	
• Age 40-49	
• Age 50-59	
• Age 60-69	
• Age 70 and older	
Gender	
• Male	
• Female	
Marital Status	
• Now married	
• Widowed	
• Divorced	
• Separated	
• Never married	
• Partnered	
Education	
• Completed some high school	
• Completed high school/G.E.D.	
• Currently in college/some college	
• Completed Associates degree	
• Completed four year college degree	
• Currently in post-graduate or profession school	
• Completed post-graduate or professional degree	

## Brian Taylor's Introduction to *Strength for the Journey: A Guide to Spiritual Practice*

by Renée Miller

This guide to spiritual practice offers a diverse and extensive view of spiritual discipline. But before diving in, perhaps it might be helpful to remember why we practice disciplines in the first place. After all, we can undertake religious activities for all sorts of reasons: to satisfy an inner critic who says “You’re not spiritual enough”; to pursue emotional highs; or just to feel less stress. What is the context for spiritual discipline within the Christian life of faith?

Let’s begin with the word “spirituality.” Locate this category on the shelves in any major bookstore and you’ll find hundreds of titles: Jewish, Buddhist, Christian, Sufi, Hindu, self-help, recovery from addiction, and the spirituality of business, baking and baseball—it’s all out there. But what do we mean by this word?

For some, “spirituality” is the doing of spiritual practice such as those suggested in this guide: prayer and meditation, worship, study, yoga, ministry, movement. But there’s obviously a problem with this. When we don’t practice, we believe that we’re not being very spiritual. Even worse, when we do practice, we believe that we are! We all know pious, disciplined people who we wouldn’t call “spiritual” at all. Jesus certainly came across some of those folk.

For others, “spirituality” means certain kinds of inner experiences, often characterized as calm, spacious, alert, loving, and non-anxious, with a sense of connection with everything and everyone. As accurately as these words might describe some of our experience, they are really the fruit of a spiritual life, not the thing itself. When calmness or a sense of being connected becomes our definition of spirituality, we run the risk of

making these experiences into idols. We seek these experiences rather than seeking God. When we don’t feel these things, we assume that we are not “spiritual” or that God is absent.

So if spirituality is not *practice*, and it is not the hoped for fruit, what is it?

It is *relationship*. Spirituality is how we are in relationship to God, to other people and the world around us, and to ourselves. Spirituality is the process of staying engaged in these relationships, what intention we bring to them, and how willing we are to evolve as the relationship affects us.

### Our relationship with God

Our tradition claims that while God is ultimately a mystery and beyond all of our definitions, God is also personal. While God cannot be reduced to a person (like us, only perfect and much bigger!), God is in relationship with us personally. The Creator of heaven and earth, the Spirit of all wisdom and harmony, the connective force of renewing life in the universe—this One hears our prayers, counts the hairs on our head, and responds to the particularities of our situation.

We say that God loves us, and that we are called to love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. In this relationship, we pray, we struggle with our demons, we do our best to trust, and we give thanks. As in any intimate affinity, we are comforted, encouraged, challenged, exposed, forgiven, gifted, empowered, and sent.

And also as in every other relationship, we cannot control the outcome of our relationship with God. We may like to think that we know where it will take us—into greater peace of mind, more

patience, kindness and wisdom. In fact, these qualities are promised in scripture and in the lives of the saints to all those who love God. But along the way, our relationship with God may take us through some landscape that's not so pretty! We may need to get a lot angrier before we can find peace. We may need to move through a dark night of despair before we get to the light of God.

We are in relationship to the living God, who has a character, will, and methods that are not our own. Spirituality is our ongoing, evolving relationship with this living God. This is why it is so important to not confuse spiritual fruits or disciplines with spirituality itself, making an expected emotional state or the fulfillment of religious activity into something more than they are.

For Christians, Jesus is central to our relationship with God. He may be to us a friend, an enigmatic presence, or the very face of God. Our relationship to Jesus may change over time, just as our other relationships in life change.

And it is a relationship that Jesus always asks, nothing more, really. Sometimes I talk to seekers who are worried that they aren't "real" Christians because they don't hold to particular beliefs strongly enough. They think that unless they can resolve the place of Christ in the Trinity or the paradox of his full humanity and divinity (as if!), they can't genuinely claim to be a Christian.

My response is to ask them to read quickly through the synoptic gospels, asking themselves what Jesus expected of his disciples. Usually what these seekers discover is that Jesus said "Follow me. Come and see." He didn't demand moral perfection or theological certainty. He wanted people to be in relationship with him. In relationship, they would hear him, watch him in action, be questioned by him, and come to know his love for them. We might be in relationship with Jesus mystically, intellectually, sacramentally, or as

a companion. What matters is that as Christians, we somehow stay in an evolving relationship to Jesus Christ. He will affect us over time.

### **Our relationships with other people**

How do we treat the waiter at the restaurant or the person checking out our groceries? How do we respond when the man at coffee hour makes a comment that opens to us, by just a crack, the door of his suffering? How do we tell people how much they mean to us? What kind of feelings do we cultivate towards people who are unkind or unfair to us? How do we exercise our gifts in the local church or social communities in which we live? And what kind of relationship do we have with people who don't share the privileges we enjoy?

When we bring our faith, our prayer, our questions, our scriptures and our sacraments into these relationships, they are affected. The answers to the questions above will change as we see them in light of the gospel. Our behavior in these relationships will change as we pray, as we offer them in the Eucharist, as we puzzle over them with God. The application of our faith traditions to our relationships with others is what makes them "spiritual." It is also how we participate in the incarnation. For when we take our faith seriously enough to apply it directly to all of our relationships, God takes on human flesh.

### **Our relationship with the rest of creation**

Spirituality is how we honor the earth and treat it with loving devotion, as God's own precious handiwork. It is how we stop and wonder at the color of the sky, the force of wind, the miracle of flying birds. It is how we live our daily life as consumers of the earth's resources. Creation is God's body, and our spirituality is, in part, our intentional relationship with this magnificent, fragile, interconnected body.

## Our relationship with ourselves

With just a little bit of reflection, this can seem very strange: how can “I” be in relationship with “myself?” Aren’t I one, not two? And yet we frequently say things like “I feel good about myself...I’ve not really been myself lately...I feel the need to change myself...I’m learning to accept myself...I really saw myself yesterday.” An important question arises—who is the subject of the feeling good, changing, accepting, or seeing, and who is the object?

Without stepping too far into a metaphysical swamp in this brief introduction, suffice it to say that we humans are gifted with the unique capacity for self-reflection, for self-awareness. Different traditions explain this in different ways. Through the contemplative stream of our Christian tradition, we can understand it as the Spirit within us relating to our conditioned self.

We are born with genetic determinates and predispositions. As we develop, we are influenced by our circumstances and the people that surround us. We adopt responsive strategies that help us survive and progress. Along the way, some of these conditioned habits of mind, emotion, and behavior become helpful, and some become harmful. Some are our virtues, some are our sins. This is the conditioned self.

Meanwhile, we are also created in the image of God. We are like a seed that contains great potential to fully become the person God intends us to become. The Spirit is given to help us evolve. As spiritual beings, we activate and affirm this Spirit through baptism and other sacraments, faith, devotion, and spiritual practice. Living through us, the Spirit becomes more and more part of our consciousness.

This makes it possible, at times, to see our conditioned self with God’s eyes. As Meister Eckhart said in a sermon, “The eye with which we

see ourselves is the same eye with which God sees us.” So it is “the Spirit bearing witness with our spirit” (Romans 8:16). And we can boldly say that as Christians—along with our sinful and limited humanity—“We have the mind of Christ” (1 Corinthians 2:16).

In the course of our faith journey, the Spirit, the Christ within us, the image of God given to us in potential form – this true self rises up and relates to the conditioned self. Gradually, in the dance between God’s grace and our effort, we evolve. We “work out [our] own salvation with fear and trembling” (Philippians 2:12). Jesus and Paul go so far as to say that in the process, the [false] self dies, and “it is no longer I [the conditioned self] who lives, but Christ within me” (Galatians 2:20). And yet we remain uniquely ourselves, a particularly “Brian-shaped” (in my case) version of Christ, or image of God.

And so we say that we relate to ourselves. Our spirituality is how we live out this relationship with the self. Are we intentional about it? Lazy? Perfectionist? Do we believe it is all up to us? Are we waiting for God to zap us? Are we willing to go into the empty place of grace that remains when we walk away from conditioned habits of mind, emotion, and behavior? Can we live the tension between being determined to grow and forgiving ourselves for being human?

**Our spirituality, then, is how we are in relationship with God, other people, creation, and ourselves.**

## The place of spiritual discipline

With grace, with faithfulness, these relationships bear fruit. Our tradition tells us that over time, extending into eternity, all these relationships will be redeemed, that they will fulfill God’s intentions: love, forgiveness and reconciliation; compassion, justice and peace; environmental harmony; and for you and me, that we will be filled with the light

of God. All of this redemption is the fruit of our spirituality; it is the result of faithful relationships.

So what is our part in producing this fruit? Ah, this finally brings us to the subject and purpose of this guide: practice. Practices, or “spiritual disciplines,” are the things we do intentionally that strengthen and enliven our relationship with God, others, the world, and the self. Spiritual practices are the things we do that, together with God’s grace, produce the fruit of redemption.

Renée Miller has done a wonderful job of putting the spotlight on a variety of practices, some very traditional and some not so traditional. One gets the feeling that she could have kept going forever, highlighting hundreds more of them, because, after all, how we live in relationship to all of life is spiritual practice. We are to love God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength. In beginning to list spiritual practices, we end up like the author of John’s gospel, when he spoke of the “other things” Jesus did, “If every one of them were written down, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written” (John 21:25).

Perhaps spiritual discipline, therefore, is just living in an awake, holistic, and faithful way. In a documentary film about the monastic life at Spencer Abbey, a Trappist monk said (and I paraphrase), “Monastic life is just putting a frame around everyday life. We do the same things everyone else does—we eat, we work, we sleep, we live in community. But we do it all with intention towards God, and that makes it holy.”

Some of us are easily geared towards being disciplined. We exercise six days a week, we get up every morning and meditate and read for an hour, we always take our laundry to the cleaners every Friday afternoon. I used to be like this, and my wife called me “the human metronome.”

During this period of my life, regular discipline was important; it was helpful. Like someone who practices scales and exercises on one musical instrument for many years in order to find the depths and beauty of music, the one who is spiritually disciplined might be more able to plumb the depths of their faith. Having searched this territory deeply, it will always then be near, always accessible.

But life changes us, and I’m not so disciplined anymore. My spiritual discipline is now more like what Brother Lawrence described as the “little interior glance.” Others have always been this way, people who don’t really need the regular discipline I needed. This little interior glance can be made while eating a meal, taking a walk, talking to a friend, sitting in a budget meeting, reading a book, surfing the internet, or gazing at the clouds. This is what Renée illustrates as she leads us through her diverse examples.

### A few last words of advice!

Do those practices that enliven you, not the ones you think you should do. As Dom John Chapman said, “Pray as you can, not as you can’t.” It’s about nurturing relationship.

How or when redemption happens is a mystery. For “The kingdom of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground, and would sleep and rise night and day, and the seed would sprout and grow, he does not know how” (Mark 4:26-27).

Keep in mind what T.S. Eliot wrote: “For us it is just the trying. The rest is not our business” (East Coker, the Four Quartets).



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## Episcopal Beliefs and Practices

*How do we Episcopalians express our faith and describe our practices? This was the question raised by a RenewalWorks pilot group. Working with The Book of Common Prayer and the writings of Leslie Newbegin, Marcus Borg, and Ian Markham, the group's facilitator, the Rev. Canon Clarence Langdon, created a compilation of the beliefs and practices that are foundational for Episcopalians. This work has played a key role in developing the Spiritual Life Inventory used by RenewalWorks.*

*Many of these beliefs and practices are shared by Christians everywhere; others are particular to our church's tradition. This is not the only way to express our faith and practice, but it is a good place to begin exploring what is important and life-giving in our journeys of faith as Episcopalians.*

### Primary sources for our belief and practice

The Bible, church tradition, and human reason provide compelling truth about God and creation.

The Baptismal Covenant and Holy Eucharist serve as the cornerstones of our beliefs and worship.

*The Book of Common Prayer* provides comprehensive resources for an individual, family, and community life of prayer, in the context of the church year.

### Our beliefs

We embrace belief in the Trinity, our understanding of God as one in three persons:

We believe in God the Father. We and all creation are the continuing work of a loving God.

We believe in God the Son. Jesus is the supreme disclosure of the heart of God. His total trust and obedience to God reveals the unconditional trustworthiness of God, who raised Jesus from the dead.

We believe in God the Holy Spirit. We experience the power of the Holy Spirit working in us as we place our trust in Jesus' promises and follow in his ways in the Church and in company with his followers through the centuries.

Jesus reveals to us what constitutes a whole and authentic life. His radical trust in God and freedom to reimagine the traditions of his people call us to follow in his way of trust and freedom.

The Bible contains all things necessary for salvation. It is the story of God's creation and God's people and provides a key for understanding the presence and purposes of God in the midst of nature, history and our personal journeys. Jesus is the lived Word of God.

Every person has freedom and responsibility to discern the truth of God for his or her life through engaging the Bible, in conversation with the historic teachings and liturgy of the church, and human reason. We cherish diverse expressions of belief and practice as people grow into abundant and authentic lives in their time and place.

### Our practices

We embrace the Baptismal Covenant and the Holy Eucharist as the foundation for our belief and practice.

We participate regularly in the Holy Eucharist, bringing the substance of our lives and the fruits of our labors, offering them to God, and having them incorporated into the Risen Body of Christ.

We seek to name and renounce all forces in and around us that corrupt God's purposes of love and unity among all people and with creation.

We turn to Jesus and accept him as savior, putting our trust in his grace and love, and promising to follow and obey him as Lord.

We promise to persevere, and to repent and return when we fall away from God.

We promise by word and example to proclaim our trust in God's reconciling love.

We promise to strive for justice and peace and to respect the dignity of every human being.

We seek to bring values rooted in faith in God to our participation in public life.

We promise to seek and serve Christ in every person and to love our neighbors as our selves.

We express our gratitude and trust in God through tithing, proportional giving, and supporting works of justice and compassion.

We offer regular morning and evening prayers.

We offer prayers of intercession for all who suffer from violence, illness, grief, or abandonment and for all whose lives are closely linked with ours.

We offer prayers of thanksgiving for the gift of life and for the myriad blessings bestowed upon us by God.

We read and meditate on the Bible regularly.

We prepare and participate in *The Book of Common Prayer* rites for baptism, marriage, confession of sins, and burial of the dead.

We observe the prayers and disciplines provided for the seasons of Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Easter, and Pentecost.

We participate regularly in the offerings of our congregation for Christian formation for children and adults.

We seek spiritual friendship and accountability through individual and group reflection on our spiritual journeys.

We believe that God is present and active in the whole of creation and that we are called to participate with God through appreciation and care for creation, through the arts, through our daily work, through our relationships with other people, and in our own inner lives.

# Spiritually Vital Congregations

## Best Practice Principles

- *The Heart of the Leader*
- *Get People Moving*
- *Embed scripture in everything*
- *Creating ownership*
- *Pastoring the community*

## What are the Best Practice Principles?

In years of work with congregations, in extensive research with more than 1,800 congregations and almost half a million church-goers, researchers noted a number of churches that seemed to exhibit distinctive vitality. So they gathered a select group of leaders from these congregations to find out what they were doing. The churches were varied. Some were urban, some suburban, some rural. They were denominational and non-denominational. Some were large. Some small. But despite this diversity, basic themes emerged in these conversations that led researchers to identify five Best Practice Principles common to these congregations:

- *The Heart of the Leader*
- *Get People Moving*
- *Embed the Bible in Everything*
- *Create Ownership*
- *Pastor the Community*

As RenewalWorks seeks to help congregations move forward and go deeper in the spiritual life, we commend these Best Practice Principles. They are not holy writ. You may think of others that are important to your community. You may not think every one is particularly pertinent to your common life. You may feel like you are doing some of these quite well. You may see others as a growth opportunity.

But we invite you to engage with these principles in the RenewalWorks process, to use them as a measure of what you are doing and what you might feel called to do. They can be a kind of checklist. If you feel your congregation is not engaged with one of them, you might ask why and whether it matters. And you can celebrate the ways applying any number of them can help your congregation grow in faith.

As you use these principles as a guide, remember that the next steps for your congregation may well be programmatic initiatives (a new ministry, a new course of study, a new staff person). But 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. At the heart of RenewalWorks lies the conviction that spiritual growth is about relationship, the deepening of love of God and neighbor. How can you help that love grow in your congregation? How can you do that for yourself?

For example, this change of heart, this change of culture may be a commitment to prayer before every church gathering or the inclusion of a meditation on scripture in outreach efforts. It may be a call to individuals to set aside a time daily for reflection and prayer. It may be a conversation in ministry groups about why we do what we do. It's as much about culture as it is about program or activity. (Remember the findings discussed in *Footsteps*: increased church activity does not necessarily mean increased spiritual growth.)

We offer this explanation of the Best Practice Principles as a way to understand what they are and to consider some ways they might be applied to your congregation. We begin with the Heart of the Leader, which is the most important of these principles. Without committed leadership, the rest won't happen.

# The Heart of the Leader

*The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ.*

—Ephesians 4:11-12

It's the key, the critical element. The leader—we're talking primarily about the clergy leader (or rector, if you have one), but also other clergy and lay leaders, like wardens, vestry members, and others—must single-mindedly champion spiritual growth as the priority for the parish. The clergy leader is CSO: Chief Spiritual Officer. Modeling discipleship and spiritual sustainability are implicit in this role. How is the leader fed? How does the leader stay in touch with the first love that drove the call to ordination?

## Steps

1. Model discipleship: Leaders make disciples by becoming disciples themselves
2. Exhibit humility: Spiritual growth is God's work. Leaders are instruments of God's power at work.
3. Focus more on transformation than attendance or pledge units

## Examples of Best Practice Principles

1. Clergy make discussing spiritual growth a priority for colleague groups.
2. Clergy make time and arrangements for discipleship training (conferences, retreats, mentor relationships, spiritual direction).
3. Vestry members understand their role as spiritual leaders and employ vestry covenants and other methods to hold themselves accountable. They make use of Forward Movement resources like the *Vestry Resource Guide* and the new book, *God's Grace and Robert's Rules: A Theological Primer for Vestry Members*.
4. The vestry supports and encourages the clergy, providing resources to deepen their spiritual lives and establishing patterns of care for them.

# Get People Moving

*Welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.*

—Romans 15:7

This, of course, suggests welcoming and incorporating newcomers. But it means so much more. It's about communicating 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 leader offers guidance, but spiritual growth as an expectation needs to be part of the culture. No one, however stalled or dissatisfied, gets a pass.

## Steps

1. Make the goal of spiritual growth clear
2. Make work toward that goal an expectation for everyone in the congregation, those who are new and those who have worshiped with you for decades
3. Make the leader the champion of that goal

## Examples of Best Practice Principles

1. Use *Transforming Questions* (a new curriculum offered by Forward Movement) or another comparable introductory class.
2. Incorporate instructed eucharists regularly in the Sunday schedule (ideally quarterly), and provide other opportunities to learn more about the eucharist. Our research with Episcopal churches shows that it is a key catalyst for spiritual growth.
3. Have everyone in the parish read a book together, like *Jesus was an Episcopalian* by Chris Yaw or *Being Christian* by Rowan Williams.
4. Provide ways for people to begin to read scripture on their own. Encourage a daily quiet time. *Forward Day by Day* is a good place to start. You may want to encourage people to start with the Gospel of Mark, using *A Journey With Mark* from Forward Movement, or N.T. Wright's, *Mark for Everyone*, or a similar resource.

## Embed the Bible in Everything

*All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work.*

—2 Timothy 3:16-17

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 then be shaped by scripture. For most Episcopal congregations, this means shifting the culture to embed the Bible in meetings, service projects, social events for all groups, and ministries for all ages.

### Steps

1. Keep scripture at the core of preaching and teaching
2. Take away excuses for not engaging with scripture
3. Model ways that scripture can be foundational for the community

### Examples of Best Practice Principles

1. Plan a parish-wide, intergenerational engagement with scripture like *The Story* or *The Bible Challenge*.
2. Encourage *Forward Day by Day* for individual reflection.
3. Make it a parish-wide policy to include scripture reflection in every meeting, service project, and gathering of the church. Begin by modeling this in vestry meetings.
4. Have the leadership read "The Bible and Episcopalians" pamphlet or some other resource about scripture from Forward Movement.

## Create Ownership

*Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for his good pleasure.*

—Philippians 2:12b-13

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.” Everyone has both the freedom and the responsibility to pursue his or her own spiritual growth. Leaders assist this process by establishing the expectation that every individual in the community will grow in their relationship with the church, in their personal spiritual practice, and in service. As one church put it, “If you come here you will grow.”

### Steps

1. Empower people to be the church
2. Equip people to succeed in their ministries—coaching, thanking, encouraging, challenging
3. Hold people accountable. Build relationships in small group or one-on-one connections where people can talk about their own spiritual journeys.

### Examples of Best Practice Principles

1. Articulate the expectation that everyone in leadership needs to grow in his or her own spiritual lives. Dedicate a vestry meeting (or a portion of an annual retreat) to share personal plans for spiritual growth. Form vestry prayer partners so that each member is praying for another member and their spiritual goals.
2. Promote daily devotional practices, like Forward Movement’s daily meditation books with reflections for each day of the year. (In 2016, the series is *Abiding with God Day by Day*).
3. Develop spiritual paths for parishioners. Articulate a Rule of Life for your parish. It can be quite simple. For example, a church in Chicago developed the following Rule of Life:
  - WORSHIP more than you don't
  - SEEK a deeper understanding of your faith
  - SERVE others in the name and manner of Jesus
  - GIVE as generously as God has given to you
4. Create a prayer for the parish that everyone knows and embraces. Offer this prayer as a congregation before sermons and other gatherings.
5. Plan a retreat for the congregation, along the lines of Soulworks from St. John’s, Memphis ([www.stjsoulworks.org](http://www.stjsoulworks.org)).

# Pastor the Community

*The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve.*

—Mark 10:45

Jesus came to serve, and a relationship with him is deepened through commitment to service in the church and the neighborhood. He calls his disciples to go out into the world, proclaiming good news by word and example. A big part of that is knowing what God is up to in the neighborhood already, listening to the voices you encounter there, entering into dialogue with those of other faiths. And it's about working for justice and peace wherever you encounter the suffering and need of others.

## Steps

1. Elevate expectations for participation in service in the church and in the community
2. Build bridges to the local community
3. Make service a platform for sharing faith

## Examples of Best Practice Principles

1. Make it an expectation that everyone in the parish will do some service. Everybody can, even if the act of service is simply to pray for people in need.
2. Explicitly anchor current service projects in the Baptismal Covenant, in prayer, and in scripture. If you have a soup kitchen or a mission trip or a construction project, incorporate scripture and prayer in those gatherings. Ask different members of the service team to offer prayer and scripture.
3. Discover ways to learn what is going on in the neighborhood and around the world. Contact Episcopal Relief & Development to see how your congregation can support global initiatives. Use Episcopal Relief & Development resources in Lent.
4. Develop a partnership with a community of another faith or at least another denomination. Work on a service project together with that community.

## Leader's Heart Breakout Tips

In Workshop 3 your RenewalWorks Workshop Team will be breaking out into groups focused on each of the best practice principles for vital congregations. The Leader's Heart, however, will not be one of the best practices principles discussed by the workshop team. Instead, the Leader's Heart is assigned to a small group, including but not limited to, the rector and the senior warden, and should be completed outside of the scheduled workshop time.

The primary goal of this exercise is for leaders to look themselves fully in the mirror and recommit to their spiritual practices and growth—and then think about how they are creating spiritual leadership in their vestry and the overall life of the church. Clergy and lay leaders who give their heart to development of a deeper spiritual life are better able to lead congregations into that deeper spiritual life.

The rector and senior warden may also choose to include other lay leaders in this process at their discretion. They should schedule an hour for a meeting. Upon completion of this exercise, the rector reports back to the workshop team on their findings at the start of Workshop 4.

Research has indicated that among the best practice principles that make for vital congregations, the central and most important principle focuses on the Leader's Heart, particularly for churches who present in the first two stages of spiritual growth.

Begin with a Bible reflection

*But be doers of the word, and not merely hearers who deceive themselves. For if any are hearers of the word and not doers, they are like those who look at themselves in a mirror; for they look at themselves and, on going away, immediately forget what they were like. But those who look into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and persevere, being not hearers who forget but doers who act—they will be blessed in their doing.*

—James 1:22-25

Then review page 2 of the Data Findings Report Part 2, which introduces the 5 Best Practice Principles and explains color coding. Next, review page 3 of the Data Findings Report Part 2, which defines the Leader's Heart and gives results from your respondents.

Brainstorm ways this principle could be put to work in the congregation. Begin by thinking about your own individual spirituality and how you might recommit to it. Then contemplate how the church might better champion spiritual growth in vestry meetings and in the overall culture of the church.

Note: Ideas should not be only programmatic. Culture shifts that have no impact on budget or staffing—things like beginning and ending all meetings with prayer, having prayer partners on the vestry and other committees, adding scripture reflection to outreach efforts, etc. can be more effective in creating a church culture than a one-off program. It's important to resist the temptation to come up with a long list of ideas that you will not have the time or energy to accomplish.

Some questions to consider as you reflect on this principle:

1. Is our leadership grounded and surrounded in prayer?
2. Are we embedding scripture in every gathering?
3. Are we framing all our work as a ministry?
4. Are we adequately developing, equipping, and caring for our leaders?
5. Are we honoring people's presence and participation and developing new leaders?

## Suggestions

### **Practice accountability (and elevate expectations)**

- At the end of every meeting, take a few minutes to ask: Where did you see God today in our conversation?
- Develop a vestry covenant, which is embraced by every member of the vestry and is known to the congregation. Look at the *Vestry Resource Guide* published by Forward Movement if you'd like a template or create your own. Further examples and information: <http://www.ecfvp.org/tools/116/vestry-covenants-and-norms>
- Make sure that vestry retreats are really vestry retreats and not just extended business meetings.
- Have an annual conversation among vestry members about what each person is doing to deepen his or her own spiritual life. Report back the following year.
- Make expectations for vestry members clear regarding regular church attendance, participation in ministries of the church, and financial commitment to support the ministry of the church. Have an orientation for new vestry members to review the expectations and exit interviews with retiring clergy to debrief and reflect on the experience.
- Clergy should seek colleague groups to form friendships, accountability, and encouragement.

### **Anticipate resistance and conflict**

- Read *Canoeing the Mountains* by Tod Bolsinger, a great book about leadership in our current context. It speaks about the challenges of resistance in the midst of a changing and challenging religious environment.
- Make sure clergy have colleague groups and/or mentors to discuss issues of resistance and conflict.
- Wardens and Vestry members may also want to connect with others in neighboring congregations who can provide insight and support.

### **Make it all joyful**

For clergy, it's important to keep in touch with the first love, with those things that motivated you to be ordained in the first place. For wardens, vestry, and lay leaders, it is also important to stay connected to those things that led these leaders to give of their time, talent and treasure. With that in mind, we suggest:

- Discovering resources for clergy that will be sustaining. These include colleague groups, formal or informal relationships with mentors, spiritual direction, retreats, weekly study time and annual continuing education.
- Lay leaders, and especially wardens, should insist that clergy are discovering these resources, should uphold and defend the clergy when they work to discover these resources, should provide financial and staff resources to make sure that clergy take this kind of time.
- Lay leaders should also work on a relationship with clergy whereby they can ask “Is it well with your soul?”
- Read *The Book of Joy*, a story of a meeting between Desmond Tutu and the Dalai Lama, a great description of how leaders, even those who are both busy and persecuted can stay in touch with their first love.

## About Forward Movement and RenewalWorks

Forward Movement is committed to inspiring disciples and empowering evangelists. While we produce great resources like books and daily devotionals, Forward Movement is not a publishing company. We are a ministry.

Part of our ministry is carried out through RenewalWorks. Through a guided methodology of self-reflection, sharing, and workshop discussion, RenewalWorks challenges congregations to refocus on spiritual growth and to identify ways that God is calling them to grow.

The mission of RenewalWorks and Forward Movement is to support you in your spiritual journey, to help you grow as a follower of Jesus Christ. Publishing books, daily reflections, studies for small groups, and online resources is an important way that we live out this ministry. More than a half million people read our daily devotions through *Forward Day by Day*, which is also available in Spanish (*Adelante día a día*) and Braille, online, as a podcast, and as an app for your smartphones or tablets. It is mailed to more than fifty countries, and we donate nearly 30,000 copies each quarter to prisons, hospitals, and nursing homes. We actively seek partners across the Church and look for ways to provide resources that inspire and challenge.

A ministry of The Episcopal Church for eighty years, Forward Movement is a nonprofit organization funded by sales of resources and gifts from generous donors. To learn more about Forward Movement, RenewalWorks, and our resources, please visit us at [www.forwardmovement.org](http://www.forwardmovement.org) and [www.renewalworks.org](http://www.renewalworks.org).

We are delighted to be doing this work and invite your prayers and support.