

Report of the RenewalWorks Workshop Team  
to the Leadership of  
All Saints' Episcopal Church

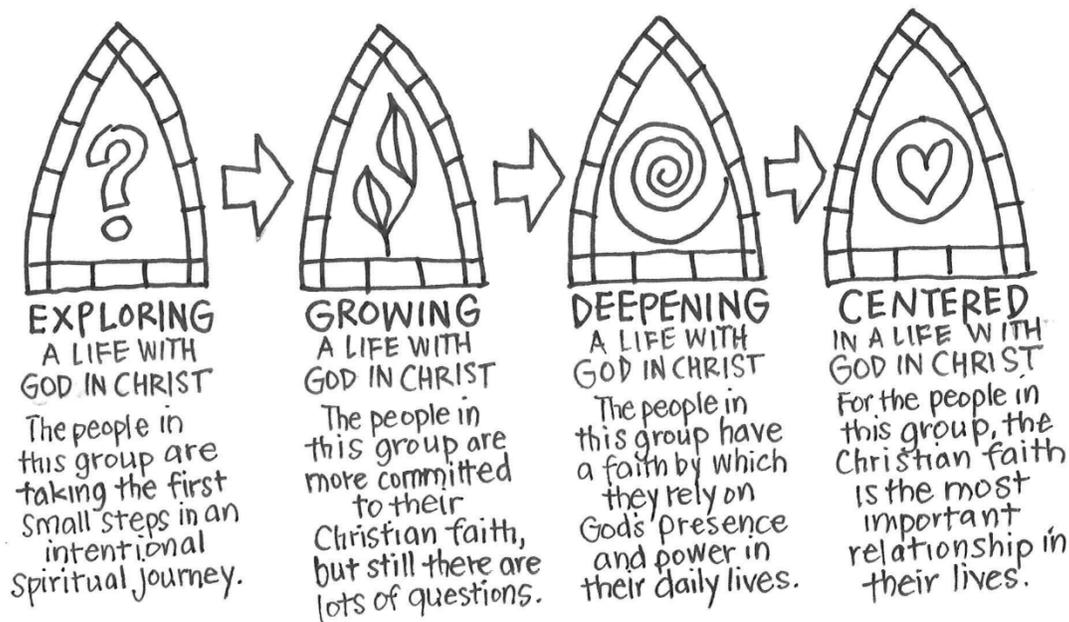
**Overview**

RenewalWorks provides a methodology for understanding where we have been spiritually as a parish, where we are now, and where we'd like to go. The congregation of All Saints' completed a survey in September 2016. Parishioners had to be 18+ years to respond. Our congregation had 226 responses (average Sunday attendance is 350-400). 84% of respondents were age 50+. A small group within All Saints' met to discern and interpret the results of the survey to understand how our members currently feel about their spirituality and the role of the church in fostering spiritual growth. This group was made up of diverse ages and backgrounds, and was selected to more accurately round out representation of our congregation.

**Results**

All Saints scored a 57 on the Spiritual Vitality Index. Episcopal churches tend to score between 43 and 69. The index was created to give parishes a way to compare themselves to other churches in the database. We should interpret this number as a window into where our congregation is on their faith journey.

RenewalWorks also organizes the survey results into a structure where each congregant in the parish is in one of four stages on a spiritual continuum: Exploring, Growing, Deepening, or Centered:



Exploring		Growing		Deepening		Centered	
All Saints	17%	All Saints	50%	All Saints	28%	All Saints	5%
Episcopal Norm	19%	Episcopal Norm	56%	Episcopal Norm	21%	Episcopal Norm	4%
All Churches Norm	9%	All Churches	38%	All Churches	27%	All Churches	25%
# of Parishioners	39	# of Parishioners	113	# of Parishioners	63	# of Parishioners	11

Taken from the RenewalWorks report:

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

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

### **Recommendations**

Our goal as a small group was to provide focused and actionable recommendations, based upon the RenewalWorks methodology that All Saints' can consider to deepen our congregation's individual and collective spirituality.

Through the survey findings, RenewalWorks guided us to focus on the following three areas: getting people moving on their spiritual journey, embedding the Bible in our works, and pastoring to the community. The recommendations below are based on the following:

1. The understanding we gained of our congregation through the survey;
2. Our prayerful discernment of the survey results and exploration of the RenewalWorks methodology as members of both the parish and this small group; and
3. The experience and knowledge provided to us by the research and interpretations from RenewalWorks.

### **Getting People Moving**

RenewalWorks defines this practice as "communicating to all members of the congregation that they are on a spiritual journey and to foster a living, vital, dynamic community." The survey found that our church needs the most help in providing a **clear pathway** that guides the spiritual growth of our members. We think this could be done in the following ways:

1. Take what our small group has learned about the four stages of the Spiritual Continuum (Exploration, Growth, Deepen, Center) and make the congregation aware of this as a definition of a spiritual growth pathway. Be mindful of these stages in our planning of class offerings (i.e. a spiritual 101 class, an "after confirmation" class, a newcomer's class, etc.).
2. Focus on ways to provide a pathway or roadmap to spiritual growth in our discussions with the community and transitions into ministries and opportunities to serve that are easy to understand and participate in.

## Embed the Bible

This practice is defined as “the single most transformational factor for spiritual growth. In the same way that scripture is woven throughout *The Book of Common Prayer*, so the Bible should be woven throughout the lives of the congregation, providing guidance, comfort, and challenge.” The survey found that our church needs the most work in consistently challenging each person to **engage in scripture** in new and interesting ways. It highlighted that our parishioners do not feel that the Bible is an authority in their lives. This stood out to our small group as the strongest area for us to focus on, particularly through daily discipline. We offer the following recommendations:

1. Start each ministry meeting with a reading and/or reflection from scripture.
2. Launch at 10/10/1 challenge for the congregation to do daily as an individual practice to enhance spirituality. 10 minutes of scripture reading, 10 minutes of prayer, and 1 act of kindness a day. Refer the parishioners to *Forward Day by Day* as a tool.
3. Emphasize from the pulpit and from all parish leaders that reading the Bible and deepening our understanding of scripture is essential in our spiritual journey and life as a community.

## Pastor the Community

RenewalWorks challenges “a big part of this effort is for the congregation to know what God is up to in the neighborhood already, listening to the voices encountered there, including interfaith dialogue and work for justice and peace wherever the needs surface. Connect the service to faith and find ways to deepen faith through that service.” The survey brought to light that our congregation wants us to **provide opportunities** for them to serve those in need, allow them to use and develop their spiritual gifts, and provide training on how to integrate our faith into the service. Good places to start:

1. Create a simple “Mission” prayer for All Saints’ that can be said anytime our members are out doing work in the community. It connects members together in each act of service work we do. We recommend the prayer of St. Francis.
2. Create a path of service for parishioners. Include a path for those don’t feel called to physically go out into the community and volunteer (prayer, intellectual dialogue, etc.). Do this by creating imagery of a pie chart, with each piece being a service our church participates in. Encourage the congregation with “how many pieces have you completed?”
3. Each quarter, bring a service opportunity to our 10am education hour. Combine elements of JustFaith social justice teachings and begin the service opportunity with prayer and a study of the issue.

## Conclusion

All Saints’ partnered with RenewalWorks to understand: Is our congregation spiritually healthy? The answer is “Yes”. Are we ready for further spiritual growth? The answer is also “Yes”. To keep from being complacent, we must center on our core Episcopalian beliefs and practices and showcase them to the congregation, providing the foundation and tools to go deeper. Putting energy and focus into the recommended actions will enhance our spiritual lives as Episcopalians and an All Saints’ community.