

May 31, 2016

Note to: The Vestry and Members of Holy Cross (“HC”)

From: HC Parish Renewal Works Team (“HCRW” Team)

Renewal Works – Helps Congregations Focus on Making Spiritual Growth a Priority

Renewal Works (“RW”) defines Spiritual Growth as steps taken to deepen our relationship with God, with neighbor, with the world and with ourselves.

The RW process helps the parish to:

- Make the goal of Spiritual Growth clear, and
- Make that goal an expectation for everyone in the congregation.

The progression of the relationship we have with God and our neighbor is described by RW as the ‘spiritual continuum’ or the ‘Spiritual Journey’. Further, RW identifies that parishioners can be at four different stages of their own Spiritual Journey, and may move forward or backwards between these stages:

1. Exploring a Life with God in Christ

Those taking the first small steps in an intentional spiritual journey



2. Growing a life with God in Christ

Those more committed to their Christian faith but having many questions



3. Deepening a life with God in Christ

Those whose faith lets them rely on God’s presence and power in their daily lives



4. Centered in a life with God in Christ

Those who consider that their Christian faith is the most important relationship in their lives

RW research has identified changes that helped members of other congregations move between the stages, and have shared helpful ideas so that we can develop our own program.

What is the RW process?

RW first requires a parish to complete anonymously a “Spiritual Life Inventory” by parishioners. At HC, 88 parishioners completed the survey.

Second RW requires the parish to then form a team to study the results of the survey, and, through a series of workshops, examine:

- a. Where have we been?
- b. Where are we now?
- c. Where do we feel called to go?
- d. How do we get there?

The 17-member HCRW team, which was led by Snowy Albright, will present their findings to the parish family through sermons, the newsletter, bulletin and short write-ups from the RW team members about their own spiritual journeys.

In conjunction with the parish family, the RW team will create a multi-year program designed to help and encourage parishioners in their own spiritual journey.

RW analyzed the data received through Spiritual Life Inventory and found the 88 Holy Cross members who completed the survey placed themselves in the following categories:

Exploring a Life with God in Christ	-	11 members (13% of those surveyed)
Growing a life with God in Christ	-	44 members (50% of those surveyed)
Deepening a life with God in Christ	-	28 members (32% of those surveyed)
Centered in a life with God in Christ	-	5 members (5% of those surveyed)

Upon request HC members will be provided with the PowerPoint presentations from RW and the numerical analysis of the survey results compiled by Ellen Wells in this process.

RW provided the following analysis of the HC survey data:

- HC parishioners have an impressive and strong sense of serving their local community.
- Overall satisfaction with the church and the church leadership is also strong and parishioners are committed and energized by the church opportunities provided
- HC has a lower than average understanding of core Episcopal practices and beliefs

The concern with these findings is that they show our focus is on serving others rather than deepening our personal relationship with God. RW cautions churches like ours to examine whether they are acting more like a Rotary Club or the United Way than a religious organization focused on our relationship with God.

The HCRW Team noted the following:

Current Beliefs of HC Members

- Grace is a really strong shared belief – see BCP Page 858 for definition
- There is a strong desire for Interfaith conversation and ecumenical service
- HC members may welcome help in identifying their Spiritual Gifts
- We give of money and time and are compassionate – strong stewardship
- Several HCRW Team members were surprised, yet happy to learn that they were on a Spiritual Journey!

Current Practices of HC Members

- Strong commitment to serve outside our community
- Our satisfaction with the Sunday service is lower than we rate our value for it
- We are below both Episcopal and All Church norms for how much we reflect on Scripture and the Book of Common Prayer

Current Activities of Our Church

- Holy Cross is at or above the Episcopal Church norms in all categories
- While strong in Service – there is still room to grow
- We are infrequently involved in spiritual mentorship

What are the next steps?

The HCRW Team developed a statement to start discussions with the Parish and HCRW team members serving in each area are listed:

Strive to understand the concept of and need for us to progress on our Spiritual Journey and enable one another to grow, focusing on the following areas:

1 *Worship Service - Liturgy.*

How we do it and how do we improve the satisfaction

(Chuck Dierling, Michael Cobb, Roni Hursthouse)

2 *Bible / Scripture.*

Cultivate a love for and incorporate the use of Scripture

(Linda Lashley, Doug Fry, Snowy Albright)

3 *Understanding who we are as Episcopalians*

(Fr. Jerry Gallagher, Trevor Hursthouse)

4 *Pastoring our Immediate Community*

(Carolina Villa, Judith Beckett, Trevor Hursthouse)

5 *Creating /Offering opportunities for spiritual mentorship*

(Becky Wall, Lee Stroud, Chuck Dierling)

Appendix 1 provides the current Mission and Vision Statements for Holy Cross.

Appendix 2 provides lists that resulted from the HCRW workshop discussions. The HCRW Team will now seek input from parishioners prior to developing a multi-year program designed to help and encourage parishioners in their own spiritual journey.

Almighty and ever living God, source of all wisdom and understanding, be present with us as we consider the renewal and mission of Holy Cross Episcopal Church. We give thanks for the gifts you have bestowed upon our congregation. Help us to be faithful stewards of those gifts. Bless us with spiritual growth, a deeper love of God and neighbor. Teach us in all things to seek first your honor and glory. Guide us by your Holy Spirit to perceive what is right, and grant us both the courage to pursue it, and the grace to accomplish it; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Mission of Holy Cross:

To spread the Good News of our Lord Jesus Christ with love and grace to all those who are seeking to know Him through worship, study and outreach.

Holy Cross Vision Statement:

- To answer God's call to join with other Christians who above all love the Lord and desire to serve Him in service and outreach; to grow in faith by being in communion with one another through worship and the study of His Word.
- To be a neighborhood church that professes the love of Christ and shares it freely and openly with all; to provide a place of fun and fellowship, but also a place to be serious in order to grow together in the Lord to form a strong relationship that will last a lifetime.
- To be a church where pastoral care, youth, and outreach are priority ministries; where children are happy and want to be; where the priest and people are charged with proclaiming God's Word to all, especially reaching those not affiliated with a church.
- To have music that is a blend of traditional hymns from sources such as the Episcopal Church's 1982 Hymnal and contemporary songs from various sources, including the hymn supplements "Wonder, Love and Praise" and "Lift Every Voice and Sing"
- To have a church building that is bright, open, light-filled, and ideally sitting on a multi-acre plot of land where parking and growth would never be a problem.

1. Worship Service - Liturgy (How do we do it; How to improve satisfaction)

- Intergenerational services – all ages
- Instructed Eucharist
- Survey congregation to identify / understand areas of satisfaction and dissatisfaction in Sunday Services
- Align all aspects of the liturgy – provide change for (reflect) the season
- Ensure music choice reflects the scripture and consider solo musical performances to enhance spirituality
- Incorporate silence and time for reflection
- Homilies on scripture with short Q&A or sharing by congregation after
- Select music to ‘enhance / enliven’ scripture. (flagged ‘Very Important’)
- Occasionally use the Baptismal Covenant in place of Creed
- Personal witness by different parishioners (voluntary) on a regular basis like once every 2 months
- Forum to see how congregation feels about service and fellowship

Other Comments

- Plan with the worship committee innovative and creative ways to enhance and deepen the spiritual experience of worship at Holy Cross.
- Impediment to worship – how we use the Book of Common Prayer and the Hymnal – too cumbersome.
- Create and articulate expectations that those who attend HC will grow in their spiritual relationship
- Encourage accountability. Each member of HC should be encouraged to grow in their spiritual journey
- Model, educate, communicate, and provide guidance to our parish about our spiritual journeys...as individuals and as a parish.
- Make available and aware through announcements on Sunday through newsletters and resources for spiritual growth such as Forward Day by Day (available on the table in the fellowship hall) and books in the library (adult Sunday School classroom).

2. Bible / Scripture. Cultivate and incorporate the use of Scripture

- Begin and end each gathering with scripture and prayer
- Have a list of helpful reading such as Forward Day by Day but much more detailed
- Include silence and reflection time following scripture readings in worship
- Initiate during a sermon
- Offer class on structure and sources of Bible
- Provide babysitting/child care
- Create a committee to organize and/or teach Bible studies, book studies on spiritual growth, guest lectures on spiritual growth, etc.
- Offer daily devotional online
- Survey the parish about what books, Bible studies, opportunities for growth that are of interest
- Encourage people to use our library - make a listing of books for publication
- Establish church-wide/year-long Bible curriculum
- Use the website to provide a resource guide
- Encourage those who will open their homes to small group studies
- Do all of the above comparing/contrasting Episcopal vs. mainline Protestant use of scripture

Other Comments:

- Cultivate a love for scripture.
- Encourage curiosity and exploration through use of multiple media formats
- Learn more about the Bible in order to apply it to everyday life
- Include children in the learning process making it a family affair
- Openly embrace the Bible
- Have clergy interact with congregation regarding readings
- Encourage laity as well as clergy to share knowledge of and exploration of scripture e.g., “a great devotional book for me is ...”
- Make efforts to make the Bible even more interesting...Bible jeopardy?
- Expect regular interactive bible sermons. Create an expectation that members will bring their bible and have the homily focus on the bible reading, weaving anecdotes into the story to bring it to life as he/she explains the reading.

3. Understand who we are as Episcopalians

- Provide classes on our beliefs (invite all to attend instructional or confirmation classes)
- Explain how our tradition understands God, *Via Media*?
 - Scripture
 - Tradition
 - Human Reason
- Provide list of books/websites that explain who we are
- Share the results of the RW survey- Where are we...where we want to go, i.e. create a culture of spiritual growth, tie this to who we are as Episcopalians?
- More instructed Eucharist
- Do exploratory sessions on BCP
- Initiate during sermon
- Hold small group book discussions
e.g. using Jesus was an Episcopalian, The Episcopal Handbook, Welcome to the Book of Common Prayer, People of the Way, History of the Episcopal Church,
- Provide information on and explore together liturgical seasons, colors, etc.
- Provide a list of expectations
i.e. what do we expect of the people who come to HC with respect to their spiritual journey?

4. Pastor the Community

- Hold an ecumenical forum / service
- Look to special occasions – start with Thanksgiving for service and /or meal – move from there
- Invite leaders from neighboring religious communities to a forum at Holy Cross:
 - to identify opportunities to serve those in need in our local community, and
 - to share resources to meet those needs
- Communicate regularly to members the various needs in our local community and the opportunities to serve
- Engage other congregations to provide classes, movies, workshops on prayer, financial peace, etc. (maximize our space and budget)
- Lenten evening service following dinner
- Find out what other religious organizations are doing in our immediate community to help the less fortunate and how we can support those efforts
- Hold open social events inviting the immediate community – then find out their corporal needs
- Have activities at church and invite neighbors - e.g. 'Hot Dogs and Blue Grass Music – All Are Welcome'
- Provide events for children and invite neighborhood

5. Spiritual Mentorship

- Have spiritual directors available to help people on their spiritual journey
- Identify ways/models for mentorship available to us. How do we implement?
- Educate as to what the role of a spiritual mentor and train – perhaps use the Stephen Ministry or similar?
- Identify volunteers who would like to be trained as spiritual mentors
- Make parishioners aware of this availability.
- Make accessible (weekly telephone mentorship)
- Explain why you might need or want a spiritual mentor.
- Develop Spiritual Journey / Spiritual Growth-Continuum concept.
- Have sponsors for those to be Baptized/Confirmed throughout the process.
- Have opportunities for prayer partners – all ages

Other Comments:

- Provide and identify spiritual mentors such as participation in Cursillo and EFM, Churchwomen, Men's Fellowship activities, church family retreats, clergy counseling.
- Utilize creatively our physical space in order to offer more opportunities for workshops, Bible study, and personal and parish-wide spiritual growth. In doing this, we will survey parishioners about their interests, look at the weekly calendar, and plan to add space as we prepare to welcome a new priest