

Congregational Vitality
Assessments:

What it is and what's coming!

The Congregational Development
Commission
(CDC)

What do we measure and does it really tell us who we are?



Changed Context



The Mission of the Church
in the 1940/50's was to
return an entire populace
from war to peace, to re-
socialize men from combat
to family and to build
bridges of peace between
nations. The mission was
realized brilliantly. That
was then, this is now...

Changed Context



There is no Northwest Passage
back to the 50's.



We all know the problem is out there!



When in doubt...blame kids
these days!



Or these days...



Or these days..









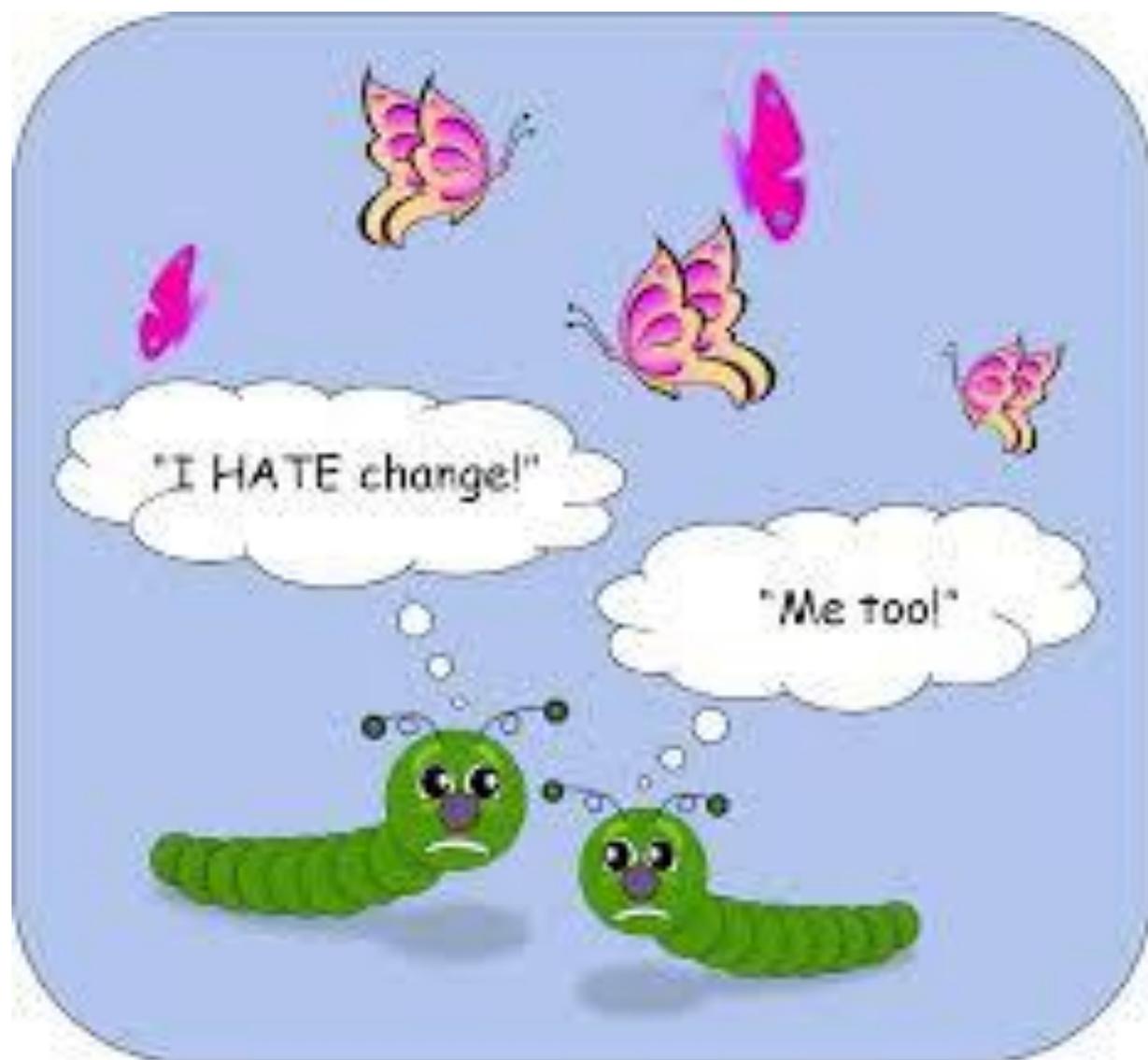












**CHANGE
IS GOOD.**

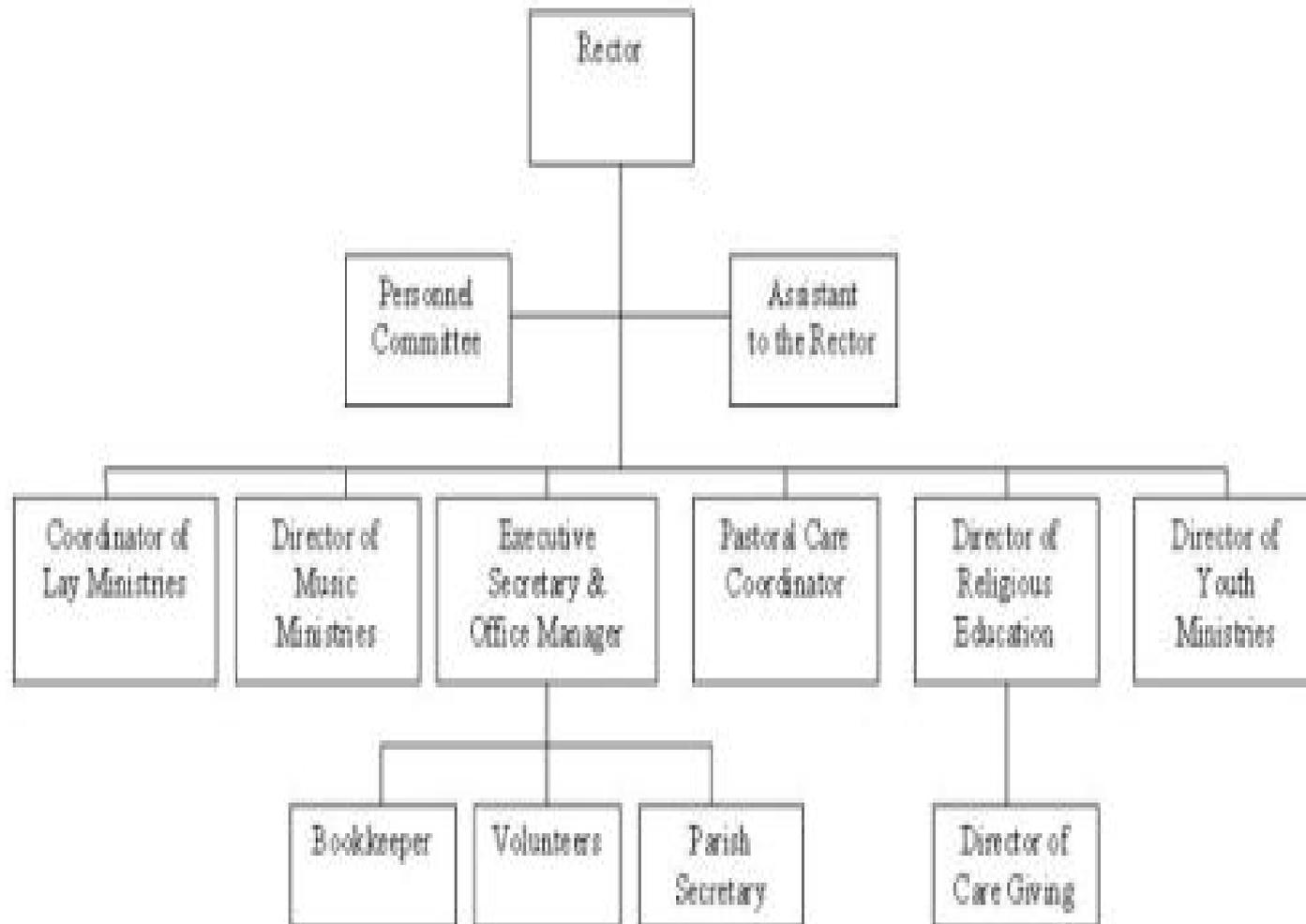
**you go
first!**

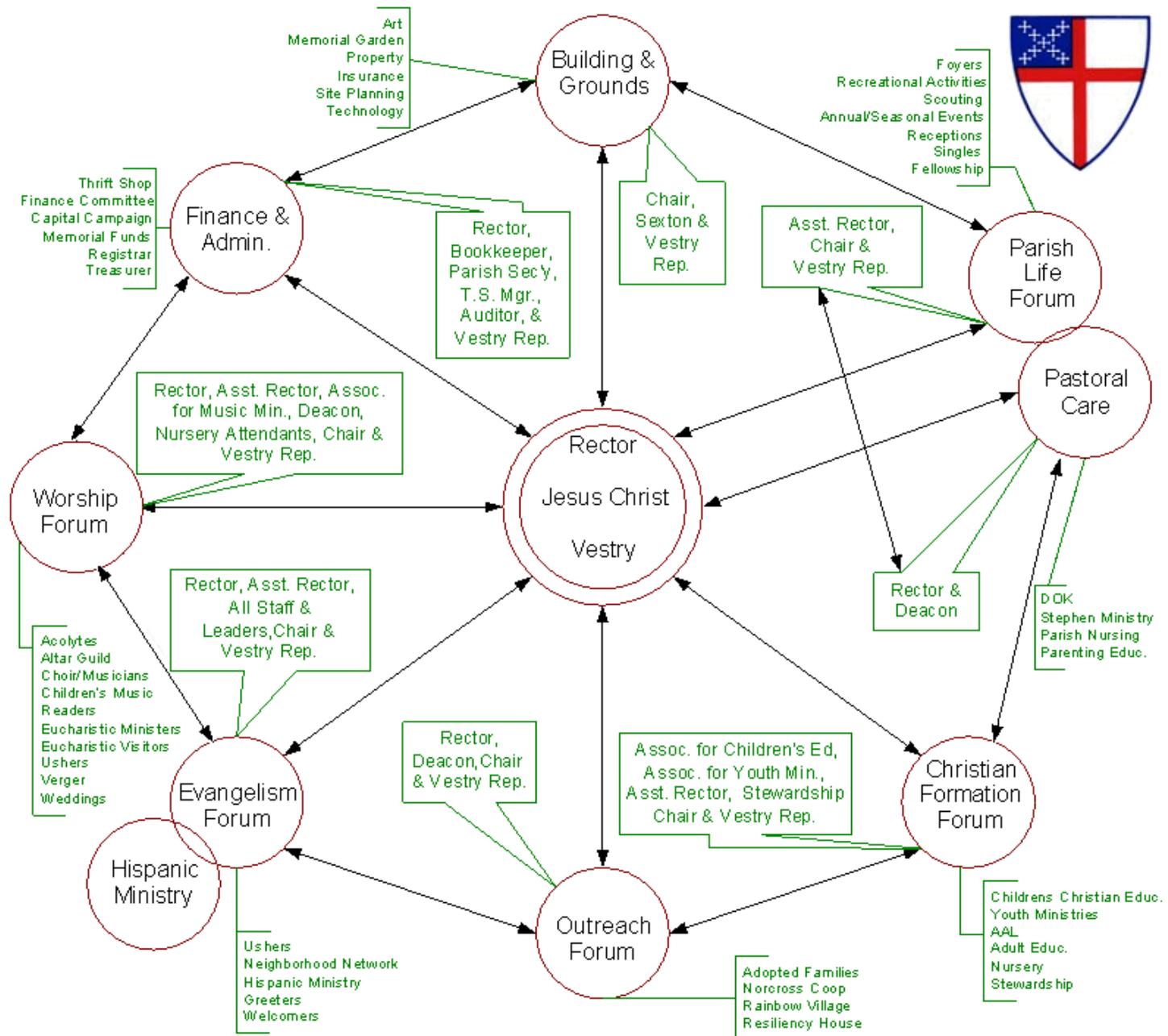
Technical Fixes



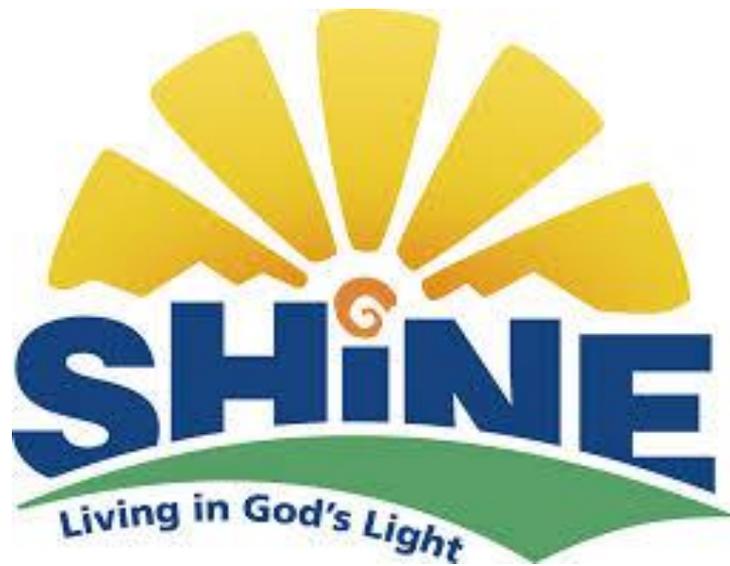
PARISH ORGANIZATION

ORGANIZATIONAL CHART















Dear Lord, Thank You that at last I am a warm
butt in the pew...said no person ever!



Warm butts in the pews



**Vampire Evangelism:
Join my church pay my bills.**



Changed Context



**There is no Northwest Passage
back to the 50's.**



Look

"Well, you did ask for a sign"
-God

CDC investigated three Dioceses:

Olympia: College for Congregational Development

Chicago: Thrive

Toronto: Healthy Church

Explored programs in three countries:

United States: Renewal Works

Canada: Natural Church Development (5yrs)

United Kingdom: Nat. Church Development (10yrs)

Starts with reliance on God and what God is doing.

Assist parishes to assess where their real status is, as opposed to thoughts/wishes/memories. Have "fierce" conversations. You will know the truth and it will set you free.

Has clear direction for forward movement.

Uses sound development practice/statistics etc..

Renewal Works

Natural Church Development

An introduction to
*RenewalWorks*TM



Forward Movement

Reinvigorating the life of the church

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing. It is the gift of God, not the result of works, so that no one may boast. 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 2:8-10

What does that way of life look like?

“The life-and-death question for each of our churches and denominations may boil down to this: Are we a club for the elite who pretend to have arrived or a school for disciples who are still on the way?”

Brian McLaren, *Finding Our Way*

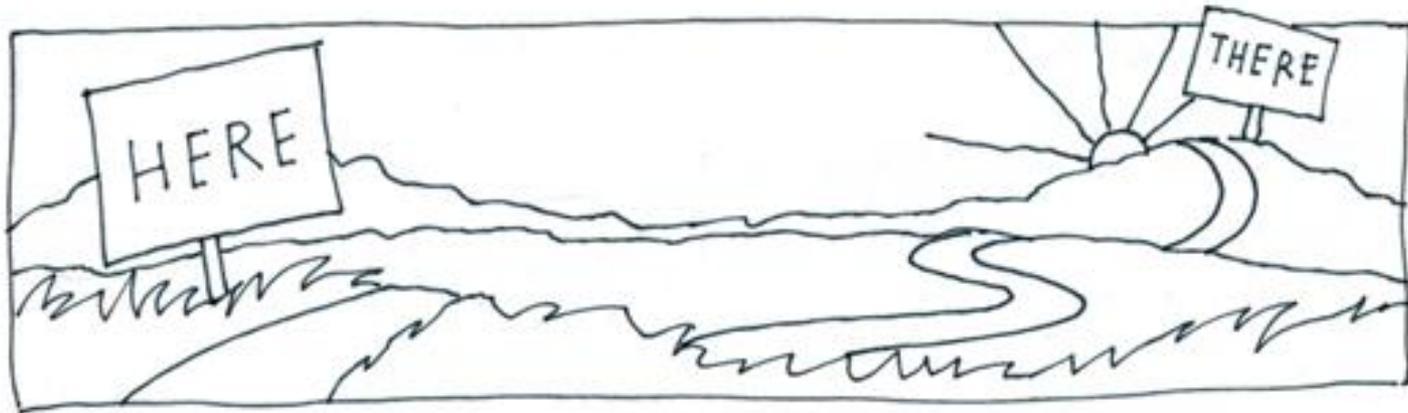
From People of the Way by Dwight Zscheile

- What does it mean to be a disciple in today's world? What does it mean to be a church member? Are they the same thing?
- How does the shape of life in the Episcopal Church foster depth and commitment to the way of Christ and how does it undermine it?
- Who are we as Episcopalians and what are we here for?

- Are we doing and being all we're called to do and be?
- Does more programming, more activity produce more growth in the church?
- Is flat really the new up?
- Shouldn't we look a little bit more like the church described in the Acts of the Apostles?
- What's the connection between the spiritual vitality of the congregation and the spiritual vitality of its individual members?

Self Awareness is Key





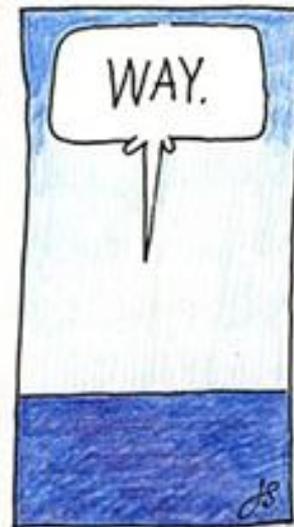
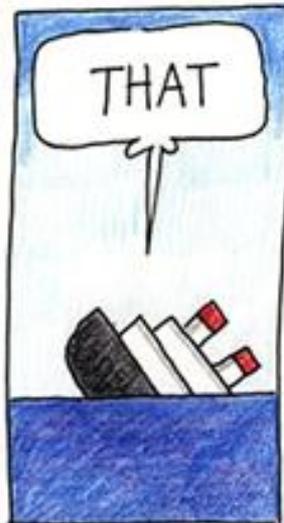
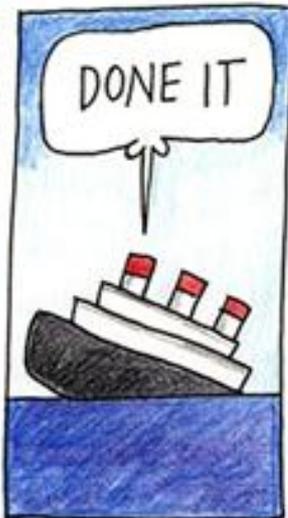
This vision for RenewalWorks:

To help congregations, and individuals, and ministries in those congregations to move from where they are to where they are called to be, with the expectation:

If you come here, you will grow.

AKA

The Great
Conversation



ENVISION

Allstate®



Ameritech



PNC BANK

Lilly



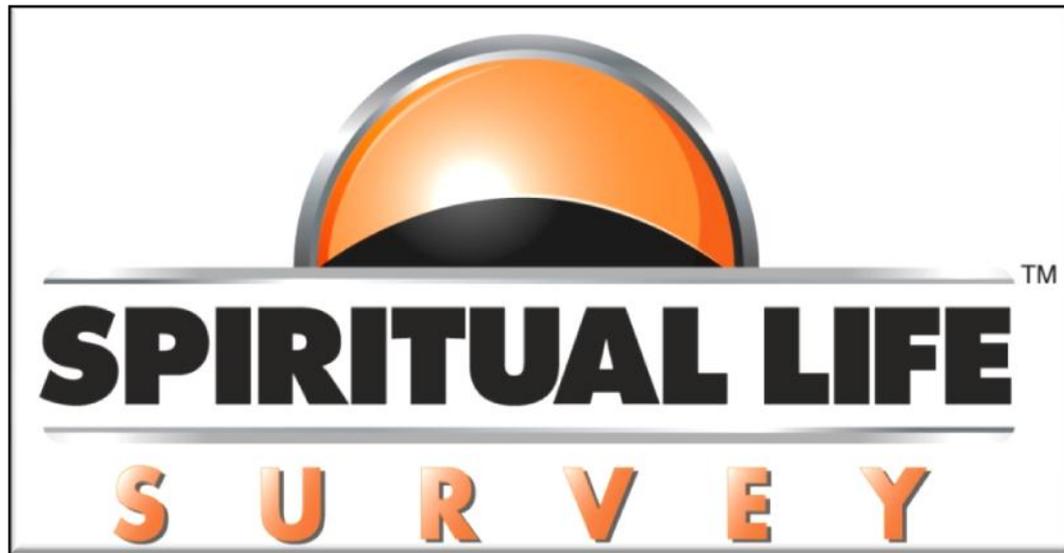
biore.

kinko's®



RAND McNALLY

Taking a survey



What is measured:

- User's perspective
- Needs, attitudes and behaviors
- “The Intangibles”, inside the head and heart

Strategic questions

**What drives
spiritual growth in
an individual?**

**What are
characteristics of
growing churches?**

**Through the Eyes of
Parishioners**

Reveal has surveyed
2,000 Congregations
500,000 Individuals

The big revelation:
Congregations and
individuals
with a vibrant, deepening
faith, place spiritual growth
as a top priority.

This Is What We Would See If Church Activity Drives Spiritual Growth

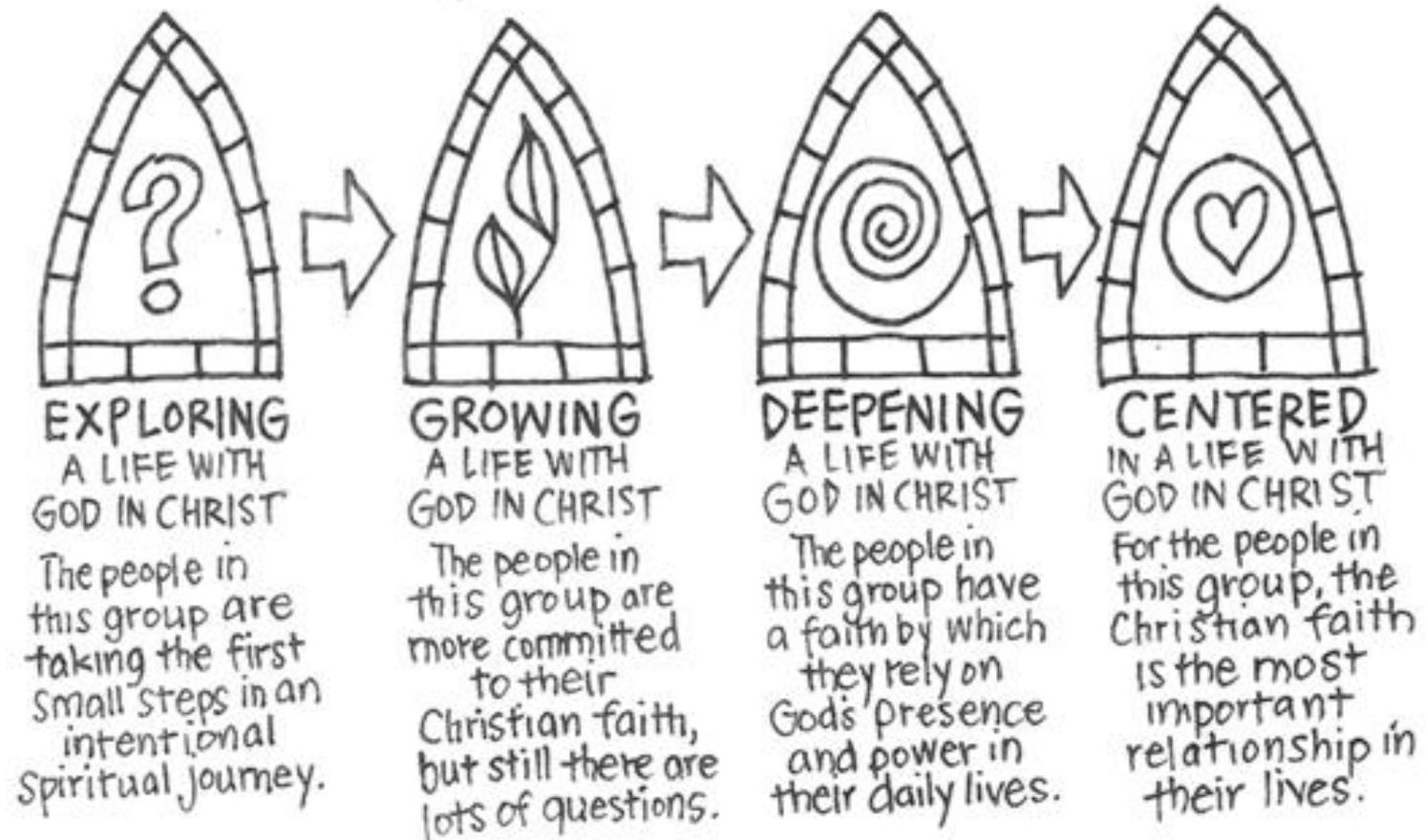


Based on Research Results, the Connection Between Church Activity and Spiritual Growth Appears to Be Limited



What does seem to
matter?
Relationship with God
and neighbor.

Spiritual Growth Continuum



And by spiritual growth
we mean what?

Growing in relationship with
God, neighbor, world and
self

The relational dimension of spiritual growth

Jesus said: The first commandment is this: Hear O Israel, the Lord our God is the only Lord. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, with all your strength. The second is this: Love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other greater commandment than these.

Mark 12:29-31

Top variables

1. Reading and reflecting on scripture
2. Embracing/clarifying core Christian beliefs
3. Engaging in personal spiritual practices
4. Serving those in need
5. Worship: Being in Spiritual Community

The RenewalWorks Process

- A parish takes an on-line survey
- Four workshops with a selected team, meeting about two weeks apart
- Recommendations to vestry and parish, launching a process of long term focus on spiritual growth, a process which unfolds over a number of years

Where have we been?

(Workshop 1: Introducing the spiritual continuum)

Where are we now?

(Workshop 2: Looking at the survey results)

Where do we want to go?

(Workshop 3: Best practices)

How will we get there?

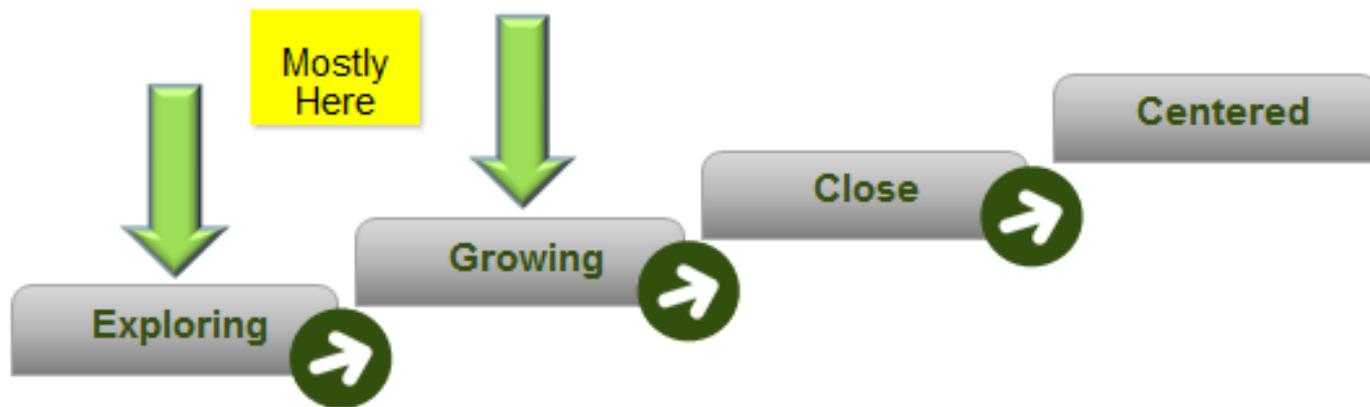
(Workshop 4: Next steps)

Spiritual Vitality Index:

Looks at:

1. Church's role
2. Personal Spiritual Practices
3. Service

Skewed early in the Continuum



Key Conclusions

- There are all kinds of signs of spiritual vitality among Episcopalians:
 - welcoming, educating children, take care of my personal/pastoral needs, prayer for others/thanks, commitment to liturgy
- Embrace of beliefs/clarity around beliefs are relatively low
- Personal spiritual practices are relatively low
 - consistent with low expectations

Conclusions continued...

- Serving those in need is a strong feature
 - Social justice legacy is strong, but not a lot of clarity about the theological or biblical basis
- Profiles suggest 'lifestyle' churches
 - For 'my' convenience or benefit: focus on what I get out of it
- There are groups of deeply committed in all churches

Emerging Implications

- There is a distinctive and pervasive Episcopal culture
 - Not particularly high expectations. Is that healthy, sustainable?
- Eucharist, prayer, solitude, service key in growth
- Serving is a huge leverage point.
 - Need to ground/connect to beliefs, scripture, practices
- Change will not be quick nor easy
 - Need a multi-year path

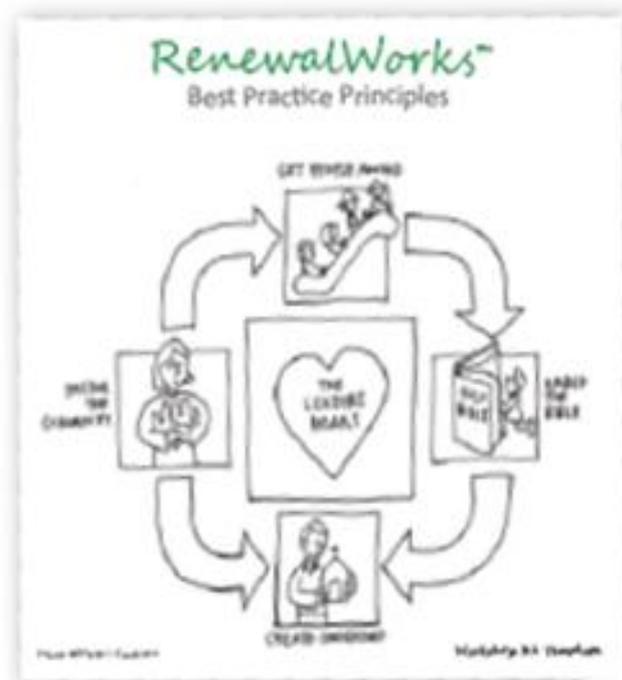
Where do we want to go?

Workshop 3: Looking at beliefs and practices and best practice principles
How do we describe our beliefs and practices?

How do we apply best practice principles learned from the research?

What is God calling us to do and be?

The Best Practice Principles



Get people moving
Embed scripture
Create ownership
Pastor the community
Focus on the leader's
heart

The leader's heart: It's at the center.



Romans 14: 1 How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?



Leaders of vital congregations...

- Focus on growing hearts, not growing attendance.
- Be single-minded in the objective of forming disciples.

Leaders of vital congregations are...

- Disarmingly humble: Jim Collins GOOD TO GREAT: “Best leader is someone who demonstrates combination of deep personal humility with intense professional will.”



Embed the Bible

We are left with our question. What makes the church, your congregation and mine, different, utterly essential, without equal, unique? Let me venture a response:

A congregation is Christian to the degree that it is confronted by and attempts to form its life in response to the Word of God.

-Will Willimon, *Shaped by the Bible*

I can't read the Bible for you.
-Bill Hybels



Create ownership





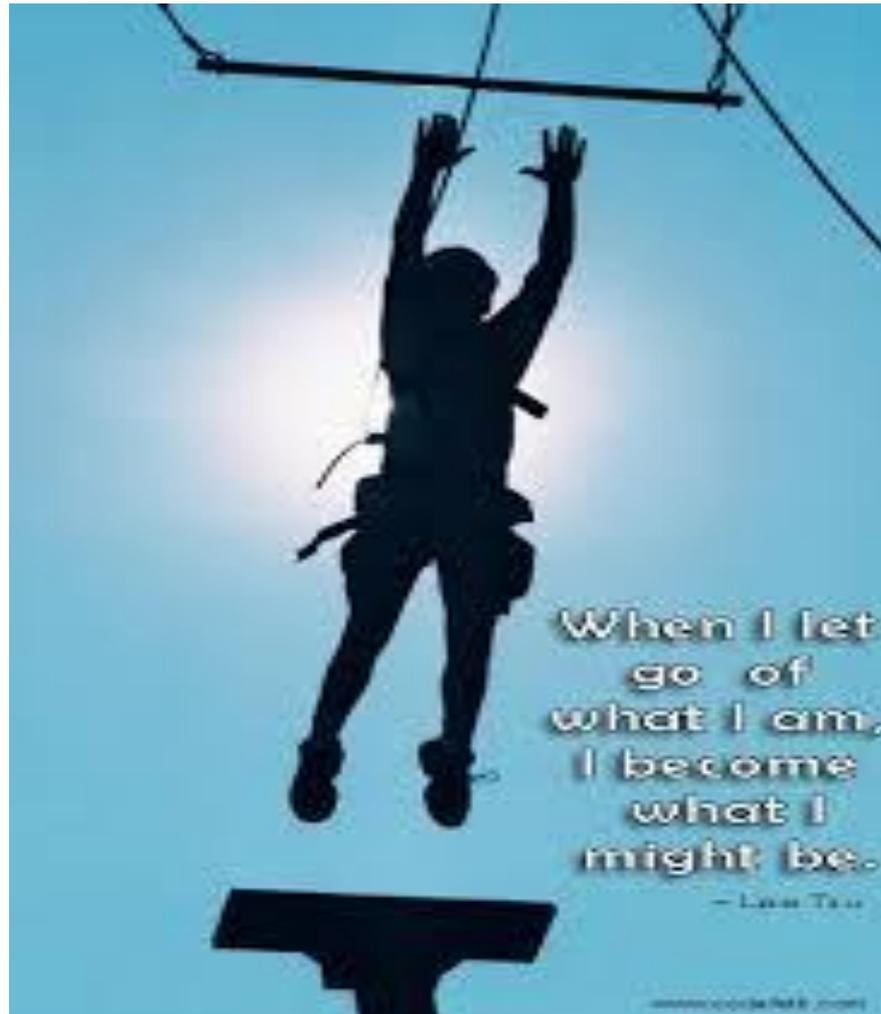
Pastor the community



The baptismal covenant

- Will you proclaim by word and example the good news of God in Christ?
- Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself?
- Will you strive for justice and peace, and respect the dignity of every human being?

Elevating expectations: What might that look like?



Overheard at one of the workshops:

“I don’ t expect anything to happen to me when I come to church.”

Should we expect people to expect something to happen?

If so, what?

Do we want to grow? Should we?

What's your sign?



THE
EPISCOPAL
CHURCH

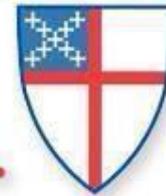
WELCOMES YOU

**“If you come here,
you will grow.”**



**Love God. Love Your Neighbor.
Change the World.**

The Episcopal Church Welcomes You.



If you come here, you will grow.

Grow in our understanding of God's activity in our lives:

- Commit to examine and deepen our relationship with God
- Follow Jesus, and his teachings and practices, as the supreme example of whole and authentic life
- Passionately express our lives by responding to the Holy Spirit through worship, personal practices and service.

If you come here, you will grow.

Look at everything the church is doing:

- Every ministry can deepen
- All ministries can be evaluated
- Wherever a person may be, each person can grow spiritually

If you come here, you will grow.

Shifting and elevating expectations for
worship:

The liturgical leaders (musicians, readers of the scriptures, preachers and celebrants) are to be the prompters in worship. All of us, the congregation as well as the liturgical leaders are the actors in the drama of worship. God alone is the audience for the drama.

-Soren Kierkegaard

Evolve the culture

- Not necessarily about more programs, adding staff or bigger budgets
- Align everything for spiritual growth; relentlessly pursue
- Learn from others, and discover your own language: It's all about translation.
- Pray a lot

Renewal Works Launch 2015

9 Parishes 6 Months

3 Per Region "Indaba
Style"

The NCD identified eight Quality Characteristics used by God to build his church.

- Empowering Leadership
 - Gift-oriented Ministry
 - Passionate Spirituality
 - Functional Structures
- Inspiring Worship Services
- Transformative Small Groups
- Need-oriented Evangelism
 - Loving Relationships

*A letter from Evelyn Underhill to
Archbishop Lang of Canterbury
(Found among her papers, c. 1930)*

May it please your Grace:

I desire very humbly to suggest with bishops assembled at Lambeth that the greatest and most necessary work they could do at the present time for the renewal of the Anglican Church would be to call the clergy as a whole, solemnly and insistently to a greater interiority and cultivation of the personal life of prayer.

*More from a letter from Evelyn Underhill to
Archbishop Lang of Canterbury
(Found among her papers, c. 1930)*

The real hunger among laity is not for halting attempts to reconcile theology and physical science but for the deep things of the Spirit.

We look to the clergy to help and direct our spiritual growth.

God is the interesting thing about religion and people are hungry for God.

A good place to start this exploration is with some key questions:

- Where is your congregation healthy?
- What factors play a role in a vital and strong congregations?
- What about you personally?
- How would you rate your spiritual vitality?
- What can help you—and your congregation—deepen a relationship with God and with neighbors?

pray

For more information contact:

The Rev. Claire Woodley

stmarysmirector@yahoo.com

The Rev. Canon Alta Gracia

Perez-Bullard at aperez-

bullard@dioceseny.org

The Rev. Jay Sidebotham at

Jay@Renewalworks.org