

RenewalWorks Report

St. Luke's Episcopal Church
January 29, 2025
Final Report

During the Fall of 2024, St. Luke's Episcopal Church participated in a comprehensive study of the church's spiritual vitality using the RenewalWorks program created by the Episcopal Church. This program focuses on helping churches make spiritual growth their top priority, understand Episcopal beliefs and practices, and identify key areas for growth both individually and as a community. Members of St. Luke's were asked to complete a detailed inventory regarding their religious values and practices, as well as their feelings about St. Luke's Church itself. The Clergy helped assemble a diverse committee who utilized the tools of the RenewalWorks program, including Episcopal Beliefs and Practices assessment, Best Practice Principles of Spiritually Vital Churches, demographic analysis, and a summary of questionnaire responses.

The RenewalWorks program utilizes a Spiritual Continuum Profile that helps identify where individuals and congregations are in their faith journey, from Exploring a life with God, to Growing, Deepening, and ultimately Centering their life with God. The goal of this process was to understand where we are as a congregation spiritually and to identify opportunities that will enable our congregation to grow in love of God and neighbor. Through this process, we sought to answer fundamental questions about our church's role in supporting spiritual growth and our collective journey toward deeper faith.

Process and Methodology

The assessment began with a spiritual life inventory completed by 121 parishioners, representing 54% of our average Sunday attendance. This response rate exceeded the typical Episcopal church participation of 40%, demonstrating strong engagement from our congregation. The data collected provided insights into our members' spiritual practices, beliefs, and their experience of church life.

A series of four workshops were conducted with the RenewalWorks committee to analyze the data and develop recommendations. The first workshop provided orientation to the RenewalWorks process and introduced the Spiritual Growth Framework. In the second workshop, the team reviewed survey data and demographics, discussing their implications for our congregation. The third workshop focused on examining Best Practice Principles from churches successful in supporting spiritual growth. In the final workshop, the team developed specific action plans and recommendations based on all the gathered information.

Key Findings

Our data revealed several significant insights about our congregation's spiritual life. In examining our current state, we found that our congregation demonstrates particularly strong prayer life and thanksgiving practices, exceeding Episcopal norms in these areas. We also show

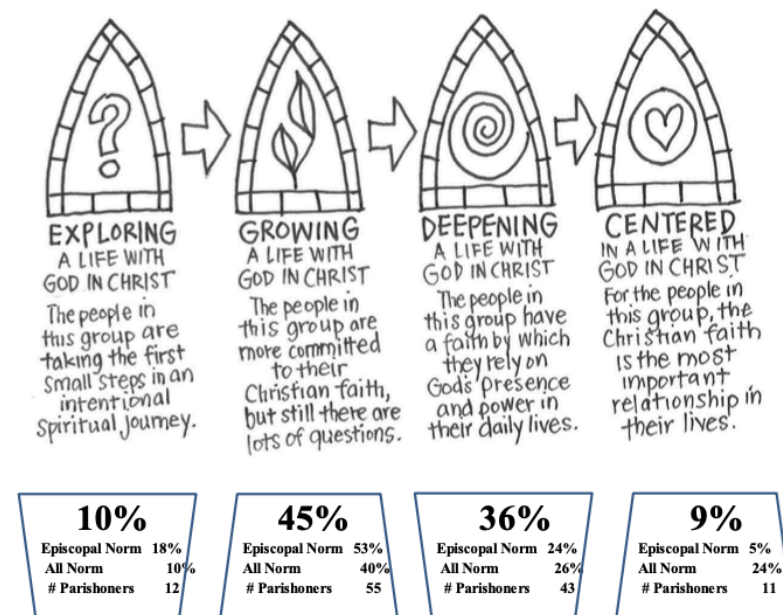
high engagement in service and outreach activities, indicating a strong foundation in putting faith into action.

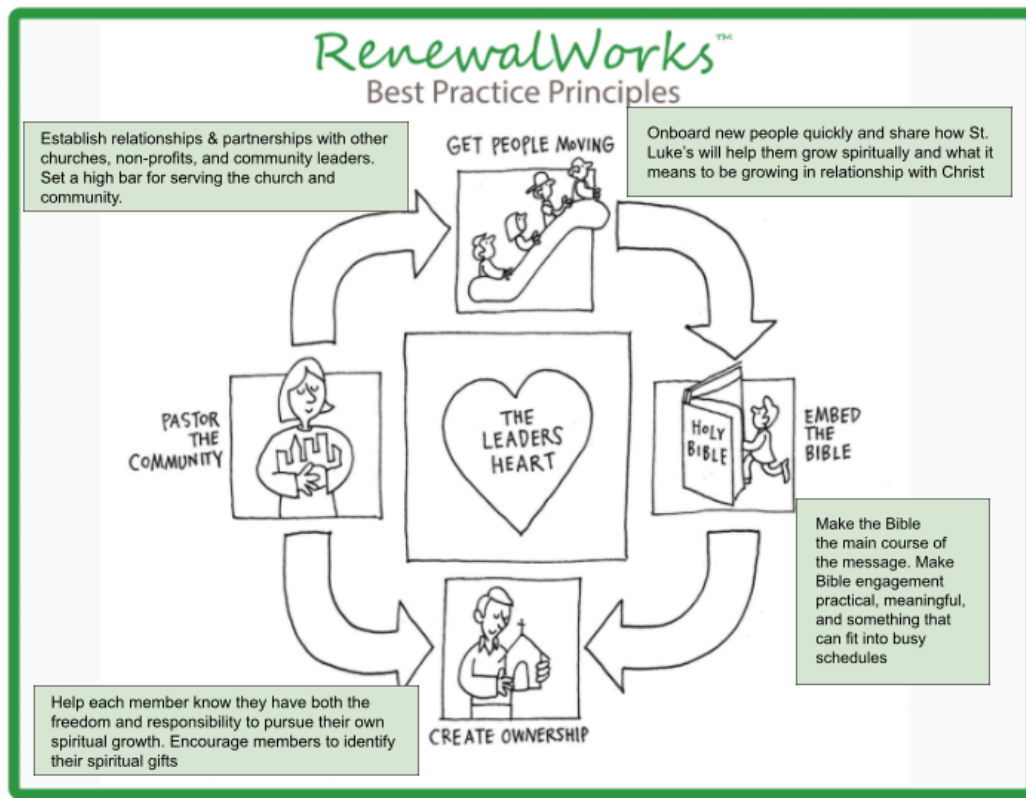
The assessment revealed a need for deeper spiritual growth among members. While our congregation shows strong commitment to service, there is a desire to more fully integrate faith understanding with these activities. Bible engagement emerged as an area where there is high desire for growth but lower current practice, suggesting an opportunity for development.

Our Spiritual Continuum Profile indicates that 55% of our parish is in the Explore and Grow levels of spiritual development. 36% are deepening a life with God in Christ, and 9% are centered and describe it as the most important relationship in their lives. This represents a spiritually young congregation, despite demographic maturity. While this might initially seem concerning, the data actually indicates strong potential for spiritual growth and development. Our members actively seek deeper understanding of core Episcopal practices and show willingness to engage in new spiritual formation opportunities.

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.





Actions to be Considered

After considerable review of data, discussion, and reflection, the committee focused on three areas of Best Practices as defined by RenewalWorks: **The Heart of the Leader, Embed the Bible, and Pastor the Community**. In addition to these practices, a theme the committee titled **Awareness** also emerged. These best practices and one theme are interconnected; this relationship became evident as we identified ways to operationalize the best practices. Church leaders and members will work together to incorporate the principles into the life of St. Luke's.

Heart of the Leader

1. Professional Development to support the Clergy in their spiritual development
2. Leadership Development for Clergy, Staff, Vestry, Lay Leadership and all interested parishioners
3. Create opportunities for leaders to share their stories about "who they are, what they do, and why they do it." (awareness)

Embed the Bible

1. Include scripture in an intentional and formalized way in sermons, communications, and all church activities
2. Parish-wide scripture or Bible study - Consider a "Scripture of the Week" that will be studied and discussed in all church activities
3. Offer regular formation (St. Luke's 101) that teaches in depth information about Episcopal traditions - the what and why of sacraments, practices, liturgy (awareness)

Pastor the Community

1. Educate the parish about the existing outreach opportunities (awareness)
2. Teach about the ways in which service is connected to faith
3. Help build relationships with our neighbors
4. Continued strong relationship between church and school

For Clergy

Consider the Clergy's role in spiritual leadership focusing on three key areas. First, leadership development emphasizing regular spiritual development sessions for church leadership, creating structured opportunities for sharing faith journeys, and developing and modeling Bible integration in all church activities. Second, offer worship enhancements incorporating more scripture-based teaching in sermons, creating opportunities for member testimony and faith sharing, and developing a systematic approach to teaching Episcopal traditions. Third, offer pastoral care establishing regular one-on-one spiritual guidance opportunities, creating a framework for connecting service activities with faith formation, and developing mentoring relationships with lay leaders.

For Vestry

The Vestry's role centers on providing structural support, leadership, and resource management. In terms of structural support, the Vestry focuses on allocating resources for spiritual growth initiatives such as valuable ideas and information. Additionally, creating accountability structures for implementing recommendations, and establishing clear communication channels for sharing spiritual growth opportunities. Leadership responsibilities include participating in spiritual development training, supporting Clergy in implementing new initiatives, and monitoring progress of spiritual growth programs. For resource management, the Vestry focuses on reviewing and allocating funding for recommended programs, supporting development of new ministry initiatives, and ensuring adequate resources for Bible study and formation programs.

Other Church Leaders

Ministry and Committee chairs play an important role in assisting members in maintaining focus, accomplishing goals and building relationships to further spiritual growth of the congregation. They are also important in mentoring and cultivating future leaders.

For St. Luke's Members

Individual members play a crucial role in the congregation's spiritual growth. Personal spiritual development includes regular Bible study and reflection, participation in new spiritual formation opportunities, and development of personal prayer and devotional practices. Regarding community engagement, members actively connecting their faith with their service work ensures that when they serve others, they're not just doing good works, but growing spiritually through the experience. Members can grow in faith together by joining small groups where they can discuss their faith experiences with others. When members serve others through outreach

activities, they could take time to reflect on these experiences - both individually and as a group - and share these meaningful moments with the larger church community.

Recommendations and Next Steps

To maintain focus and momentum, we recommend establishing a ***RenewalWorks Implementation Team***. This dedicated group should include representatives from Clergy, Vestry, and congregation, meeting regularly to oversee progress and provide updates to church leadership. The team will need to establish clear metrics for success, including participation rates in formation activities, engagement in Bible study programs, integration of service and spiritual growth, and regular assessment of overall spiritual vitality. Through careful monitoring and adjustment of these initiatives, we can ensure our spiritual growth efforts remain vibrant and aligned with our congregation's needs.

To ensure effective implementation and sustained momentum, we recommend a phased approach to these changes. Each phase builds upon the previous one, allowing for careful development and assessment of initiatives before moving forward.

Immediate Actions (First 90 Days):

- Form implementation team with clear leadership structure
- Develop communication strategy for congregation
- Refine list of spiritual development ideas with Clergy and Vestry
- Review and align on direction and next steps

Medium-Term Goals and Objectives (3-6 Months):

- TBD by the implementation team

Long-Term Goals and Objectives (6-12 Months):

- TBD by the implementation team

These recommendations represent our team's prayerful consideration of the data and our church's needs. We believe implementing these suggestions will help nurture the spiritual growth our congregation seeks while honoring our Episcopal traditions and identity.

Report respectfully submitted by the RenewalWorks Team

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