

WHAT IS RENEWALWORKS, AND WHY DOES IT MATTER?

A ministry of Forward Movement, RenewalWorks encourages churches to chart a course marked by deeper spiritual growth, experienced through a growing love of God and neighbor. When Jesus was asked what must be done to inherit eternal life, his answer was simple, even if it wasn't always easy. He answered, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself." Luke 10:27

Since he gave that answer, the key to vitality in the spiritual life has not changed. It holds the key to changing our own lives, our churches, and our world.

It's an exciting time to be the church. For sure congregations face challenges, with shifts in affiliation and observance in our congregations. But we are provided an opportunity to get clearer about the mission of the church, to reinvigorate the church (and our own spiritual lives) with a renewed focus on discipleship.

We've given the chance to ask, and begin to answer, these questions:

- How can we move forward in changing times?
- What are we called to do, and be?

RenewalWorks offers a way for congregations to address these questions by remembering Jesus' basic teaching, reconnecting with a call to discipleship, focusing on growing hearts, and transforming the church, one person at a time.

HOW THE PROGRAM WORKS

The RenewalWorks process leverages more than ten years of research that reveals key characteristics of vital congregations. This research emerges from work with more than 1,800 churches, including more than 100 Episcopal congregations, and almost 500,000 congregants.

The process begins with an anonymous, confidential, and thought-provoking online survey (called the Spiritual Life Inventory, or SLI), which congregants are invited and encouraged to complete. The SLI explores the individuals' spiritual life and the church's role in supporting it.

When the congregation's responses are viewed as a group and benchmarked against data gathered from more than 1,800 churches for over a decade, the SLI provides a snapshot of the spiritual vitality of the congregation.

A workshop team of nine to twenty-four participants is formed to explore spiritual growth and work with the SLI findings. Using a guided methodology that involves self-reflection, sharing, and discussion, the group meets in four workshop sessions that begin and end with prayer.

Workshop team members consider research-based best practices of vital congregations and explore ways those practices might take root in their own congregations. Leveraging the findings, congregations implement changes in ways that make sense for their church and context.

THE WORKSHOPS

The workshops use multiple breakout groups to foster collaboration. They are self-contained—no outside help is required. RenewalWorks provides an in-depth, step-by-step Facilitator Guide, a Participant's Workbook, and templates created by the Rev. Jay Sidebotham to print and post as visual aids. These materials are emailed to you once you've registered.

In addition, RenewalWorks staff members offer online videos and weekly phone check-ins with the your church's workshop facilitator.

Here's a quick look at 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 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 for 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.

It doesn't have to stop here. Many churches choose to continue meeting in a workshop setting after completing the RenewalWorks process. Contact us for a list of resources that might help you and your congregation continue the value discussion.