



Workshop 1

Where have we been?

At this gathering, you take your first steps in getting acquainted with your workshop team and with what's ahead—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 everyone reflect on the dynamic nature of their own faith and the role played by the church and clergy in supporting and encouraging spiritual growth.

GETTING READY FOR WORKSHOP 1

Read *Footsteps* by the Rev. Jay Sidebotham (your facilitator will provide this)

WELCOME AND WORKSHOP OVERVIEW

The session begins with introductions and a discussion of some basic ground rules for your team's work together. The facilitator offers a brief description of this session and the RenewalWorks process.

As with any journey, it helps to know what's ahead. Here's a brief run-through of the four workshops:

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 1,800 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 chapter 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 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

Time spent on prayer and reflection before each session's main tasks helps everyone center as a group and invites God into your work. This session uses the prayer and texts below.

Prayer of Self-Dedication from *The Book of Common Prayer* (p. 832):

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.

Readings from scripture

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

After the scripture is read, your facilitator asks:

What words or phrases in these readings resonate with you?

Exercise 1: Personal experience discussion

This discussion begins with an exercise on our spiritual journeys.

Following the instructions below, complete the Life-line Exercise on the next page. Your facilitator will give you five minutes to work on this.

Life-Line Exercise

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 found on the next page. 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.

After five minutes, team members are divided into small groups. The groups are asked 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-three minutes for each person).
- Listen for common drivers in the ways faith grows or diminishes as each person speaks.

When everyone has spoken, the groups consider these 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.
