

Becoming Disciples

March 2019

Leading for Discipleship

Jay Sidebotham

In my ministry as parish priest in the Episcopal Church, I have been both guided and challenged by a question posed by Brian McLaren. Looking at the state of American Christendom, he asked, “Are we a club for the elite who pretend to have arrived or a school for disciples on the way?” The fact is, widespread complacency marks the Episcopal culture, sometimes causing it to resemble a club, a resting place, a destination.

Several years ago, Pope Francis preached that there is no such thing as a stationary Christian. His insight may explain why first Christians were called ‘people of the way.’ That’s a contrast and challenge to the many folks in mainline congregations who wonder what the talk of transformation is all about. Why should they bother? Why should they change? As one congregant commented, “We are spiritually shallow and we are fine with that.”

The heart of the leader is key in vital congregations

In our work with close to 300 congregations, [RenewalWorks](#) has noted five best practice principles that mark vital congregations. The first principle is: Get people moving. Get people to recognize that as individuals they are on a spiritual journey, that they are meant to go deeper and to never stop growing. Other principles include:

- Embedding scripture in the life of the community
- Creating a spirit of ownership and personal responsibility for spiritual growth
- Pastoring the community, engaging with outreach efforts, forging a deeper connection with the neighborhood.

At the center of these first four principles is the most important – the heart of the leader. Getting people moving, creating a culture of discipleship is dependent on the community’s leadership. How does that happen?

First and foremost, the leader must work on his or her own spiritual life. In the 1930’s, Evelyn Underhill wrote the Archbishop of Canterbury to express concern about what she observed among the clergy of her day. She felt compelled to tell him that clergy needed to be called to a “greater interiority, a deeper life of prayer.” She reminded him that God was the interesting thing about

religion and that people were hungry for God. What made her need to remind the archbishop that God was the interesting thing about religion?

Spiritually healthy clergy are able to get people moving

Her words resonate because after decades in parish ministry, I'm struck with how clergy can lose sight of the original call, their first love. Leading a congregation brings out the ADD in all of us, as we simultaneously attend to buildings, finances, personnel concerns, landscaping, cooking, all while we're trying to preach, preside, prepare, pastor and plan. Any hope for vitality in our churches rests with leaders committed single-mindedly to the spiritual growth of the members in those churches. That starts with leaders focused on their own spiritual health and growth. Too often clergy are spiritually depressed, distracted or depleted, losing touch with why they got into the ministry in the first place. Clergy cannot give what they don't have. They cannot share with authenticity what they are not experiencing themselves. Too often, that causes them to lose effectiveness in spiritual leadership. Sometimes they end up looking for an exit strategy.

But that doesn't need to happen. We have discovered spiritual health and vitality in congregations led by clergy who have deepened their own spiritual lives, engaging with scripture to nourish themselves, developing meaningful prayer practices, engaging on their own with ministries of service. When clergy leaders experience that spiritual health, they can share it with the congregation. With humility and transparency, courage and vulnerability, they can lead their flock into a deeper life with God, closer discipleship of Jesus, all empowered by God's Holy Spirit.

We find that clergy leaders who have committed to their own spiritual growth, who are intent on building a culture of discipleship in their congregations, are able to get people moving. And that spiritual leadership is not limited to the clergy. Clergy leading vital, vibrant congregations discover ways for lay leaders to focus on spiritual growth.

Vestry members are spiritual leaders, too

We are frequently asked to lead vestry retreats to help lay leaders understand their role as spiritual leaders in the congregation. Often in the Episcopal culture, vestry members limit their role to monitoring finances and facilities. Those are, of course, vital ministries. But at heart, vestry members are spiritual leaders, leaders of a spiritual community. That concept often triggers a deer-in-the-headlights look. Many vestry members (and other lay leaders) don't feel equipped to be spiritual leaders. Many are not sure of what that would even look like. Some have no interest in such a role. Many have served on boards, corporate or non-profit, and have no idea of how service on the vestry differs from those other kinds of service.

It's been heartening to witness clergy who rise to meet this challenge. One rector begins each monthly vestry meeting with an hour of Bible study and prayer for each other. That leads into a well monitored 90-minute meeting about other issues. Vestry members agree to serve knowing of this commitment. It has transformed the congregation, making vestry service not a depleting, boring series of business meetings but a deep spiritual community. Frankly, that is more time in study and prayer than I was ever able to include in a vestry agenda as a rector, but I share it as aspirational example of how to make a culture shift toward spiritual leadership.

Another rector recognized how ill-equipped her lay leaders were for spiritual leadership, when in other aspects of their lives they were extraordinarily competent. She developed a program called REVIVE, in which a clergy person builds discipleship in lay leaders through small groups focused on scripture, prayer and vocation. We see spiritual depth and vitality in congregations where everyone (clergy, lay leaders, staff) is pulling in the same direction, focused on spiritual growth as the priority for their congregation.

Congregations *can* change

With spiritual growth clearly identified as its priority, congregations are poised to move forward into deeper love of God and neighbor. For many congregations, that movement begins with a common endeavor. One of the most successful programs of engagement is some parish-wide engagement with scripture – for example, the Bible Challenge or the Good Book Club, currently promoted by the Presiding Bishop. Some have focused on teaching prayer and learning about Christian essentials. Others have embraced a new emphasis on outreach, anchored in Jesus' call to reach out to those in need, responding to needs in the community in Jesus' name.

Such efforts begin with leadership committed to discipleship. The heart of the leader matters. It's key to the culture change needed in contemporary congregations. The change won't happen quickly. It may not be easy. It won't happen without intention. But when it happens, the church grows in vitality, which is a wonderful thing to behold. All of it is possible, by God's grace, with God's help.

The Rev. Jay Sidebotham is the Director of RenewalWorks. He also now serves as associate rector at St. James' Parish in Wilmington, NC. Jay comes to this work out of his experience as rector of Church of the Holy Spirit in Lake Forest, IL, where he led the congregation through a period of sustained focus on spiritual growth and renewal. Before coming to Church of the Holy Spirit, he served at St. Bart's, New York City; St. Columba's, Washington, DC; St. Luke's, Durham, NC; and St. Martin's, Providence, RI. He is well known for his cartoons about church life and his animation work on the television series Schoolhouse Rock! For more information about RenewalWorks or about ways clergy are leading for spiritual growth, contact the Rev. Jay Sidebotham at jsidebotham@renewalworks.org or go to the RenewalWorks [website](#).

Resources:

- [Beliefs and Teaching that Engage My Heart: What's Your List?](#) by Jay Sidebotham, ECF Vital Practices blog, October 4, 2016
- [The Leader's Heart](#), an ECF Vital Practices webinar presented by Jay Sidebotham, January 27, 2015
- [Episcopalians on Baptismal Mission](#), an ECF Vital Practices tool
- [Can the Church Learn from McDonalds?](#) by Alan Bentrup, ECF Vital Practices blog, August 1, 2017

Transitioning to a Network of Missional Communities

John Maher

In 2012, after 33 years of full-time ministry, I retired and began taking my clergy pension. I was not ready to completely stop parish ministry, but I liked the idea of no longer working full-time, and my wife and I wanted to move closer to both of our families. In the winter of 2013, I was called as half-time vicar of St. Francis, Manakin Sabot, in the Diocese of Virginia. The position filled both of my goals – to work half-time and to be closer to our families.

St. Francis at that time was 12 years old. The congregation had peaked at around 90 and then fallen back to 40 members after some conflict and the move to a small ranch house renovated for worship. After about a year of getting to know one another we set our minds on coming up with a new long-range plan.

The plan the congregation had adopted during the search phase included becoming a very large parish with multiple staff and a substantial building. A theme I kept hearing from parishioners, however, was that they loved being a church of around 40 people. So I challenged the vestry with this question, “If you love being a church of 40, why did you plan to become something you do not want to be?” It turned out, they thought it was expected that all churches would grow to become large.

I told them they were faithful in the planning process during the search. I also told them that they were completely right about 40 people being a good size, that it was, in fact, the perfect size. Then I gave them a further challenge: “Let’s grow by multiplying groups of 40 as often as we can.”

A different kind of church

They agreed to go in that direction, and now the challenge was on me as well as the congregation. Multiplying groups of forty, or missional communities as some call them, was going to be new to all of us. I knew enough to know it would be a different kind of church than any of us were used to. It would take an emphasis on discipleship instead of attendance, developing leaders instead of managing volunteers, building missional communities instead of programs, and learning to multiply ministries and groups instead of adding people to what we already have. We started walking down a very different and challenging path, and we are still on that path today.

We have developed three missional communities since 2013. Each has its own mission focus and arranges worship, fellowship and outreach around that focus.

- The Parke’s mission focus is to meet and serve people in their community, the Parke. They have been meeting now for four years, and have grown to 20 people, 14 of whom are not members of St. Francis. They look for neighbors in the community who are in need and see what can be done. Currently, they are forming a bereavement committee for those in the neighborhood who have lost a family member.
- The Symphony’s mission focus is to serve the residents and staff of the Symphony Assisted Living facility nearby. Twice a month, a team from this missional community leads worship

there on a Sunday morning. They visit residents at other times during the month. When one of the residents died, they were called upon to help lead the funeral.

- The Garden's mission focus is those people in our county who are hungry and use the county food pantry. Fresh produce is grown for the food pantry, and some members of the garden volunteer there, so they can get to know those who are receiving help. The idea is to do more with those whom they are serving and not just do things for them.

Growth in discipleship and mission

Each group has seen a deepening of the discipleship of its members. The ministry of these groups has broadened the influence of St. Francis in our community far beyond what it was before. Each has its specific challenges. Each faces the challenge of how to multiply by developing new leaders.

One of the most powerful dynamics in becoming disciples in this work is paying attention to the mission focus. When a group is committed to reaching and serving a certain group of people, a neighborhood or an affinity group, and its members organize as a group to equip one another for that mission focus, each will grow as a disciple of Jesus. It is my task as the vicar to keep equipping the leaders to live a life of discipleship so that they, in turn, can encourage and equip their group members to likewise live a life of discipleship, pursuing the mission that God has given them.

It's a challenging way to "do church." It's also very fulfilling. I am thankful to God that I can pursue this kind of ministry in these final years of parish leadership.

The Rev. Dr. John F. Maher, Jr. is vicar of St. Francis, Manakin Sabot, in the Diocese of Virginia. He has been married to his wife, Carol, for 44 years. She has been a public school art teacher, a pastoral counselor and conference director. They have two children and one grandchild.

Resources:

- [Taking Church Out into the Community](#) by David Rice and Anna Carmichael, Vestry Papers, November 2018
- [Love Listens](#) by Alan Bentrup, ECF Vital Practices blog, July 2, 2018
- [Sharing the Bounty of God's Garden](#) by Bill Eakins, Vestry Papers, November 2018
- [Small Groups, Big Impact](#) by John Adler, Vestry Papers, July 2014
- [The Resurgent Church](#) by Peter Strimer, ECF Vital Practices blog, February 17, 2011

What Is Discipleship?

Bill Campbell

Too often, when we talk of discipleship, we turn to the root word "discipline," or we talk about the suffering servant, or the things we must give up in order to devote our lives to Jesus. These things are important, but they are not the only image of discipleship that our Church needs to carry. The life of a disciple of Jesus is one of love, charity and hope. Not a perpetual Lent!

Rob Bell has an interesting video series that gained popularity in the early 2000s called “Nooma.” One of his videos, “[Dust](#),” discusses discipleship in terms that many of us might not normally consider. It’s just over 15 minutes long and worth a watch, if only so that we can share a common language for this conversation. Rob Bell is not everyone’s cup of tea, but this idea of carrying Jesus’ dust is fascinating, and I think important, for how we think about discipleship in the 21[1] century.

Living like Jesus

Can this child of God do what I do? Jesus continually asks this question of us. And, importantly, Jesus answers it as well – *Yes, you can be like me. You can be the hands of God on this earth.* Jesus tells us that our faith can move mountains, it can enable us to walk across the stormy seas of our life. Let’s not dismiss this as fodder for Hallmark cards. Let’s agree that when Jesus tells us something about our abilities, he means it.

It is these encounters with Jesus that we need to focus on. It is impossible to become a disciple of Jesus if you have never had an encounter with him. In essence, discipleship is responding to an encounter with Jesus by modeling your life after Jesus. Like all things in life, the details make all the difference. What does an encounter with Jesus look like, feel like, sound like? you may ask. It’s difficult to nail down. There are as many descriptions of an encounter with Jesus as there are people who have encountered Jesus. What is the best way to model my life after him? Well...if I had an answer that would satisfy everyone’s theology, lifestyle, culture and background, I would be living a very different life.

Proximity to Jesus does matter though. The charge is, “May you be covered in the dust of your rabbi, Jesus.” That the dust that falls off your teacher would wind up on your feet, your clothes, in your hair and that you might breathe it in. We not only have to have some sort of encounter moment, where we acknowledge Jesus in our life, we then have to find a way keep up with the movement that follows the moment! Too often, we think of a life devoted to Jesus where he is some sort of frozen leader that lived and died, and we know everything there is to know about him. This is a heresy. Jesus is risen. The Holy Spirit is with us as our guide. Being a disciple means movement. It means keeping up.

And good luck keeping up. It’s my experience that Jesus moves fast. The Holy Spirit pushes and pulls at the same time. God is still in the creation business and is doing a new thing and wants you to get the work done!

Stop, pray and listen

This is a good time to address the dual (dueling?) nature of a life in Christ. I do believe that Jesus moves fast. I do believe that being aware of the movement of God is vital. I am also painfully aware that the best way to stay attuned to the movement of Christ is to find a way to stop, get quiet and listen. Silence, meditation, centering prayer, whatever you call it, the end result is the same – God is yanking at you hard, God has faith in you and wants you to get to work, God’s directions come in the still small voice. I once worked for a Japanese chef who seemed impossible to understand. Things happen so fast in a kitchen. It’s hot, fast, hectic and I loved it. This guy was adamant that if I

couldn't understand him, it was my fault. He was right. I found that when I allowed the insanity to wash over me and put my focus on Chef Chen, I could hear him, understand him and deliver.

My own experience isn't nearly as interesting as Martin Luther's or Bishop Desmond Tutu's. Luther has been credited with saying, "I have so much to do that I shall spend the first three hours in prayer." In our own time, Bishop Tutu has changed the world through action, activism and prayer. He moved quickly with Jesus and yet spent hours each day in prayer. Look to the spiritual mentors in your life. Chances are that they believe in prayer and take their prayer life seriously. Our friends at [RenewalWorks](#) have data on this actually. They know that people are far more likely to deepen their life with Christ the more they pray and read the Bible.

Just do it

So, I have some sage wisdom for you. Go and be a disciple. Go and talk to the people you think are already disciples, and ask them where they found Jesus. Chances are you are an Episcopalian, so I'm not asking you to go to the store and ask people there if they have met Jesus. I am asking you to go to your faith community and ask your faith leaders about living a life devoted to being more like Jesus. I am suggesting that a life in Jesus is exciting, wild, stable and peaceful.

God has already declared a great faith in you. Jesus has called you. The Holy Spirit is pushing and pulling you. I hope you get covered in the dust of the Trinity, I hope you get filthy in it. I really hope that our walks with Christ intersect and that we get to greet each other on the road. I'll stop and pray with you – I believe it helps!

Bill Campbell is the Executive Director of [Forma | The Network for Christian Formation](#). He is now a program director at ECF through a collaboration between ECF and Forma that combines the best discipleship practices and networks of Forma with the amazing leadership resources and networks of ECF.

Resources:

- [What is Episcopal Evangelism?](#) by Alan Bentrup, ECF Vital Practices blog, August 10, 2018
- [There's Still Time](#) by Linda Buskirk, ECF Vital Practices blog, March 23, 2018
- [Transform Your Congregation: Read the Bible](#) by Scott Gunn, Vestry Papers, November 2012
- [Discipleship in the Episcopal Church Today](#) by Jay Sidebotham, Vestry Papers, May 2017
- [The Cost and Benefits of Discipleship](#) by Greg Syler, ECF Vital Practices blog, September 23, 2015

The Gift of Giving

Margarita Gomez

For the past twenty-six years, I have been a member of Trinity Church in Los Angeles, California. Before that, in the 1980s, I was an accountant in the diocese of El Salvador for seven years. During that time, the Rev. Luis Serrano, other members of the Episcopal Church and I were incarcerated by

the state authorities. They said that the Church was a terrorist entity because we had given preferential treatment to the poor. A group from the Episcopal Church Center, with the help of the Rev. Canon Robert Brooks, came to El Salvador and with their help we were released. Those were very tough times, and we continued to receive threats after our imprisonment. I left the Church and later, El Salvador.

After some time in New York, I went back to my country, but it was never the same. Shortly after returning to El Salvador, the threats resumed. I was also going through a divorce and I wasn't well. My sister recommended that I go to my brother's home in Los Angeles. When I arrived in California, I attended a church where a priest I knew worked. Because it was far from where I was living, he helped me find a closer church, and that is how I ended up at Trinity.

The Rev. Mac Thigpen, the rector of Trinity, didn't speak Spanish, but he understood the importance of Latino/Hispanic ministry. He saw that I attended mass but didn't take communion. Because I had grown up in the Roman Catholic Church, I was tormented by the sin of divorce. With the help of someone who spoke Spanish, Rev. Mac asked why I didn't take communion. When I told him that it was because I was divorced, he explained that I was all right with God, and that I could take communion. That is how he opened the doors of the Church for me. Later, he asked if I wanted to be an acolyte, and that was the beginning of my service at Trinity.

At that time, Trinity's English-speaking congregation was large. At the same time, many Latino/Hispanic children began coming to the church, and I had the idea of starting a daycare. I called it a 'daycare,' but it was actually a Sunday school where we taught the children about God. I had a calendar for rotating the teachers so no one would feel tired or stuck. When that first group of children grew older, we decided to offer first communion classes for them, as was customary in our Roman Catholic tradition. As the Latino group grew larger, the English-speaking group became smaller.

When the Rev. Anna Olson arrived in 2002 as priest in charge, the Latino/Hispanic congregation realized that Trinity was Episcopalian and not Roman Catholic. Many left, but some people returned later. Anna trained me to become the congregation's senior warden.

During Father Mac's time, members of the English-speaking congregation with more substantial resources had maintained the church's finances. We didn't hear much about stewardship. I was helping with Christian education and other ministries in the Church, and I wasn't ready to make a pledge. When Anna arrived, we began hearing more about stewardship, and as senior warden, I learned about the church's finances.

It is not easy to feel the desire to pledge, because putting money in the plate every Sunday is easier and a smaller commitment. I was out of work for a while and wasn't able to save, but I survived by preparing and selling food. I saw that God didn't take what I needed and always provided for me and my daughter. Since I was the senior warden, I asked myself: "Why not make a pledge to God?"

When I began pledging it was because I wanted to thank God. Even though I have had some hardship, I have never lacked a place to live, food or clothing. I pledge because I am so thankful for what God has done in my life.

When the Rev. Liz Munoz became Trinity's rector in 2006, she trained me to lead baptism and confirmation classes and sent me for training in Godly Play. Under her leadership, I was elected treasurer because the congregation needed a person in that role who spoke Spanish. As treasurer, I could explain the financial reports, expenses, budgets and administration to the congregation. Financial reports and teaching about the church's financial needs helps the congregation understand why their pledges are needed.

As a daughter of God, I am grateful and I passionate about continuing the work of Jesus. The talent and time that we dedicate to a church is very important, and we should not focus on the financial aspect alone in teaching about stewardship. If we do, we lose sight of the main vision, that the Church is Christ and his teachings, and we must try to follow his path.

I have learned that when talking with members of the congregation of all ages about stewardship, the most important thing is to be transparent about the finances of the church. Also important are quarterly reports that explain the church's situation and the way money is handled in language that everyone can understand. It is important to educate the people about how their offerings and pledges are used. When they are aware of a situation, they want to help and they will donate.

Personal examples are important in promoting stewardship. I invite people to share stories that show their gratitude for the help they receive from God. I also read Bible passages that talk about giving. I remind the people that giving is a gift. Let us remember, too, not only to talk about stewardship during the stewardship campaign, but also throughout the year. Because I think everyone should have the opportunity to give, I invite the children in my daycare to give a coin, and that can begin their pledging.

My relationship with Jesus has grown a lot since I began pledging. The truth is, that when I was incarcerated and facing death I was greatly inspired to work with young people and children. God has invited me to give more, to be grateful and to commit to give still more. This commitment is with God. When I offer my pledge, I never think, "Oh, this money will be used for this or that." Instead, I say, "Thank you Lord for all you give me and for giving me the gift of giving!"

***Margarita Gomez Posada** started her life in the Episcopal Church as an accountant in the diocese of El Salvador. She loves to learn and tries to attend and learn from as many church conferences as possible. Margarita is trained in Godly Play and hopes to take what she has learned to other churches around her diocese.*

Resources:

- [Stewardship, Discipleship](#) by Linda Buskirk, ECV Vital Practices blog, September 7, 2018
- [A Ministry of Invitation](#) by Nancy Davidge, Vestry Papers, November 2016
- [Financial Transparency](#) by James Jordan, Vestry Papers, September 2018
- [Campaign of Generosity](#) by Victor Conrado, Vestry Papers, September 2015
- [Mission-Based Budgeting, A Loving, Liberating, Life-Giving Process](#) by Phyllis Jones, Vestry Papers, November 2018

Mission-Based Budgeting: A Loving, Liberating, Life-Giving Process (Part 2)

Phyllis Jones

In [Part 1](#) of this series, we focused on changing the conversation around budgets and the types of mission-based budgets. In this second article, we focus on the process of creating a budget that is rooted in mission.

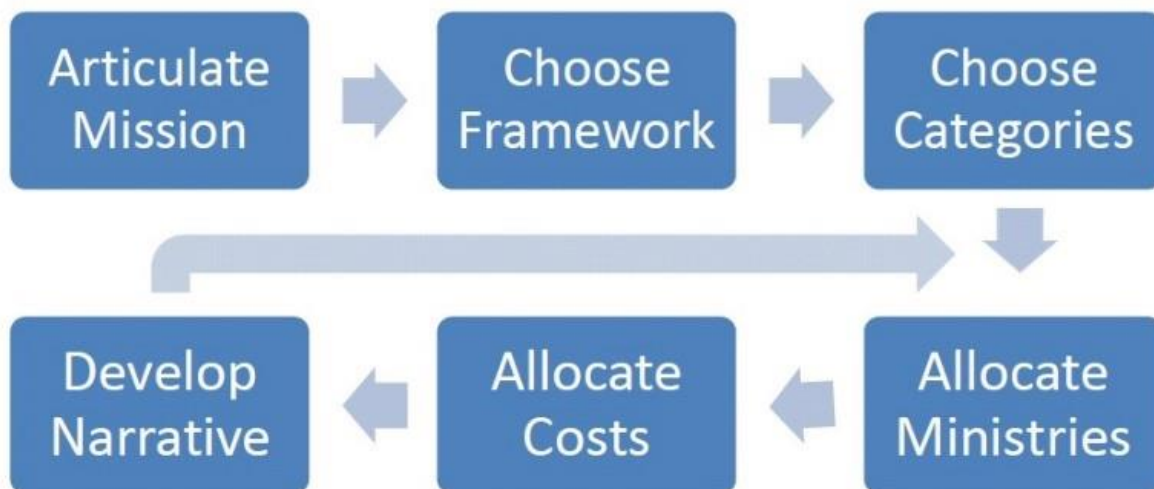
[The Way of Love; Becoming Beloved Community; the Five Marks of Mission](#); Evangelism, Racial Reconciliation & Justice; and Environmental Stewardship. All are expressions of how we live into what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. That makes them great examples of meaningful frameworks for translating our traditional budgets into mission-based budgets, so we can evaluate how well we put our money where our mission is.

At the end of Mission-Based Budgeting, Part I, we left you with a list of six basic things you'd need to get started:

1. A clearly articulated sense of mission.
2. A framework by which you can evaluate how you live into your sense of mission.
3. A list of broad categories, consistent across your framework, into which it's helpful to group costs.
4. A listing of all the ministries in which you engage (worship, outreach, formation, etc.), community programs with which you partner and groups and ministries you support.
5. Your conventional, cost-center/line-item budget.
6. A committed group of staff and people in leadership positions willing to engage in the process of transforming that dry, conventional budget into one that reaches people's hearts through the stories it tells. Ideally, at least one of that group will be fluent with spreadsheets.

Ready? Set? Let's go!

Going With the Flow



Step 1 – Articulating Our Sense of Mission

We have one purpose: To form people as disciples of Jesus Christ so that they can participate in God's mission of reconciliation in the world. – The Rt. Rev. William H. "Chip" Stokes, Bishop of the Diocese of New Jersey; Diocesan Leadership Retreat Presentation (June, 2018)

Know Your Story, Live It Boldly – tagline representing our consistent diocesan theme and our commitment to Christian Formation and Discipleship

In the Diocese of New Jersey, these foundational principles of discipleship form the basis for our sense of mission and guide our communications and resourcing priorities.

Step 2 – Choosing Our Framework

We chose the [Five Marks of Mission](#) as our missional framework to help us evaluate and tell the quantitative and narrative stories of our response to our call to mission. Some other possible examples include:

- the [Baptismal Covenant](#)
- Worship, Formation, Pastoral Care, Outreach, Congregational Development (or some variation of these)
- Worshipping, Learning, Caring, Reaching Out

Step 3 – Choosing Our Categories

To create more clarity and stronger links between the ministries that help us live into our missional framework and the various costs associated with them, we developed consistent cost categories that we use across all five missional areas. You will see them in our Sample Mission-Based Budget resource, linked below.

Step 4 – Allocating Ministries

We started by gathering our diocesan staff together, putting newsprint up on the walls with headings for each one of the five marks of mission and listing which ministries fell under each mark. Many ministries fell under more than one mark. Then we expanded the conversation to other heads of committees, commissions and task forces with budget line items. Just liberating our minds to this new culture of thought released an amazing amount of creative energy in the room, right from the beginning. The results of these conversations became the basis for our graphic “narrative” sections of the Sample Mission-based Budget.

Step 5 – Allocating Costs

Here we took the information gathered in Step 4 and used it to create a strategy for allocating each line item of our conventional budget in a meaningful way, literally connecting the ministries with the resources provided to support them. For example:

- Our ministry leaders looked at which of their activities fell under which marks of mission and made thoughtful allocations of program costs.
- Our program staff looked at how they support the ministries listed under each of the marks of mission and made equally thoughtful allocations of their time.
- We used those allocations to blend and pro-rate our support staff's time as well as some of our other administrative costs, since those costs follow the mission and ministry implemented by the program staff.
- We looked at how our facilities at Diocesan House are used by the ministries and used that data to allocate facilities costs.

Here's where your spreadsheet guru comes in, using this information to break down your conventional line items into component categories and missional areas and then re-assembling them in a format that expresses how you resource the ministries given in your narrative. You can see and download the linked spreadsheets we used to accomplish that [here](#), and we plan to offer a training webinar in early 2019 that will, among other things, explore this part of the process in more detail with hands-on exercises.

Step 6 – Developing Our Narrative

We chose a graphic presentation over a simple narrative as being more engaging and succinct, choosing from thousands available at minimal cost with resolution so good that we could make crystal clear 24" x 36" poster-board displays. Combined with the solid financial presentation, this makes a powerful connection between mission and resourcing.

And Beyond

Each year, we now require each of our groups making a request for budgetary funding to [include with their request a narrative about how their ministry area helps us live into one or more of the five marks of mission](#). This helps us update our ministry allocations among the five marks, and together with input from the leadership, allocate program costs accordingly. We also evaluate whether we need the allocation of program staff costs and, by extension, administrative support costs and facilities costs. But most importantly, this process expands the Kingdom conversations and helps keep them going!

In Summary

The results speak for themselves.

Our [conventional budget format](#) is clearly still necessary as a starting point and also to maintain the comfort level needed by our traditionalists who may need to reference specific line item costs. It helps provide assurance that the numbers in the mission-based budget can be traced back to a familiar framework.

Our [mission-based budget format](#), on the other hand, enables the Kingdom conversations that help us evaluate our impact as disciples of Jesus Christ, asking questions like: Where do we see God moving? How are we following Jesus Christ out into the world? Are we allocating our resources in alignment with that sense of mission? Do we need to adjust? And all of a sudden, our repetitive budget reviews morph from exercises in boredom to powerful tools for culture change!

Canon Phyllis Jones was appointed COO of the Diocese of New Jersey in early 2017 after serving as the diocese's CFO since 2010. In addition to having oversight of the finances of the diocese, she works closely with Bishop Chip Stokes to support and resource the vestries and people of their congregations in their ministries as they seek to join God in his mission throughout the diocese, the Church and the world. She and Bishop Stokes were among the early adopters of the Project Resource holistic financial stewardship curriculum developed by ECF, the College for Bishops and the Development Office of the Episcopal Church. She serves on the Board of Trustees for the Association of Episcopal Deacons and was recently appointed as Treasurer for Province II. Her passion for resourcing mission and developing young Christian leaders in under-resourced communities finds expression in deep, long-standing Board and development relationships with UrbanPromise Ministries and its affiliate, UrbanPromise International. In 2011, she co-founded UrbanPromise Trenton. She has called St. Matthew's Church in Pennington, NJ, her parish home for 45 years, and lives in Titusville, NJ, with her husband of 35 years, Mick Jones.

Resources:

- [Mission-Based Budgeting: A Loving, Liberating, Life-Giving Process](#) by Phyllis Jones, Vestry Papers, November 2018
- [Asset Mapping as Evangelism](#) by Tamara Plummer, Vestry Papers, May 2017
- [Facing Financial Uncertainty: Testing and Retesting the Budget](#) by Greg Syler, ECF Vital Practices blog, April 27, 2018
- [Narrative Budget Template](#), an ECF Vital Practices tool submitted by Lisa Meeder Turnbull
- [Radical Budgeting](#) by Anna Olson, ECF Vital Practices blog, June 4, 2013
- [Create a Sound Parish Budget](#) by Craig Bossi, Vestry Papers, July 2009

El don de dar

Margarita Gomez

Por los últimos 26 años, he sido miembro de la Iglesia de la Trinidad en Los Ángeles, California. Antes de eso, en los años 80, fui contadora por siete años en la diócesis de El Salvador. Durante ese tiempo, el Rvdo. Luis Serrano, otras personas de la Iglesia Episcopal y yo fuimos encarceladas por las fuerzas estatales. Decían que la Iglesia era terrorista porque habíamos hecho una opción preferencial para los pobres. Un grupo de personas de la Iglesia Episcopal de Estados Unidos, con la ayuda del Rvdo. Canónigo Robert Brooks, fue a El Salvador y con su ayuda fuimos liberados. Fueron tiempos muy duros y difíciles y seguimos recibiendo amenazas después de nuestro encarcelamiento. Me fui de la iglesia y posteriormente de El Salvador.

Después de un tiempo en Nueva York, regresé a mi país, pero nunca fue igual. Al poco tiempo de estar en El Salvador, volvieron las amenazas. Además, estaba pasando por un divorcio y no estaba bien. Mi hermana me recomendó que me fuera a California a casa de un hermano. Cuando llegué a California, asistí a una iglesia de un sacerdote conocido. Era muy lejos de donde vivía, así que el sacerdote me ayudó a encontrar una iglesia cerca de mi casa y así llegué a la Iglesia Trinidad.

El rector de la Iglesia Trinidad, el Rvdo. Mac Thigpen, no hablaba español, pero entendía la importancia del ministerio latino/hispano. El Rvdo. Mac vio que yo iba a misa pero no comulgaba. Como me había criado en la Iglesia Católica Romana me atormentaba el pecado del divorcio. Con la ayuda de alguien que hablaba español, el padre Mac me preguntó por qué no comulgaba. Cuando le dije que era porque estaba divorciada el padre me explicó que estaba bien con Dios y que podía comulgar. Así fue como me abrió la puerta a la iglesia. Después, me preguntaron si quería ser acólito y así comenzó mi servicio en la Iglesia Trinidad.

En ese entonces, la feligresía anglohablante era grande. Al mismo tiempo, al grupo de latinos/hispanos comenzaron a llegar muchos niños y tuve la idea de iniciar una guardería. Yo la llamaba guardería, pero realmente era una escuela dominical en la que enseñábamos a los niños sobre Dios. Yo tenía un calendario de rotación de maestras para que ninguna se sintiera cansada ni atada. Cuando ese grupo de niños creció, decidimos empezar a dar clases de primera comunión, según nuestra costumbre católica romana. Mientras que el grupo latino crecía, el grupo de habla inglesa disminuía.

Cuando llegó la Rvda. Anna Olson en 2002 como sacerdote encargada, la feligresía latina/hispana se dio cuenta de que la iglesia era episcopal y no católica romana. Muchas personas se fueron, pero varias regresaron con el tiempo. En ese entonces, la Rvda. Anna me entrenó para ser guardiana mayor.

Durante el tiempo del Padre Mac, muchos integrantes de la feligresía anglohablante tenían muchos recursos y mantenían las finanzas de la iglesia. No se oía mucho sobre la mayordomía. Yo estaba ayudando con la educación cristiana y otros ministerios en la iglesia, y no estaba preparada para dar un donativo. Cuando llegó la Rvda. Anna comenzamos a saber más sobre la mayordomía, y como guardiana mayor, aprendí sobre las finanzas de la iglesia.

No es fácil llegar a sentir el deseo de dar una promesa, porque poner dinero los domingos en el platillo es más fácil y un menor compromiso. Estuve sin trabajo por un tiempo y no podía ahorrar, pero sobrevivía preparando y vendiendo comida. Vi que Dios no me quitaba lo que necesitaba y siempre proveía para mí y mi hija. Como era guardiana mayor me pregunté, ¿por qué no voy a darle a Dios una promesa?

Cuando comencé a hacer mi promesa fue porque quería agradecerle a Dios. A pesar de haber pasado penurias, nunca me faltó un techo, ni comida ni ropa. Doy mi promesa porque estoy tan agradecida por lo que Dios hizo en mi vida.

Cuando la Rvda. Liz Muñoz vino a ser la rectora de la Iglesia Trinidad en 2006, me preparó para dar pláticas de bautizo y confirmación y me ayudó a capacitarme en Jugando Junto a Dios (Godly Play). Bajo su liderazgo, me eligieron como tesorera porque sintieron que necesitaban un tesorero que

hablara español. Como tesorera, podía explicar a la feligresía los informes financieros, gastos, presupuestos y la administración. Los informes financieros y enseñar a la feligresía las necesidades de la iglesia es una manera de ayudar a la congregación a entender por qué se necesitan sus promesas.

Como hija de Dios, siento mucho agradecimiento y deseo fervientemente continuar la obra de Jesús. También son muy importantes los talentos y el tiempo que damos a una Iglesia, y no debemos basarnos únicamente en el aspecto económico cuando enseñamos sobre la mayordomía. Si lo hacemos, perdemos la visión principal de que la Iglesia es Cristo y sus enseñanzas y que debemos tratar de seguir su camino.

Ha aprendido que, al hablar con miembros de la feligresía de todas las edades sobre la mayordomía, lo más importante es ser transparente con las finanzas de la iglesia. Es importante presentar informes cada cuatro meses para dar a conocer la situación de la iglesia y cómo se maneja el dinero de una manera que la gente pueda entender. Es importante educar a la gente sobre cómo se usan sus ofrendas y promesas. Cuando la gente está al tanto de una situación quiere ayudar y da.

Es muy importante darles ejemplos personales para promover la mayordomía. Invito a diferentes personas a compartir sus historias de agradecimiento por la ayuda que han recibido de Dios. Leo pasajes de la Biblia en los que se habla de dar. Les recuerdo que el dar es un don. Recordemos que no solo se debe hablar de la mayordomía durante la campaña de mayordomía sino todo el año. Porque creo que todas las personas deben tener la oportunidad de dar, yo invito a mis estudiantes, a los niños, a que den una moneda, y así comienzan a dar sus promesas.

Mi relación con Jesús ha crecido mucho desde que comencé a dar mi promesa. La verdad es, que cuando estaba encarcelada y enfrentando la muerte me inspiraré mucho a trabajar con jóvenes y niños. Dios me invitó a dar más, a estar agradecida y comprometerme más. Ese compromiso es con Dios. Cuando doy mi promesa nunca pienso, "Oh este dinero va para esto o para lo otro." En cambio digo "¡Gracias, Señor, por todo lo que me das y por el don de dar!"

***Margarita Gómez Posada** comenzó su vida en la Iglesia Episcopal como contadora en la diócesis de El Salvador. A ella le encanta aprender y trata de asistir y aprender de tantas conferencias de la Iglesia como sea posible. Margarita está entrenada en Jugando Junto a Dios (Godly Play) y espera llevar lo que ha aprendido a otras iglesias alrededor de su diócesis.*

Recursos:

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- [Vivir la mayordomía](#), un webinar ECF de Wendy Pineda y el Rvdo. Alejandro S. Montes, agosto 22, 2017
- [El presupuesto impulsado a través de la misión](#), una herramienta de ECF Vital Practices
- [Hablando de la Mayordomía](#) de Miguel Escobar, ECF Vital Practices blog, mayo 24, 2011
- [El Futuro o el Hoy](#) de Juan Ángel Monge, Vestry Papers, septiembre 2011

Walking Wet

Lisa Kimball

I have always had skinny, straight hair, which salon professionals flatter by calling, “fine.” I also had a proclivity in my early years for leaving the house with wet hair, even when it would freeze on the way to the bus stop. Something about getting on with the adventure of life felt more appealing than standing in front of a mirror with a blow dryer. Recently, my memories of wet hair and my understanding of baptism came together.

Baptized in the world

You see, I was reading [Go Make Disciples: An Invitation to Baptismal Living](#), and I found the phrase “walking wet” to describe the experience of being baptized in the world. The idea that I have been a Christian disciple walking in the world, not running, was important to me. I am not running away from something or racing to a goal, moving so fast that I miss what’s right in front of me. Instead I am moving at a natural, if enthusiastic, pace, seeking and listening with my feet in extended contact with the ground. I have time, plenty of it in God’s economy, and I am moving forward. I am wet with the waters of baptism, washed and made new in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. My hair is damp and there’s a drip of water on the end of my nose that tastes sweet as it meets my tongue. Walking wet means allowing myself to be somewhat conspicuous, in some ways ordinary, but distinctly different from the urgent, fashionable, competitive posture American society wants to reward.

I am a wet, sometimes even soggy, work-in-progress, aware that I simultaneously inspire curiosity and need a towel. Being Christian is not a solitary, passive enterprise. It requires that I be bold and vulnerable, lead and follow. As the late Verna Dozier understood, “In baptism, every Christian has enough to learn and practice for a lifetime.”

When I remember that I am still wet from the font, I am much more likely to listen carefully for the still small voice of God, to tend the “echoes of transcendence” as Andrew Root describes them in Faith Formation in a Secular Age. Sometimes those echoes come in unexpected forms, like a conversation with Galina, an Uber driver. After learning that I teach at an Episcopal seminary and volunteering the contours of her own spiritual pilgrimage, Galina whispered the deep longing of her heart, “What will happen to me when I die? I do not want the life I love to end.”

Called to witness to God’s unconditional love

At a time when people are searching for meaning and purpose, for real, authentic encounters with God way beyond the walls of our churches, I believe I am called as a baptized person to show up and listen where they are. Walking “wet” makes it very clear something is happening, but it isn’t finished and I do not have all the answers. I, like all baptized people, am called to create and hold the space where people can learn to trust that God is present. I can be a living, breathing witness to the unconditional love of God. How I conduct myself has the potential to point others toward an encounter with the mystery of faith in the power of the Holy Spirit. It can actually draw people to the font, the source of living water.

Walking wet is also what happens when I stand by people in their tears. Soaked in their suffering and pain, I remember my own baptismal promises to “seek and serve Christ in all persons” and “strive for justice and peace among all people,” and I am compelled, with God’s help, to challenge the systems that make them cry. Walking wet is a good reminder that I am still learning and growing. It is a protection against becoming overwhelmed at the scale of injustice, the magnitude of evil. Instead, in my made-newness I am called to do the next right thing, whatever it is that is right in front of me. I am compelled by the water on my skin and the seal of oil on my forehead to step out in solidarity with the poor and marginalized. “Baptism dismisses us into the world! It does not make us more ‘churchy,’” as the missiologist, the Rev. Dr. Christopher Duraisingh wisely reminds us. Walking wet witnesses to the world that we do indeed have a story, “a defense for the hope that is in us” (1 Peter 3:15). We are resurrection people, and death has lost its sting.

The messier the better

In baptism we are “marked as Christ’s own forever.” It is radical good news. As Paul described it to the Romans, “neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, 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.” Learning to claim our identity as people of God and live into our high calling as the baptized community is lifelong and life-wide work. So, next time you pass a baptismal font on your way out of church, reach in, scoop up a handful of water and splash it over your head. The messier the better! Walk into the world literally wet and discover anew what was prayed over your head in baptism,

“Heavenly Father, we thank you that by water and the Holy Spirit you have bestowed upon these your servants the forgiveness of sin, and have raised them to the new life of grace. Sustain them, O Lord, in your Holy Spirit. Give them an inquiring and discerning heart, the courage to will and to persevere, a spirit to know and to love you, and the gift of joy and wonder in all your works.” (BCP, 308)

Let us “walk wet” together as members of the Body of Christ! I can see the t-shirts now.

Elisabeth (Lisa) Kimball is the Associate Dean of Lifelong Learning, and Professor of Christian Formation and Congregational Leadership at Virginia Seminary. She joined the VTS faculty in 2009, having served on the faculty in the College of Education at the University of Minnesota with dual appointments in the School of Social Work (Youth Studies) and the Department of Curriculum and Instruction where she coordinated the Master’s Program in Youth Development Leadership. In addition to teaching and managing a dynamic department, Lisa is frequently invited to speak on Christian formation, evangelism, and congregational vitality. She is currently directing a 5-year project, funded by the Lilly Endowment Inc, Baptized for Life: An Episcopal Discipleship Initiative to support congregations as they explore themes of Christian vocation and calling. Before assuming an academic career, Lisa spent twenty years serving on the staff of five congregations and two dioceses in California and Minnesota, and is now an active member of the Church of the Epiphany in D.C.

Resources:

- [Working Theology\(ies\) of Baptism](#) by Greg Syler, ECF Vital Practices blog, April 7, 2015
- [Baptism in Community](#) by Richelle Thompson, ECF Vital Practices blog, July 23, 2012
- [Revolution Brews in the Baptismal Font](#) by Herb Gunn, Vestry Papers, September 2009
- [Everyday Christians](#) by Alan Bentrup, ECF Vital Practices blog, June 12, 2017
- [Episcopalians on Baptismal Mission](#), an ECF Vital Practices tool

7 Steps Toward Intergenerational Discipleship

Eduardo Solomón Rivera

When someone in the church speaks of “formation,” many think of the traditional Sunday school classroom, the glories of glitter and glue with small children and goodies-to-go bags on the first Sunday of Lent. Youth, however, are more likely to cringe at the prospect of a visit from parish clergy to their otherwise fun meetings. And adults recall enduring yet another adult forum on the physics of the crucifixion or on the details of this year’s new, improved program to recruit young families and save the congregation.

Over the past 30 years, good work has been done exploring intergenerational discipleship, or what author and church consultant John Roberto calls intergenerational faith formation. In this approach all ages in the congregation come together to learn, worship, serve and play, rather than meeting in their respective age groups. Researchers are finding that the traditional ways we have gone about Christian formation and discipleship, organizing by age and stage, have contributed to new generations that do not identify with their religious tradition and leave or ‘graduate’ from church when they become adults.

The argument for an intergenerational approach

The age and stage model was largely a product of the influence of developmental theorists Piaget and Erikson in the 20th century. For many U.S. Americans, the resulting social segregation has kept children, adolescents, young adults, middle adults and older adults from developing and enjoying meaningful relationships across generational divides. “More significantly, this model has been a cause of a deep void in developing self-identity,” argued Jason Brian Santos, Mission Coordinator for Christian Formation in the U.S. Presbyterian Church, in the 2018 Woods Lecture at the University of Dubuque Theological Seminary.

“For centuries,” Santos said, “these identities were formed in collective societies that focused on communal formation and the social construction of identity.” He went on to explain how identity is largely formed by ‘doing’ the things that are most important to a community, by engaging in practices that define the whole body. In his concluding remarks, he said, “It is our job to make sure those foundational memories include multiple generations.”

Reclaiming our identity as the body of Christ

So, how might we begin to tear down the silos and reclaim our stories, our awareness of each other as essential and, most importantly, our identity as the body of Christ?

Here are seven steps toward becoming a church that practices an intergenerational discipleship model.

1 Believe First things first. Boldly reaffirm and celebrate Jesus in every aspect of the life of the church and in every ministry. Integrate prayer, sacred scripture and spiritual reflection as sustaining practices of the community. Adults, especially the leadership, ought to model this, and lead by example.

2 Celebrate Experience the sacraments abundantly. Make appropriate changes to worship to increase engagement and participation by all without making worship child-ish. Engage the liturgical year, and let it frame the journey. Reclaim your baptism, reflect on the Baptismal Covenant (BCP, 304-305) and commemorate baptism anniversaries.

The first two steps are foundational to the life of any ecclesial community and essential for intergenerational discipleship. If we desire to be an authentic community of believers, then each of us must work on strengthening our own spiritual life, with God's help. We must reclaim our identity as God's church, take an honest look at our congregations and renounce whatever has undermined that foundation.

3 Discern Take a good look at areas where your parish may already have success in gathering members across generational lines and build on that.

4 Envision Look beyond the Sunday school classroom, youth group and adult forum for authentic formational experiences in community. Create intentional space for intergenerational small group communities. Adopt a simple model of theological reflection — follow Lectio Divina or discuss reactions to the Sunday gospel. Allow for social time.

5 Remember Celebrate the Communion of Saints. November is a good time to remember those who have died in the past year. Remember your saints — your ancestors through various actions and make time to hear each other's stories and shared narratives.

"Remember me," sings little Miguel to his great abuelita, Coco. It is the song that her father used to sing to her as a little child. The song brings life back into her body and her spirit and in turn, to the entire family. Each time my little ones and I watch the animated film *Coco*, I cannot help but get teary as I remember the family and community that surrounded me as I was growing up. Like many families of Latinx, African-American or other cultures that emphasize family and community, Sundays and holidays were wonder-filled times. They were not without their challenges, but I could not imagine growing up without my parents' care and devotion, my aunts' unconditional love, my grandparents' stories or the special meals we shared and sometimes prepared together.

6 Engage Go beyond coffee hour. How well are informal mentoring relationships developing? Could a formal mentoring program be right for your parish? Coordinate with your Christian education / formation / discipleship ministers to create spaces for

engagement. Organize for justice. Serve the poor. Spend time together. Offer coffee hour activities that promote participation across the age groups. Don't discard events for specific age or affinity groups, but do not let them drive the mission.

When we first joined our parish in Chicagoland, we felt genuinely embraced. Adults and older adults connected beautifully with us and with our children. The baby had many grandmothers. At times, I would go looking for him and frequently, I'd find a lovely, older adult woman in a rocking chair with the tiny infant in her arms. The people in that congregation demonstrated genuine love and interest in us as a family, and they backed that up with actions when we needed them most.

7 Commit Sustainable progress will only be possible if the clergy and lay leadership, staff and vestry are all committed to shifting the discipleship paradigm from an age and stage model to an intergenerational model. Empower and support your formation ministers to grow, dream and work together to make this your reality.

Growing up, I remember the adults whom I loved and who loved me back — my parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles and my faith community. I grew up in a Latinx family proud of our cultural heritage and language. We did almost everything together — en familia. The food, the music, the hugs and the stories from my family and faith community are gifts that I will forever cherish, gifts that have helped to shape and anchor me in my identity, my faith and my vision of community from my cradle to this very day.

This process will likely take years to produce a thriving, intergenerational faith community. Experiment. Fail. Keep at it. Learn from the work and success of others. Take your time and celebrate the wins!

Eduardo Solomón Rivera, is on the Board of Directors of [Forma | The Network for Christian Formation](#). Eduardo is the Managing Editor of EFML, the new Latinx curricula of [Education for Ministry \(EfM\)](#) and is on the Bishop's staff in the Diocese of Southeast Florida. He is also the Latino Resource Development Lead for [Baptized For Life](#), and serves on the newly formed Confirmation Collaborative of the Episcopal Church born out of the research and findings of [The Confirmation Project](#).

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- Kozlowski, Matthew, [Three Models for Intergenerational Faith Formation](#), Spring 2015, Episcopal Teacher
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- Santos, Jason B., PhD, "[Killing Church Softly: How Age and Stage Ministry has Hurt the Church and Why Intergenerational Formation Might be Our Only Hope](#)" 2018 Woods Lecture. University of Dubuque Theological Seminary

Resources:

- [Mentoring High School Students](#) by Emo Rosero-Nordalm, ECF Vital Practices blog, January 31, 2014
- [Young People: Not Merely the Church's Future](#) by Vanessa Riutta, ECF Vital Practices blog, November 15, 2013
- [Child's Eye View of the Church](#) by Peter Strimer, ECF Vital Practices blog, December 7, 2010
- [Reimagining Leadership in Small and Rural Churches](#) by Kelsey Schuster, Susan Daughtry, and Karen Olson, Vestry Papers, July 2017
- [Hands Off: Letting Teens Take the Lead](#) by Richelle Thompson, ECF Vital Practices blog, September 20, 2016

When 'Fine' Isn't Enough

Brenda Husson and Ryan Fleenor

Everything was fine. Certainly that's how St. James' parishioners felt and the way other parishes and clergy viewed us. We had four services on Sunday, a thriving Sunday school and the parents that come with it, twenty- and thirty-year olds as well as older adults. Forums on Sunday were well attended, and we were feeding and sheltering some of our low-income and homeless neighbors, as well as sending volunteers to Malawi and Haiti and working with the children of incarcerated parents here in New York City. Our programmatic life was humming along.

However, whenever parishioners were asked what they loved about St. James', they always spoke first about the sense of community they found here. It's hard to complain about that (and it is a great community), but there was no talk of transformation or God, let alone Jesus. And stewardship (again, fine by the standards of many parishes) was flat, indicating that we were, for many of our parishioners, just another nonprofit. Maybe their favorite, but not a place that was changing or challenging them at the center of their lives.

I was flummoxed. And as the rector, discouraged. Yet I hardly felt there was much reason to complain when everything was 'fine.' Fortunately a trusted friend and mentor, the Rev. Carol Anderson, was willing to listen to me whine. But only briefly. Then she pointed out that unless I was willing to change everything so that we were focused only on creating disciples – parishioners who wanted to follow Jesus and take up the call to love God with their whole heart and mind and strength and their neighbor as themselves – I shouldn't expect much to shift.

Some serious soul-searching and conversation ensued. Conversations with staff, both clergy and lay, and with the vestry. It turned out that despite the overwhelming sense that everything was going well, once the possibility of "more" was raised, excitement (and anxiety) grew. It helped that the "more" was not about doing more, but rather a sense that church and our life of faith could mean more for all of us if we could find ways to grow spiritually. It also helped to acknowledge that this might mean stopping some of what we were doing if it wasn't leading people deeper into discipleship. As we laid out the idea of focusing all that we did during the week as well as on Sunday

on knowing and following Christ, a lay staff member started to tear up. “Really? We could do that?” she said. “That’s why I wanted to work in a church.” Her comment was a gift, but also a tough lesson. She had not known that until that moment.

As we began to reimagine our parish life, we learned about Renewal Works, a ministry of Forward Movement. Using data drawn from more than 1,000 parishes across multiple denominations, they have shown that in spiritually vital congregations, parishioners are developing spiritual practices and disciplines. Renewal Works provides no set program to fix what ails parishes, but they know from the research that the key indices for spiritual vitality are:

- reading and reflecting on scripture
- embracing core Christian beliefs
- engaging in personal spiritual practices
- serving those in need
- and being in a spiritual community.

All of that moves people along a continuum, from exploring faith to growing in faith to deepening faith in Christ and finally, to being centered in Christ. The Renewal Works process provides a wonderful diagnostic tool – the spiritual vitality survey – to help congregations discover where parishioners are and what they need to move forward.

A high percentage of our parishioners completed the survey (a blizzard that kept everyone home for two days helped). The results were clarifying – and distressing. The clear majority of our parishioners were in the first two stages of spiritual growth (exploring and growing) with many reporting no real sense of core Christian beliefs or how to pray. Despite our efforts at engaging people with the Bible, it still felt like a foreign country to many. It was cold comfort to know we were well within the norm for Episcopal parishes. But it was also galvanizing.

The results underscored the fact that no matter how compelling worship is, unless everything points towards Christ and the path of discipleship, that weekly hour won’t be enough to change people. Fortunately, Renewal Works asks congregations to form a task force and helps process the results of the survey so that the task force can formulate plans to go forward, plans developed from the expressed needs and longings of the congregation.

Here’s a sample of how St James’ moved forward: The rows of chairs facing the ‘teacher’ in Sunday forums changed to round tables where parishioners spoke with each other with some prompts and questions from a facilitator. From trying out prayer practices (we also had retreats where parishioners could learn ways to pray) to Bible study to conversations about Faith’s Big Questions, the forum room has become electric with conversation and insight. We launched a catechumenate, using Forward Movement’s free curriculum, Transforming Questions, and have a dozen people each year who commit ten weeks to exploring the fundamentals of the faith. There are Bibles in the pews and they are used during sermons. Education for Ministry (EfM) has blossomed. Parishioners now lead morning and evening prayer five days a week. Two hundred parishioners, from 18 months to 95 years old, went on a Parish Weekend Away to explore the Book of Ruth! Small groups,

formerly a struggle to launch and sustain, took off with 70 people committed to spending a season exploring the Apostles Creed. The list goes on.

When we retook the survey three years later, we learned that the congregation had changed. Now the majority of our parishioners are in the second and third stages of spiritual growth. But here's one of the best indices of a changed parish. After we had explained the first survey results to the parish and inaugurated the Renewal Works process, a parishioner had asked, tongue only partially in cheek, "Does this mean we can talk about Jesus in the halls now?"

"Yes," we said then. And now we do.

***Brenda Husson** is a graduate of Union Theological Seminary, and, although ordained by the Diocese of Central New York, has spent the entirety of her ministry in varied parishes in the Diocese of New York before becoming Rector of St. James' Church in 1996. She and her husband, Thomas Faulkner, a professional sculptor and an Episcopal priest, live in Manhattan and are the proud parents of a son, Christopher.*

***Ryan Fleenor**, Vicar at St. James' and instrumental in nurturing the task forces and the Formation Committee that developed through the Renewal Works process is a graduate of the Berkeley Divinity School at Yale University. He came to St. James' in 2010 as a Lilly Fellow, a two-year mentoring program for newly ordained clergy. He was asked to continue on the clergy staff, becoming Associate Rector. He became Vicar in 2017. He lives in Brooklyn with his husband, Daniel Noble, a federal prosecutor.*

Resources:

- [Discipleship in the Episcopal Church Today](#) by Jay Sidebotham, Vestry Papers, May 2017
- [Cultivating a Culture of Discernment](#) by Blair Pogue, Vestry Papers, July 2010
- [Showing Up for the Resurrection](#) by Anna Olson, ECF Vital Practices blog, April 1, 2018
- [Church on the Go!](#) by Alan Bentrup, ECF Vital Practices blog, May 25, 2017
- [Grow Christian: Practicing Faith at Home](#) by Richelle Thompson, ECF Vital Practices blog, February 9, 2016

Beginning Before Baptism

Melissa Rau

I'm a mom of three, and after launching my eldest into adulthood last year, I began to reflect on some of the decisions we've made as parents. Overall, I think we're doing a good job of raising our kids — they don't get in trouble, their teachers are their fans and we're always getting compliments on how great they are from our friends and church family.

The three of them are on different parts of the discipleship spectrum, however. Our eldest has a mature faith and worships regularly, even though she's away at college. Our youngest has a deep sense of the divine, loves to acolyte, but doesn't necessarily dig worship. The middle one prays

before eating...and conveniently tries to have sleepovers on Saturdays to avoid going to “boring” church.

Churches and parents can team up

Ever wonder what you’d do differently as a parent if you had the opportunity to go back, start fresh and apply what you’ve learned the first round through?

What I would have welcomed would have been an opportunity to think through the traditions and rituals my family would celebrate over the course of my kids’ upbringing. I realize now that there are many things my husband and I could have planned, had we thought about our discipleship strategy before we baptized our kids.

What would it look like if the church were to partner with new or expectant parents to help them think through their child’s faith development?

Many clergy gather baptismal families and hold a rehearsal of sorts before the service. Some go further and require parents to meet with them to discuss the meaning of baptism. Too few effectively equip moms and dads to take the lead role in nurturing a life-long faith in Jesus in their children. I think there are many things congregations can do to help families be more intentional and proactive in their children’s faith development.

Consider rites of passage

A rite of passage can be a powerful moment in the life of anyone, especially a child. When certain milestones are recognized and celebrated, children feel embraced by the community.

While a lot of churches have traditional rites or passages for the young, many are completely underwhelming. For example, giving a third grade class Bibles during the liturgy and saying a prayer for the kids before sending them back to their seats is an underwhelming rite of passage (better than not doing it at all, but a huge missed opportunity). Congregations that knock it out of the park make these events memorable — something that children can’t wait to experience and will remember into their adulthood.

Other than baptism, the most popular rite of passage is confirmation. Many parents who have otherwise been AWOL will bend over backward to get their kids to church to prep for confirmation...just to disappear again. What would it look like if parents had a hand in developing additional milestones between baptism and confirmation? It might even help them engage more with the church throughout their kids’ lives.

Churches can help parents anticipate, dream and plan

New and expectant parents are eager to dream and look to the future — one that includes their smart, healthy, beautiful baby positively changing the world when he or she grows up. Then life happens, and dreams are set aside while basic living gets in the way (work, bills, doctor’s visits,

school, sports, etc.). Before we know it, time has flown by, and parents are left to wonder what they might've done differently had they been given the chance.

Churches can give moms and dads the space to dream and plan ways to nurture their child's faith as they grow. Try this:

Host a gathering of parents to dream and plan together. If you're in a larger church, it could be a retreat of sorts for new and/or expectant parents. If you're in a smaller church, it could simply be a meeting between the parents and a member of the clergy. Or, to attract a critical number of participants, a diocese might host the gathering.

Start with an opening prayer for the parents and their children, one about hope, perseverance, commitment, life, love and promise. Set the stage for a meaningful time together.

Focus on three things: ages and stages, rites of passage and traditions.

Help parents consider what they want their children to know, feel and do in terms of their faith development and when. For instance, perhaps they want their future first grader to have learned the Lords' Prayer. Maybe they want their future third grader to understand the Ten Commandments. And perhaps they want their sixth grader to know the books of the Bible in order. Help them capture these plans in writing (and if you have time, help them make it pretty so they cherish and value it).

Next, help moms and dads identify the key milestones they would like to see celebrated. Help them dream about what these rites of passage might look like. What would make it special? How can they be involved? Remember those third grade Bibles? Maybe the parents can highlight their favorite verses in their child's Bible before he or she receives it. Help them identify at least four to five rites of passage in addition to baptism and confirmation over the 18 years.

Finally, what traditions are your parents most interested in preserving or starting with the church family? Give them space also to consider what their own family traditions might look like. What holiday traditions might they want to plan? Are there others they want to incorporate? What current family traditions do they want to let go of or reimagine?

By giving families the time and space at the front end of things to consider all the ways they can help their children grow in deeper relationship with Jesus, our church has a better foundation from which to launch the next generations — with intention and purpose.

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Resources:

- [Backpacks and Baptism](#) by Lisa Meeder Turnbull, ECF Vital Practices blog, August 23, 2013

- [Traditions](#) by Richelle Thompson, ECF Vital Practices blog, December 4, 2012
- [Models for Vestry Leadership of Faith Formation](#), an ECF Vital Practices webinar presented by Lisa Kimball and Kyle Oliver
- [Growing a \(Rule of\) Life](#) by Greg Syler, ECF Vital Practices blog, February 24, 2016

Dollars and Discipleship

Julie Simonton

Here's the thing that strikes me. At some point in pretty much every stewardship conversation I will say, "Stewardship is about using the gifts God gives us to do the work God calls us to do." And that's when one of the most brilliant, delightfully predictable moments in my ministry begins. Every time. People grab a pen, put nose to paper, write furiously and point a finger skyward to hold me silent... and then they ask me to say the sentence again.

Our most fundamental relationships

'Using the gifts God gives us to do the work God calls us to do' is not a transactional statement about stewardship dollars. Of course it's not. What it is, and what I believe is so compelling about these words, is the way they capture our most vital and fundamental relationships – our relationship with God, with the world around us, with ourselves – and with Christ. We are indeed disciples when our household economy is included in conversations about the household of God.

Yet despite the Gospel model, when the dollars in our wallets are called to become a part of God's Kingdom through our churches, many of us in ministry leadership witness a pivot with parishioners and with congregations. We see a turn toward spreadsheets over scripture, 'plate and pledge' conflating with evangelism, discipleship converting to arithmetic and generosity spiraling toward transactional.

The urgency that numbers can create is understandable. It can also be paralyzing.

For starters, no one wants to give to the Titanic. Often, urgency will create a momentary swell of giving, but the band-aid dollars that turn a spreadsheet from red to black temporarily will eventually cause a once vital congregation to atrophy. At some point people will decide not to give, because 'giving just to keep the lights on' is not the vibrant, relevant life in the Kingdom to which Jesus calls us. When we give just to keep the lights on, we are neither faithful stewards nor faithful disciples.

Secondly, when congregations are dealing with an urgency created by numbers, they often become absorbed by how paralyzing it is. Congregations need to stop and take a moment to look inward when wrestling with how to steward their ministries faithfully. But those that stop and stay there miss hearing God's call to pivot toward new life in the economy of God's Kingdom.

Dollars keep us mindful as disciples. They are also a barometer for what we value as disciples. As Billy Graham said in one of my favorite quotations, “Our checkbook is a theological document – it tells us who and what we worship.”

But it's *not* transactional... right?

Of the many ways to define stewardship, I find that one of the reasons ‘using the gifts God gives us to do the work God calls us to do’ resonates with such deep satisfaction is because it does border on the transactional. It is a theological statement that touches on a trending jargon in cultural currency. The relationship, in this instance, is between what we receive and the impact of what we – and God! – can do with it.

This defining sentence is also satisfying to ministry leaders, because it gives us essential discipleship language for meeting people where they are. Even more importantly, it gives the folks we encounter the language to meet *themselves* where they are and to meet God.

So now, this satisfying sentence that lives on the border of *transactional* becomes world-altering-Kingdom-multiplying-life-in-Jesus-Christ – *transformational!*

What's next? Ask the questions...

A frequent question I'm asked by ministry leaders is not whether we should talk in the church about money and its relationship to discipleship, but how. Here are three ideas to get you started:

Try these questions: How are you rich? How are you poor? How am I rich? How am I poor?

These questions, offered in a recent address by the Rev. Dr. Sam Wells, vicar of St.-Martin-in-the-Field in London, resonate deeply with me. I hear them as essential discernment in the economy of God's Kingdom – addressing every gift God gives us, and every response we can offer in God's calls to us.

Or these: Where are three points of energy in your life, whether challenges or opportunities? What is the value of each? What is the cost of each? Where is God in each?

Oscar Wilde wrote about a man who ‘knows the price of everything and the value of nothing.’ Invite conversations about the differences between the value and price we put on the tangibles and intangibles in our lives, and where our conscious awareness crosses into unthinking.

And even this: Will you carry this prayer card?

A new feature of the annual giving package we write for churches is both a [card](#) (the size of a credit card) that can be printed for wallets or uploaded to mobile phone screens, offered especially for folks who shop and pay on the go. It reads, “Using the gifts God gives us to do the work God calls us to do.”

Download. Upload. Print. Cut. Paste. Appropriate with abandon and without attribution – so that every time we open our wallets, you, I and all the people to whom and with whom we minister are mindful of our gifts and our call.

Bonus: Invite people who carry the prayer card above (yourself included) to close each day with the [Ignatian daily examen](#).

Then be in conversation. With each other about the gifts God gives us. And with God about how we are called to use them.

***Julie Simonton** joined the Diocese of Virginia office for congregational development and stewardship in August 2013. Her role is to provide hands-on guidance and resources to congregations in all areas of congregational life, focusing especially on development, including robust stewardship, creative hospitality and spiritual health. Her profile includes creating comprehensive annual giving programs for churches and directing diocesan retreats, conferences, and programming for annual conventions. Julie loves to be on the road presenting workshops at rural churches, around the Beltway, or at national conferences. She especially delights in conversations over coffee, during vestry retreats, or out in any-given parking lot when the Holy Spirit begins to bubble and people authentically engage with where Jesus is calling them to use the gifts that God gives us to do the work God calls us to do. Before joining the Diocese of Virginia staff, she was lay associate minister for family ministries and parish life at Grace Episcopal Church in Alexandria, VA.*

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- [Aligning Money with Mission](#) by Susan Snook, Vestry Papers, March 2017

7 pasos hacia un discipulado intergeneracional

Eduardo Solomón Rivera

Cuando alguien en la iglesia habla de “formación”, muchos piensan en el salón de clase tradicional de la escuela dominical: las glorias de los brillantitos y el pegamento que tanto gustan a los niños pequeños y las bolsitas llenas de sorpresas del primer domingo en la Cuaresma. Lo más probable, sin embargo, es que a los jóvenes no les entusiasme para nada la idea de la visita del/de la sacerdote durante sus reuniones divertidas. Y las personas adultas recuerdan haber aguantado por enésima vez un foro sobre la física de la crucifixión o los detalles del nuevo programa mejorado de este año para reclutar familias jóvenes y salvar la congregación.

Durante los últimos 30 años, se ha realizado un buen trabajo de exploración del discipulado intergeneracional o sobre lo que el autor y asesor de iglesias John Roberto llama formación intergeneracional de fe. Con este enfoque, feligreses de todas las edades se unen para aprender, rendir culto, servir y jugar, en lugar de reunirse con sus respectivos grupos de edad. Los investigadores están hallando que las maneras tradicionales de impartir formación y discipulado cristianos, organizados por edad y etapa, aportaron a nuevas generaciones que no se identifican con su tradición religiosa o que se van o 'gradúan' de la iglesia cuando alcanzan la edad adulta.

El argumento para un enfoque intergeneracional

El modelo de edad y etapa fue principalmente el producto de los teóricos del desarrollo Piaget y Erikson en el siglo XX. Para muchos estadounidenses, la segregación social resultante impidió que los niños, adolescentes, adultos jóvenes, adultos de mediana y mayor edad formaran y disfrutaran relaciones significativas entre generaciones. "Todavía más significativamente, este modelo ha sido la causa de una profunda laguna en el desarrollo de la autoidentidad", arguyó Jason Brian Santos, Coordinador de Misión de Formación Cristiana de la Iglesia Presbiteriana de EE UU, en la Cátedra Woods de 2018 del Seminario Teológico de la Universidad de Dubuque.

"Por siglos", dijo Santos, "estas identidades se formaban en sociedades colectivas centradas en la formación comunal y en la construcción social de la identidad". Explicó además la manera en que la identidad se forma principalmente en 'hacer' las cosas de mayor importancia para una comunidad mediante la participación en prácticas que definen el organismo en su totalidad. En sus comentarios finales dijo, "Es nuestro trabajo asegurar que esos recuerdos formativos incluyan generaciones múltiples".

Reclamar nuestra identidad como el cuerpo de Cristo

Entonces, ¿cómo podemos empezar a derribar los silos y reclamar nuestras historias, nuestra toma de conciencia de cada uno como algo esencial y ante todo nuestra identidad como el cuerpo de Cristo?

Hay siete pasos hacia convertirnos en una iglesia que practica un modelo de discipulado intergeneracional.

1 Creer Ante todo, lo principal. Reafirme y celebre entusiastamente a Jesús en todos los aspectos de la vida de la iglesia y de todos los ministerios. Integre la oración, las sagradas escrituras y la reflexión espiritual como prácticas que sustentan la comunidad. Los adultos, especialmente el liderazgo, deben servir de modelos de esto y liderar dando el ejemplo.

2 Celebrar Experimente los sacramentos abundantemente. Realice cambios apropiados en el culto para incrementar la participación de todos sin infantilizar el culto. Participe en el año litúrgico y deje que enmarque la jornada. Reclame su bautismo, reflexione sobre el Pacto Bautismal (Libro de Oración Común 224-225) y conmemore los aniversarios bautismales.

Los primeros dos pasos son los cimientos de la vida de toda comunidad eclesial y esenciales para el discipulado intergeneracional. Si deseamos ser una *comunidad* auténtica de creyentes, entonces *cada uno de nosotros* debe esforzarse en fortalecer su propia vida espiritual, con la ayuda de Dios. Debemos reclamar nuestra identidad de iglesia de Dios, mirar honestamente a nuestras congregaciones y renunciar a lo que haya socavado esos cimientos.

3 Discernir Mire a fondo las áreas en que su parroquia ya haya tenido éxito en reunir miembros de diferentes generaciones y expándalas.

4 Prever Mire más allá del salón de la escuela dominical y de los foros de adultos en pos de experiencias auténticamente formativas en la comunidad. Cree espacios intencionales para pequeños grupos comunitarios intergeneracionales. Adopte un modelo sencillo de reflexión teológica: siga la Lectio Divina o hable sobre las reacciones al evangelio del domingo. Deje tiempo para socializar.

5 Recordar Celebre la Comunión de los Santos. Noviembre es un buen momento para recordar a los que fallecieron anteriormente ese año. Recuerde a sus santos – sus antepasados mediante actos diversos y dedique tiempo a oír las historias y narrativas compartidas de los demás.

“Recuérdame”, canta Miguelito a su bisabuelita, Coco. Es la canción que el padre de ella solía cantarle cuando era pequeña. La canción reanima el cuerpo y el espíritu de ella y, a su vez, el de toda la familia. Cada vez que mis hijitos y yo vemos la película animada Coco, se me llenan los ojos de lágrimas porque me recuerda la familia y la comunidad que me rodeaban a medida que crecía. Al igual que las culturas latinas, afroamericanas y otras que enfatizan la familia y la comunidad, los domingos y los días festivos eran momentos que maravillaban. No estaban exentos de problemas, pero no puedo imaginar crecer sin los cuidados y la devoción de mis padres, el amor incondicional de mis tías, los cuentos de mis abuelos o las comidas especiales que compartíamos y a veces preparábamos juntos.

6 Participar Vaya más allá de la hora del café. ¿En qué medida se están formando relaciones informales de tutoría? ¿Podría ser adecuado un programa formal de tutoría para su parroquia? Coordine con sus ministros de educación cristiana / formación / ministros de discipulado para crear espacios de participación. Organícense para la justicia. Sirvan a los pobres. Pasen tiempo juntos. Ofrezca actividades para la hora del café que promuevan la participación de personas de diferentes edades. No descarte eventos específicos para edades o grupos afines, pero no permita que impulsen la misión.

Cuando recién nos unimos a nuestra parroquia en Chicagoland, nos sentimos genuinamente adoptados. Adultos y adultos de mayor edad se conectaron hermosamente con nosotros y nuestros hijos. El bebé tenía muchas abuelas. A veces lo iba a buscar y encontraba a una cariñosa anciana en una mecedora con el bebito en brazos. Los integrantes de esa congregación demostraron amor e interés genuinos en nuestra familia, algo que respaldaron con acciones cuando más lo necesitábamos.

7 Compromiso El progreso sostenible solo es posible si el liderazgo del clero y el laicado, el personal y la junta parroquial están comprometidos a cambiar el paradigma de discipulado de un modelo de edad y etapa a un modelo intergeneracional. Empodere y apoye sus ministerios de formación para que crezcan, sueñen y trabajen juntos para hacer que ésta sea su realidad.

Cuando era niño, recuerdo a los adultos que quería y me querían: mis padres, abuelos/as, tíos/as y mi comunidad de fe. Me crié en una familia latina orgullosa de nuestra herencia cultural y de nuestro idioma. Hacíamos todo juntos, en familia. La comida, la música, los abrazos y las historias de mi familia y de mi comunidad de fe son dones que valoraré para siempre, dones que me ayudaron a moldearme y anclar mi identidad, mi fe y mi visión de comunidad desde la cuna hasta el día de hoy.

Este proceso probablemente llevará años en producir una comunidad de fe floreciente e intergeneracional. Experimente. Fracase. Persevere. Aprenda del trabajo y el éxito de otros/as. ¡Tómese su tiempo y celebre los avances!

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