

Saint Francis Episcopal Church  
Holden, MA  
Our Spiritual Life

Report to the Vestry



# Renewal Works - Background

- The Vestry unanimously agreed to undertake a Spiritual Life assessment, using the Spiritual Life Inventory (SLI). The SLI explores each person's spiritual life and the church's role in supporting it.
- St. Francis survey was conducted from September 16<sup>th</sup> to October 7<sup>th</sup>. In total, 113 parishioners, representing more than 75% of the average Sunday attendance, completed the survey.



# RenewalWorks Leadership Team

- Pat Perkins – Rector
- Craig Stanovich – Facilitator
- Bryan Diehl
- Dawn Rooke
- Bev Giarusso
- Marge Tremblay
- Lindsay Demers
- Joe Reynolds
- Erik Gladwin
- Linda Shelton
- Crystal Graham



# Why Does This Matter

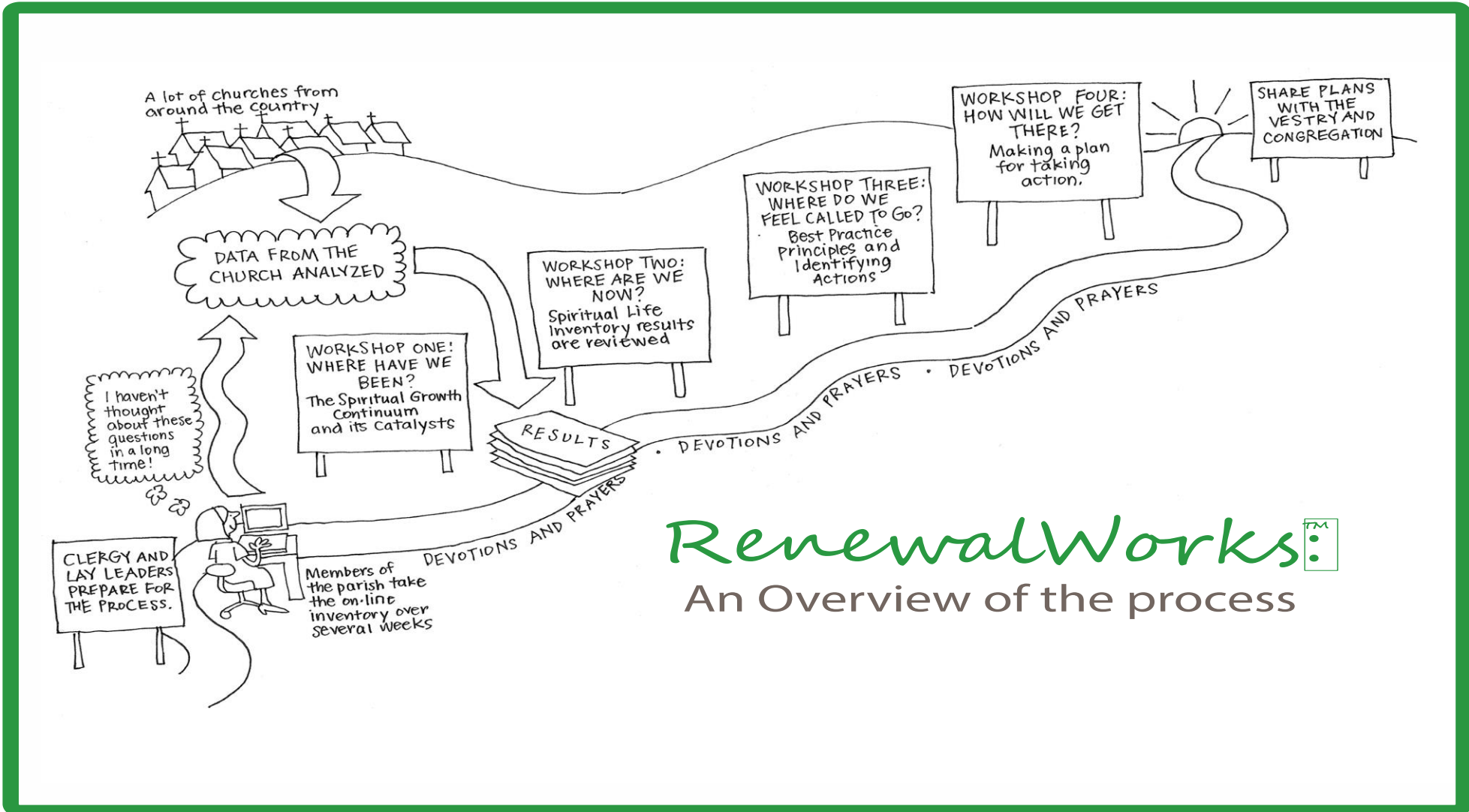
Congregations face challenges, with shifts in affiliation and observance in our congregations. But we are provided an opportunity to get clearer about the mission of the church, to reinvigorate the church (and our own spiritual lives) with a renewed focus on discipleship.

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?

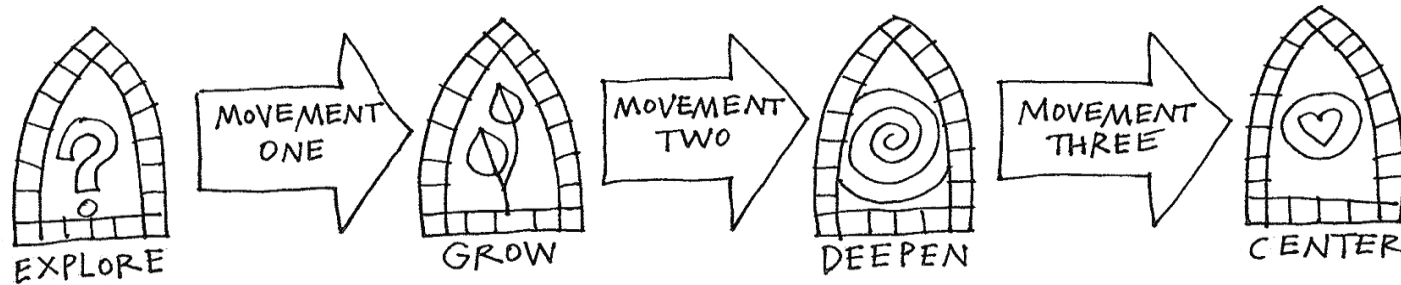


# Overview of the Process



# The Spiritual Growth Continuum

RenewalWorks™  
Spiritual Growth Framework



# Spiritual Growth - Catalysts

At every stage along the spiritual continuum, **the single, most important driver for spiritual growth was time spent reflecting on scripture.**



# Spiritual Growth - Catalysts

## **Catalysts - moving from Exploring to Growing**

- This transition is about building trust in God through beliefs.
- Often the church and clergy serve as primary helpers and teachers.





## Spiritual Growth - Catalysts

### **Catalysts - moving from Growing to Deepening**

- Personal spiritual practices are important in the move from growing to deepening.
- This group often says that spiritual growth is more important than church membership.



# Spiritual Growth - Catalysts

## Catalysts - moving from Deepening to Centered

- Faith in action in the world is key for this transition.
- Solitude, reflection, prayer for guidance, and loving God are all catalysts that help people move toward a life centered on God.



# Spiritual Catalyst Profile – St. Francis

## **The Biggest Opportunity Area for St. Francis**

Spiritual Beliefs and Attitudes

Personal Spiritual Practices

## **An Opportunity Area for St. Francis**

Organized Church Activities

Faith In Action



# St. Francis Best Practices Summary

## Embed the Bible

- **Keep Scripture at the Core of preaching and teaching.**
- **No Excuses for not engaging with Scripture.**
- **Model ways for Scripture to be Foundational.**
  - **The Biggest Opportunity Area for St. Francis**



# St. Francis Best Practices Summary

## Create Ownership

- Empower people to be the Church.
- Equip people to succeed in ministries.
- Hold people accountable.
  - An Opportunity Area for St. Francis



# Summary of SLI Findings Data Report- St. Francis

- Parishioners are not complacent about their faith and church;
- Hunger for focus on spiritual growth not being met - Spiritual growth is a priority;
- Bold church-wide initiative would be welcome by the parish;
- Seeking a better understanding of core Episcopal beliefs and practices;
- **Overall, a greater focus on scripture in all church activities needed.**



# What are we called to do?

## RenewalWorks Recommendations to Vestry:

### 1. Parish-wide practice to include prayer to begin and end every ministry

- Provide tools to help pray
- Provide suggested prayers to use (Mad-Lib Prayer – Way of Love)



# What are we called to do?

## RenewalWorks Recommendations to Vestry:

### 2. Instructed Eucharist

- Choose different topic each weekend
- Include brief of topic in Little Portion and Bulletin





# What are we called to do?

## RenewalWorks Recommendations to Vestry:

### 3. Bible 101/Episcopal 101

- Lay-lead groups
- Focus on prayer, scripture, spiritual issues and Episcopal Practices and Beliefs
- Short term commitment – one or two weeks



# What are we called to do?

## RenewalWorks Recommendations to Vestry:

### 4. Personal Spiritual Practices

- Daily devotionals – reflection (set aside time daily) and promote availability
- Include upcoming scripture readings in Little Portion (book, chapter and verses) with link to full readings



# What are we called to do?

## RenewalWorks Recommendations to Vestry:

### 5. Form Communications Committee

- Develop use of Social Media to “get out the word”
- Description of each ministry on St. Francis website



# What are we called to do?

## RenewalWorks Recommendations to Vestry:

### 6. More Hospitality Events

- Newcomers, Church Picnic, Fellowship
- Shrove Tuesday
- Benefit Social



# RenewalWorks Process– What it is NOT

- Does not change who we are as Episcopalians
- Does not change our form of worship or liturgy
- Is not a ‘Come to Jesus’ movement
- Will not change us into fundamentalists
- Is not an “inward” focus in place of our outreach and service to others



# RenewalWorks Process – What is It?

- Make spiritual growth our top priority
- Defines ‘spirituality’ for us
- Helps us understand Episcopal beliefs and practices
- Identifies where we can grow as disciples
- Helps us define where we want to go as a church
- Helps us identify key areas for immediate and longer term growth



# APPENDIX

# RenewalWorks - Background

- A leadership team of ten participants was formed to explore spiritual growth and work with the SLI findings. Using a guided methodology that involves self-reflection, sharing, and discussion, the group has met in four workshop sessions that begin and end with prayer.
- The leadership team members considered research-based best practices of vital congregations and explored ways those practices might take root in Saint Francis.





# RenewalWorks - Background

- The responses were collected and presented by RenewalWorks as a two-part Spiritual Life Inventory Data Findings Report. Saint Francis's responses were viewed as a group and benchmarked against data gathered from more than 1,800 churches for over a decade. The SLI Data Findings Report provides a snapshot of the spiritual vitality of the congregation.
- In addition, the last ten years of membership, worship attendance and pledge data of St. Francis was collected and reviewed. Trend forecasts for community growth patterns (including population, racial & ethnic trends, age trends, trends in school age children, household income and charitable giving practices) within a 3 mile radius of St. Francis were also included.



# Spiritual Growth

1) Exploring a Life with God (about 18% of Episcopalians surveyed) **SLI Finding – St. Francis 19% or 22 Persons**

In this first stage, people are taking their first steps in an intentional spiritual journey, exploring basic beliefs and practices in the Episcopal tradition. They believe in God but may not be sure who Jesus is for them. Their faith is probably not yet a significant part of their life.



# Spiritual Growth

2) Growing a Life with God (about 54% of Episcopalians surveyed) **SLI Finding – St. Francis 56% or 65 Persons**

The people in this group are more committed to their Christian faith, but still have a lot of questions. (No surprise there—Episcopalians love questions). They believe in Jesus and are working on what it means to follow him. Their faith is closely linked to their church community.



## Spiritual Growth

3) Deepening in Life with God (about 23% of Episcopalians surveyed) **SLI Finding – St. Francis 21% or 20 Persons**

This group is more dedicated to personal spiritual practices outside of the church (reading the Bible at home, taking time in prayer and solitude). They feel close to God and depend on God's power and presence in their lives.



## Spiritual Growth

4) Life with God in the Center (about 5% of Episcopalians surveyed) **SLI Finding – St. Francis 5% or 6 Persons**

For people in this fourth stage, faith is at the center of life and guides everything they do. They may talk about giving their life to Christ or becoming his disciple.



# Spiritual Growth - Catalysts

## Catalysts for moving from Exploring to Growing

- This transition is about building trust in God through beliefs.
- Coming to grips with core ideas like grace, the Trinity, and the notion of a personal God help people make the decision to follow Jesus.
- Participation in the eucharist, giving thanks in prayer, serving in a church ministry, helping those in need all help people in this stage grow in faith.
- Often the church and clergy serve as primary helpers and teachers.



# Spiritual Growth - Catalysts

## Catalysts for moving from Growing to Deepening

- Personal spiritual practices are important in the move from growing to deepening.
- People heading into this transition still depend on the church and its clergy for encouragement, but they begin to build their own practice.
- They reflect on scripture, seek guidance through prayer, spend time in solitude, and give proportionally or tithe to deepen their spiritual knowledge and faith.
- Regular Bible reading, participating in a small group, praying for others, and serving those in need all serve as catalysts that help move people toward a deeper life with God.
- This group often says that spiritual growth is more important than church membership.



# Spiritual Growth - Catalysts

## Catalysts for moving from Deepening to Centered

- Faith in action in the world is key for this transition.
- This group speaks of falling in love with God and being able to talk about that relationship with others.
- They take responsibility for their own spiritual growth.
- Solitude, reflection, prayer for guidance, and loving God are all catalysts that help people move toward a life centered on God.
- This group looks to the church to encourage them in their practice and challenge them to keep learning and growing. They expect church leaders to be authentic about their spiritual lives.





# St. Francis Best Practices Summary

## Embed the Bible

- **The Biggest Opportunity Area for St. Francis**

- Consistently challenges me to engage in scripture in new and interesting way

- **An Opportunity Area for St. Francis**

- Helps me understand the Bible in greater depth
- Helps me develop a prayer life that connects me to God
- Church leaders provide sound doctrine rooted in scripture



# St. Francis Best Practices Summary

## Create Ownership

- **An Opportunity Area for St. Francis**
  - Helps me feel like I belong

