

# RenewalWorks

from Forward Movement

## Welcome to RenewalWorks!

We are so glad you have decided to take this step in discerning a strategic spiritual growth plan for your congregation. RenewalWorks staff will be providing you with resources and guidance throughout the process. This packet contains some basic information to help you get started.

## Immediate First Steps:

- Sign the RenewalWorks Expectations Agreement for Clergy. (You will not receive your SLI link until this document is submitted). This document is sent directly to your clergy leader for e-signature. If you have not received this email, or prefer a .pdf to print and sign, please email Loren at [ldixon@forwardmovement.org](mailto:ldixon@forwardmovement.org) to let her know.
- Ensure we have the best contact email for your clergy, facilitator and administrator.

## Next:

- Appoint a workshop team facilitator and, if desired, an administrator.
- Set workshop team meeting dates, times and location.
- Recruit your workshop team (more details about these roles below).
- Begin communicating about the RenewalWorks process to the parish, including an invitation to take the Spiritual Life Inventory.

## Pre-Reading:

- Footsteps
  - Three copies of the booklet Footsteps by Jay Sidebotham will be mailed to your parish. This is a great pre-reading regarding RenewalWorks' methodology and philosophy. We encourage you to share this booklet with your vestry and the workshop team. More copies may be purchased from Forward Movement (use discount code RWX) but you also have permission to make photocopies. Link to purchase Footsteps [here](#).
- Signs of Life by Jay Sidebotham (optional, but recommended)
  - A more in-depth look at the RenewalWorks process, including examples of how churches have implemented RenewalWorks best practice principles.

Some congregations read this book with their vestries, workshop teams, or small groups prior to (or during) RenewalWorks to create conversation around how churches and church leadership can support their parishioners' spiritual growth. Churches report that it is a valuable tool for the vestry to understand and to be involved in the parish-wide RenewalWorks process. Order copies from Forward Movement [here](#).

## **About The Spiritual Life Inventory (SLI)**

To understand the current spiritual profile of the congregation, RenewalWorks begins with an invitation to every parishioner to participate in an online, anonymous assessment called the Spiritual Life Inventory (SLI). The results from this inventory create the church's aggregate report, highlighting the overall spiritual well-being of the congregation. The workshop team uses the SLI data report during the workshop process to guide decisions about how to best support parishioners and the organization of the church.

Each RenewalWorks congregation receives a unique link to the SLI to share with the congregation. The SLI works best when taken online but can also be administered on paper for parishioners who require that. Detailed instructions about how to distribute the paper surveys and input those results will be provided.

Each church is provided a target participation rate determined by a percentage of the average Sunday attendance. This ensures statistical accuracy and encourages parishioner discussions around the notion of spiritual vitality. Churches that develop a communication plan and identify groups requiring additional support (e.g., an assisted-living community that may need technical assistance) tend to achieve higher participation rates. Sample RenewalWorks communication is available in the appendix.

Two weeks prior to the launch date of the SLI, RenewalWorks will email the live link. This enables the workshop team, clergy, and staff to pre-take the SLI and for the parish administration to include it in any electronic or printed bulletins inserts. Churches may choose to create a QR code for parishioners to access through the link [here](#).

The SLI is usually open to the parish for three weeks, giving you four Sundays to promote it.

## **Forming the Workshop Team**

### **Appoint a Facilitator (or co-facilitators)**

We recommend that a member of the congregation (rather than clergy) facilitate the workshop team (we refer to this person as the facilitator). This person should be a good strategic thinker, presenter and considered a leader within the parish. Some parishes choose to have co-facilitators. The primary role of the facilitator is to lead the workshops, guided by a fully scripted Facilitator Guide as well as a PowerPoint file of workshop slides to provide visual organization to the presentation.

Some churches find it helpful to appoint an administrative person who can help with meeting time management, meeting notes, and setup logistics for the facilitator. We refer to this person as the administrator. For parishes participating in a cohort of churches launching simultaneously, the facilitator(s), administrator, and clergy are invited to join weekly Zoom Cohort Q&A sessions with RenewalWorks staff. These optional meetings provide an opportunity to ask questions, learn about additional resources, and connect with other RenewalWorks parishes in your cohort.

While the process is designed to be facilitated by a member of the congregation, onsite workshop facilitation by a RenewalWorks representative is available at an additional cost. Please contact us if that is something you are interested in.

### **Determine the Four Workshop Dates and Times**

The facilitator and clergy should determine the four workshop dates and times. Workshops can begin the week after the SLI closes and should be scheduled approximately every other week for 8 weeks. Some churches incorporate the option for a meal into the workshop. Choosing a meeting location with audio/video equipment is helpful.

### **Invite Workshop Team members**

After identifying the workshop team facilitator, the rector invites 9-12 other members of the team. The workshop team should reflect a cross-section of the parish's demographics and ministries and consist of individuals committed to full participation in the process. It is often helpful to think of the workshop team composition like a clergy search committee. Team members are expected to attend the four workshops and complete brief homework assignments. Additionally, they will encourage participation in the Spiritual Life Inventory among the congregation.

Workshop team members are provided with the Participant's Workbook, which guides the four workshops and provides additional resources, reading, and space for note-taking.

Often, workshop team members report that their RenewalWorks participation includes a personal spiritual component for them individually. Teams often bond through the

process and some elect to continue as a small group after the formal process is completed.

### **The role of clergy**

Clergy support and participation in the RW process are very important; however, the workshops are designed to be lay-led. Clergy should attend workshops to listen and participate in a limited manner. The results from the Spiritual Life Inventory will be delivered and reviewed with the rector and facilitator first. Preaching about the importance of spiritual growth and discipleship is especially important during this time.

## **About The Workshops**

The RenewalWorks process includes a series of four workshops designed to guide the workshop team towards the creation of a spiritual strategic plan for the congregation's future spiritual vitality. The Facilitator's Guide provides detailed instructions for the facilitator to prepare and run each workshop. Additional support in preparing for the workshops is offered during the weekly cohort Zoom sessions and through supplemental materials found in the User Dashboard on our website.

The workshops last for 2 hours and are usually scheduled in person about 2 weeks apart over an 8-week period. Each parish plans its own workshop schedule to fit its church calendar and to maximize attendance.

### **Here's a quick summary of each workshop:**

#### **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 the book *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 and presented in several ways and benchmarked against more than 1,800 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 half 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.

**Note:** Heart of the Leader discussion - Between workshop 3 and 4, the facilitator conducts a separate meeting with the vestry, select workshop team members, and clergy to discuss The Heart of the Leader best practice principle. This 1 hour meeting incorporates a discussion around how the church leadership could incorporate best practices into the vestry and spiritual leadership. A fully facilitated meeting agenda is provided.

### **Workshop 4: How do we get there?**

This workshop is about priorities and determining 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 their spiritual journey. In the end, a clear plan and action steps for the church should emerge. This plan is shared with the vestry and ultimately, the congregation. The plan is not so much about new programming or ministries as it is about creating venues for refocusing church life and ministry on spiritual growth.

## **The Final Report – a spiritual strategic plan**

The final product of the RenewalWorks process depends on the goals of each participating church. Most churches conclude with a final written report—a spiritual strategic plan tailored to their specific characteristics and desires. This report includes information on the current state of spirituality of the parish, summary conclusions from the workshops, and recommendations for the church’s future direction. It aims to provide a targeted, overarching spiritual focus for the next 3-5 years. Short-term goals, initiatives, and offerings should also be included, along with a plan for revising and reviewing these every 3-6 months with clergy and the vestry. The report is then presented to the vestry and ultimately to the congregation.

After workshop three, RenewalWorks provides examples of final reports as inspiration to the workshop team.

## More Information

For additional information on RenewalWorks we recommend the [RenewalWorks website](#). The [introductory video](#) on the homepage provides a short overview of the process. A [FAQ section](#) under the Resource Center website page provides answers to common questions.

The [digital brochure](#) under the Resource Center website page, can be printed or emailed and provides general information on the RenewalWorks process.

## **Appendix**

**Example 1 - Announcement of RenewalWorks initiative to parish**

**Example 2 – Announcement of RenewalWorks initiative to parish**

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## **Example 1 - Announcement of RenewalWorks initiative to the parish**

Dear friends:

This is one of the most important letters I've written to our parish in the six years that I've been privileged to serve among you.

The coming academic year brings exciting, new beginnings at Church Name. We're embarking upon Year Two of the Good Book Club, as together we read the four gospels and explore what it means to be a Christ centered community. And in a focused way, we will take stock of how we are growing spiritually.

Throughout the fall, a group of parishioners will be reflecting on where we are and where we are called to be. This process will begin with a survey. That's where we need your help.

I'm asking that you set aside about 30 minutes to take a Spiritual Life Survey. Unlike previous surveys done here at CHS, this survey focuses on you, on your spiritual life and how CHS helps you grow spiritually.

The survey findings will help shape decisions about how to create the best possible ministries and programs. Your feedback will directly impact how we allocate resources to further our spiritual journeys. Our Vestry voted unanimously to engage this process. The survey is anonymous, run by a third party, and we will only receive composite findings from the church as a whole. The survey is open to all parishioners, 18 years and older, and we encourage all to take the survey, whether you attend every week, or are only able to be with us a few times a year.

Your participation is important and so we thank you for setting aside about 20 minutes to complete the inventory. Please go to the link below and take the survey, starting any time: (insert SLI link here).

For those who prefer to take the survey "on paper", we will offer opportunities to take it in the Parish Hall.

We look forward to taking the next steps in growing our faith together. Join me in praying for this process and for the guidance of the Holy Spirit in all we do.

## Example 2 -Announcement of RenewalWorks initiative to the parish

My dear sisters and brothers,

Several months ago, your vestry made a commitment to plan for our spiritual future by retaining the help of RenewalWorks. We believe that faithful stewardship includes thoughtful planning. I have asked 7 leaders to serve as the RenewalWorks leadership team which will work over the next 10 weeks to adopt a spiritual strategic plan for growth and ministry to be presented to the vestry and to the congregation in the fall.

The first piece of the RenewalWorks process will be to collect information on our parish. This will be done through an online survey – more of an inventory our of beliefs, spiritual practices and service. In addition, the inventory asks questions about how you feel our parish helps us grow in the Spirit, and in love of God and our neighbors.

I hope each of us – clergy, staff and parishioners - will complete a survey. The aggregated data of our parishioners will help shape the work of the workshop team. We want to hear from you. In fact, our goal is 100% participation by all adult members (persons 16 years and up).

You needn't take my word solely. Read what Martha Lewis, an active parish member since 1971, says about completing the Spiritual Life Survey:

“My faith and spirituality are grounded. Ever since my first Episcopal Church Sunday school class in 3rd grade, I've had a relationship with God that isn't necessarily spectacular, but steady, ever-present, perhaps even automatic. And though my faith has not stalled or been in doubt, there have been times when it wobbled, but faith is a gyroscope that rights me when I doubt.

During the process of filling out this survey, I found myself pausing. My spirituality is not “mine” alone; it has been nurtured and supported by my Christian community, the church name. My nourishment has come, in part, from the opportunities provided by our parish and the community. The survey was an honest report, and a helpful assessment of what's been true for me. I hope all of us will take it—it was worth every minute!”

Following is a link to the survey itself. [INSERT SURVEY LINK]. Completing the survey will cost you about 40 minutes. I wouldn't ask you to make this time sacrifice if I didn't believe our life depends upon hearing— anonymously—from all of us. I'll see you in church!

Faithfully in Christ,

### **Example 3 - Announcement of RenewalWorks initiative to the parish**

Dear Saint Luke's Family,

We invite you to participate in the Episcopal Spiritual Life Inventory (SLI), an important first step in our new Spiritual Life Initiative.

Saint Luke's has been invited to join other Episcopal churches nationwide who have participated in a comprehensive survey of spiritual life to provide valuable information on our congregation's faith journey. The survey was created by RenewalWorks, an Episcopal organization charged with advancing spiritual growth or growing in love of God and neighbor. It is intended to be thought-provoking.

RenewalWorks partners with Episcopal churches of all sizes and demographics. While some of the questions may not resonate with you personally, they will form the basis for a broader study for the national church. Regardless of where you are on your faith journey- satisfied or seeking a new direction- we want to hear from all adult members of your household. Your results will be completely anonymous and confidential.

The following link takes you directly to the Saint Luke's survey: <http://>

We suggest that you set aside about 30-40 minutes to complete the SLI. It is important to note that once you start the survey you must complete it - it is not possible to take part of the survey and resume at later time. All completed surveys will be aggregated by RenewalWorks to create an overall parish snapshot.

If you are unable to complete the survey online, provisions have been made with the church office to use one of their computers or to complete a confidential hard copy version. Please contact XX for information.

The survey link can also be accessed 9/21-10/6 on our website here: All completed surveys are due by Sunday October 6th.

Following the SLI, a group of leaders will meet to complete four guided workshops which will study the parish data as well as best practice principles of spiritually vital congregations. The leaders will also convene a series of discussions to explore these issues together as a community. These discussion groups will include an opportunity for us to meet in small group and build community while we examine faith life at Saint Luke's Parish.

Thank you for your time and contribution to our Spiritual Life Initiative,  
The Rev. Denise Trogon and The Spiritual Life Initiative Team

## Example 1 – Ask to join the workshop team

Dear X,

I am writing to ask for your leadership in a new effort at (church name). Over the past few months, I have begun thinking about ways to determine the spiritual health of our parish and to engage in a process to re-focus the congregation on our ultimate goal of growing in love of God and neighbor – ultimately a spiritual strategic plan that could guide us over the next few years. In working with the vestry, we have recently agreed to pursue the RenewalWorks initiative which is an Episcopal resource provided by Forward Movement.

RenewalWorks is a discipleship initiative to orient parishes around the goal of growing spiritually. The 13-week process helps churches re-orient towards a culture of creating disciples within their unique contexts and needs. It begins with a parish-wide survey of spiritual beliefs, practices and serving which is compiled into a personalized parish summary. This data is then used by a leadership team over four 2-hour workshops. The curriculum includes a guided methodology of self-reflection, sharing, best practices, and workshop discussions. It is based on nearly 15 years of Episcopal research from over 350 churches and 29,000 Episcopalians.

It is my sincere hope that you will join the workshop team.

The methodology has uncovered key characteristics of flourishing congregations and there is an opportunity to explore what other churches have used to know Jesus more fully and to explore what it means to follow him. I think you will find the process interesting, possibly spiritually renewing and I believe you will be an important voice for shaping our result.

The commitment will be for 4 workshops scheduled to be 2 hours each. There may be some additional readings and homework review. Our workshop schedule is as follows and we want participants who can commit to attending all four.

I look forward to speaking with you further and pray that you will consider this leadership for church name.

Faithfully

## **Example 1 – Ministry leaders/vestry members email to participate in SLI**

Date

Dear Altar Guild –

I hope you have heard about Christ Church’s fall focus to discern the spiritual focus of the church. This process, led by RenewalWorks, begins with a church-wide survey called the Spiritual Life Inventory (SLI). It will be different from other church surveys you may have participated in -- as it asks questions about your spiritual beliefs, spiritual practices and church and community serving. Our individual responses aggregated will provide a snapshot of the make-up of Christ Church.

As a member of the Altar Guild, it is important for our voices to be captured in this discussion.

I hope you will join me in completing the SLI here by (Date):

Link Here

I look forward to discussing your thoughts on the SLI at our next meeting.

Faithfully,

## Example 1 – Thank you for participation in SLI and next steps

March 4, 20XX

To our parishioners:

The clergy and vestry of Saint John's extend a sincere thank you to the 242 parishioners who took part in the recent Spiritual Life Inventory (SLI) survey provided by RenwalWorks.

The RenewalWorks initiative has been a catalyst for significant revitalization and growth in hundreds of congregations. We now will move forward in developing our spiritual strategic plan from the aggregated SLI data and in ways appropriate and unique to Saint John's.

Next steps

- A series of four workshops will be conducted by a team of 25 appointed congregants, prayerfully committed to this task. This team analyzes the survey response data and begins to craft plans and initiatives based on them.
- The team will present a final draft of specific plans and initiatives to the vestry for approval.
- The proposed initiatives, informed by your survey responses, will be presented to the parish including implementation recommendations.

These final phases will take place over the course of the remainder of 20XX and into 20XX. You can expect to see more information in the coming weeks, and a complete presentation in the Parish Hall to present to the congregation in the early fall.

The important questions we hope to answer from this survey are ...

1. What is the Spiritual Health of our parish?
2. What is Saint John's role in growing Disciples?
3. How can we order our common life in response to the survey?

Once again, thank you for your prayers and commitment. I most heartily thank you for taking the time to complete this SLI.

Sincerely,

Prayer for Discernment:

Almighty and ever living God, source of all wisdom and understanding, be present with us as we consider the renewal and mission of our congregation. Teach us in all things to seek first Your honor and glory. Guide us by Your Holy Spirit to perceive what is right and grant us both the courage to pursue it and the grace to accomplish it, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.