

OPEN DOORS NEW FUTURES

MISSION SEARCH

CLERGY HANDBOOK



What does God want to do here?

SIGNS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Spiritual discernment is a prayerful, informed, and intentional effort to distinguish God's voice from others that influence us, that the Kingdom might come and God's will be done on earth as it is in heaven. The goal of spiritual discernment is to receive God's guidance.

PEACE	The pre-eminent sign: a sense of confidence at a very deep level indicates we are moving in the right direction. As a group considers an issue, the members will feel permeated with this peace as they approach God's perspective on the matter before them. God's peace does not preclude struggle. Pretending to agree can create an illusion of harmony and peace. Such apparent consonance is weak, superficial and will not last. Turbulence and turmoil are likely in early stages of discernment. The peace of God is born of bold searching, honest expression, mutual respect and genuine compassion. Ultimately the power of God's truth and love brings serenity and a sense of well-being.
CONVERGENCE	Various things that occurred independently and at different times, that heretofore had not seemed inter-related, all of a sudden converge and fit together, informing one another. A pattern emerges like pieces of a mosaic coming together.
PERSISTENCE	The same message keeps coming through unrelated channels and in different ways.
FRUITFULNESS	When certain endeavors produce abundant fruit, God may be calling us to cultivate those areas further.
DISORIENTATION <i>(followed by a sense of clarity)</i>	This occurs when a previous comprehension of truth gets shaken up and a higher truth falls into place with a sudden sense of unanticipated clarity. Suddenly, something significant becomes clear in a vivid way.
JOY	Radiance swells up from within those who are engaged and the Holy Spirit extends a sense of elation.
ENERGY	If we are getting the message right, we are infused with the energy to act on it.

The Holy Spirit, whom God will send in my name, will teach you everything.
John 14:26

Farnham, Suzanne G., Stephen A. Hull, R. Taylor McLean. *Grounded in God: Listening Hearts Discernment for Group Deliberations*, Revised Edition. Morehouse Publishing. 1996.

INTRODUCTION

May your kingdom come. May your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Matthew 6:10

Welcome to the spiritual journey of Open Doors New Futures! In every new call a congregation needs time to review the past and explore ways forward into the future. The primary goal of the Open Doors New Futures Mission Search is learning and discerning God's leading for your ministry together. Previously, congregations did this in the self-study and vision work in the interim time prior to a call. With a shortened search process, this work occurs after a congregation's call and includes the new clergy partner. This allows a congregation to fold in the insights and capacities of the new clergy partner into the work of developing the vision, the story telling, and relationship building that is at the heart of the Open Doors New Futures Mission Search.

God is calling you together as priest and people into love and service, to one another, and to the world that God loves, starting with your neighbors. You are about to embark on a spiritual journey together as a congregation. God will bring you to a place of inspiration and refreshed purpose, new people to love and new life together. All this is what makes Open Doors New Futures a journey of spiritual discernment and brings new life to congregations by building neighborhood love and connection.

Where have we been and what affects where we are going? The church that followed World War II had a clear and widely shared mission within the community: to restore an entire generation from wartime to peacetime and provide places of healing and reconciliation. The church helped people to carry the personal costs of war, a place to give back the stories of war to the community that sent them, easing the individual cost by taking on the burdens of memory. The church developed many strategies to help the young men and women and the families they built, to carry these burdens providing support, healing, community and a solid sense of a good future.

The vast network of Sunday schools, Christian education professionals, youth groups, men and women's groups, adult education all flourished in support of the mission of restoring people from war. Churches undertook religious education that emphasized peace and understanding. The rebuilding of the world was taken on with the same community fervor and bonding with which they went to war. Ecumenism and interfaith dialogues began, and young Americans fanned out across the globe in service to the "least of these" to rebuild the world. The hope of a world where the horror of WWII would never happen again united the land. It was a mighty, life-giving mission. It ended in the early 1980s, when the last of the boomers graduated from High School, and deep community connections began to fray.

INTRODUCTION (CONTINUED)

We no longer share a universally understood mission in our communities with inter-dependencies that cross ages, class, race and geography. However, we continue to use the post WWII mission strategies of Sunday school, youth groups, and adult education, all mostly pinned to Sunday morning. Strategies and models are not a mission in themselves. Without a mission focus, that develops strategies to further the mission and mutually build up church and community, churches lose community connection and relevance. The internally focused, maintenance based church develops in this lost community relationship gap. A transactional service provision model with fundraising and a “butts in the pews” focus develops that is not life giving, internally or externally. Maintenance is not mission.

Some churches started to recognize loss of momentum in the 1990s and 2000s and developed internally focused mission statements without community engagement. Full of good words but without the external relationships necessary to bring them to life, many of those mission statements are gathering dust. The church is the institution that exists not for itself alone, but to serve the world God loves. The church loses transformational or redemptive potential when we abandon community mission focus. We are blessed to be a blessing, not to be blessing hoarders. It may mean letting go, or putting aside some “traditional ministries” as we’ve “always done them” since WWII, and opening up to adaptation, fresh expressions, and new life. Discernment of God’s vision tuned to today’s community mission needs, brings clarity and joy. We know why we do what we do, and are active and willing partners with God.

Open Doors New Futures Mission Search is not about developing a new mission statement. The standard practice for developing a mission statement is to look at what the current congregation is doing, where it is doing it, and asking why it is doing it. Open Doors New Futures does not create a statement that describes the current reality. Open Doors New Futures is looking for a new chapter of mission, that will be rooted in the values of the parish but may look very different from what the parish is doing right now.

Open Doors New Futures is an adaptive change process rooted in the work of the Harvard Business school and adapted for churches by Susan Beaumont in her book, *How to Lead when You Don’t Know Where You Are Going: Leading in a Liminal Season*. Beaumont identifies four things that need to be attended to in order to move into what God is calling us to do:

- Deepening communal discernment
- Mining institutional memory
- Clarifying purpose
- Engaging emergence

Adaptive change is building on the best in a congregation and adapting it for the future of the church. This work literally leads to opening the church doors, going out, and finding new people to love in ways that meet their deepest needs. Open doors New Futures Mission Search helps congregations in building love and connection in the neighborhood, serving those whom God calls you to, and who God calls to you. You may create a new mission statement on the other side of your discovery process, but it is not the goal of this work. We are looking for those whom God wants to love in your neighborhood or town through your congregation, in this time, and for the needs of today.

The community distance and church isolation is what gave rise to the development of Open Doors New Futures. The church is not the only institution that is struggling. There's an acronym for the state of struggle: VUCA. See the diagram below, and see if it describes your experience in the last several years.

VUCA

<u>V</u> olatile	<u>U</u> ncertain	<u>C</u> omplex	<u>A</u> mbiguous
The environment demands you react quickly to ongoing changes that are unpredictable and out of your control	The environment requires you to take action without certainty	The environment is dynamic, with many interdependencies	The environment is unfamiliar, outside of your expertise

There is a corresponding use of the acronym VUCA that opens ways forward.

<u>V</u> olatile	→	<u>V</u> ision
<u>U</u> ncertain	→	<u>U</u> nderstanding
<u>C</u> omplex	→	<u>C</u> larity
<u>A</u> mbiguous	→	<u>A</u> gility

To have purposeful movement in a **volatile** setting, **vision** is needed. In the ocean amid big waves (volatility) if you can see land, you have your direction. Vision provides the “land,” or future you are headed towards and determines your path.

Uncertainty arises in the **understanding** gap and occurs when the people inside the church do not understand the experience of the community outside and around the church. Speaking with neighbors and partners in the community surrounding the church builds understanding and reduces uncertainty. We aren't guessing or assuming; we have direct information.

Clarity helps reduce **complexity**. The glut of information, overscheduled people, and a 24-hour news cycle that rarely has a break in bad news increases our sense of complexity and overwhelm. Past solutions frequently don't work today, and yet we still do them with fewer people and without the results we desire. As we gain knowledge about our actual neighbors, clarity of direction and decisions increase, and what to do in ministry based in relationships becomes easier.

Ambiguity is the experience of knowing what we once did no longer speaks in powerful ways to our neighbors, and we do not yet know what will. God is generous and there are many ways to serve our neighbors. **Agility** is the ability to meet needs in a variety of ways and embrace experimentation with new ideas. Developing agility in responding to change will help the church community stay connected to their neighbors' needs and God's presence in real and transformative ways. We all have recent experience of the church's ability to pivot and respond with agility during the Covid-19 pandemic. The Open Doors New Futures process helps build thoughtful agility without crisis.

The spiritual journey of Open Doors New Futures helps congregations address the volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity present in the world, their church, and the lives of your neighbors. Through parishes exploring their neighborhoods, churches build love, understanding, and connection with their neighbors, seeing their lives with fresh eyes. When the church invites the neighborhood into discernment, people experience the church hearing and responding to the real issues impacting their lives. The parish gains new insight, connections, and inspiration, and new vision emerges. Engaging the emerging vision builds discernment and clarity of God's leading.

A SPIRITUAL JOURNEY

What does God want to do here? It's the central question in a life of faith. Many churches are mystified that what they used to do no longer works. While we know that, we don't know what to do differently. We are in between the past and the future. In Open Doors New Futures, through multi-level conversations within a church, and in dialog with its community, God's leading into the future emerges. God speaks to us in our experiences of community exploration, with sparked imagination in conversation, prayer, scripture study, and compassionate listening, opening possible partnerships and new directions. God brings these pieces together into a new pattern specific to each church and calls the congregation into its new future mission. No two will be exactly alike. When we truly seek to discern God's desire, heaven and earth will move to see it done, and it is wonderful to be a part of God's love and flow of abundance in the engaged world around us.

Discernment asks us to open hearts and minds to God and be willing to move from:

- from knowing to unknowing,
- from advocating to attending,
- from striving to surrender.

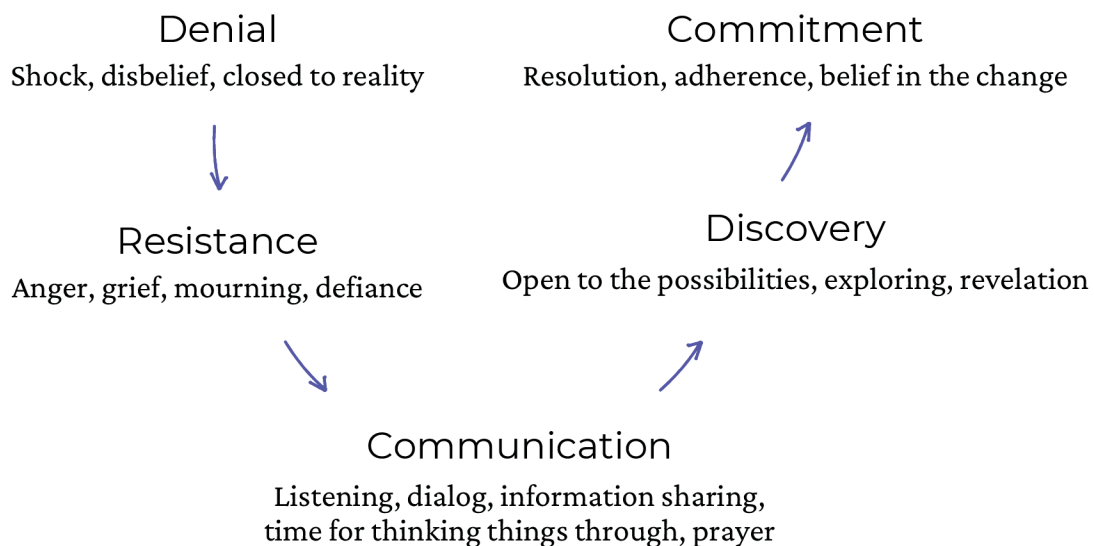
The congregation is invited into consistent prayer and scripture reflection for each section of the Open Doors New Futures Mission Search. For some this will be a very new experience. If your congregation is a little rusty in prayer, scripture reflection, and other spiritual practices, you may wish to explore a Foundation Experience to prepare them for Open Doors New Futures. (See page 13.)

Reflecting the work of the process in your preaching and teaching will help the congregation form the spiritual foundation for discernment. This is profound opportunity to provide spiritual leadership for your congregation and to model the practices that create a foundation of spiritual leadership. There are abundant opportunities to express spiritual leadership in Open Doors New Futures. You will give a short reflection of five minutes or less on the scripture in the Congregational Handbook at the beginning of every event. This is a journey you are all on together, and your words and prayer in the process are very important and build the experience of being led into the journey with God. When they engage the neighborhood, they will see some of Jesus' teachings that will be a call to them to build God's Reign here and now. Emphasize Jesus' teachings and Jesus' call when the community encounters God's work in the neighborhood. Pray with them through the process.

A SPIRITUAL JOURNEY (CONTINUED)

Not everyone will welcome the work. It is important to remember the flowchart for Congregational Change dynamics (Phases of Change): Denial, Resistance, Communication, Discovery, and Commitment. Denial and resistance are expressions of fear and loss. People don't know where they will be on the other side of change. They will ask if there will be a place for them in the new future and if they will recognize "their church." Giving people a place both to voice fears and talk about what might be occurs in the communication phase and provides places for dialogue, learning, prayer, and exploration. The data gathering events of the Open Doors New Futures Mission Search will do just that: give people a place to hear, learn, discuss, and explore. Everyone has a chance to speak and hear. The data gives God the raw experience of the people to speak into and through. The scripture and prayer scaffolding likewise provide places for people to listen for and hear God speaking. At its best, Open Doors New Futures provides an experience of God's inspiration and revelation to the congregation.

Phases of Change



Scott, Jaffee

People can be deeply threatened by change. They don't know if there will be a place for them in the future. The "conversion" experience for resistant people happens when they can discover their place in the future, and their focus shifts from maintaining the past to living into the future. The leadership's responsibility in change is to communicate clearly and provide ample opportunity for discussion. They must identify the catalyst and context of change and facilitate conversations, conversion, and commitment to the future and assure accountability of leadership to meet goals, and facilitate congregational participation. Neighborhood exploration identifies the places with opportunities to engage God in the neighborhood, and the call to ministry emerges. This emerging ministry is what pulls the congregation through the liminal "doorway" and into its future. This is where people find their place in their church's mission. The congregation engaging what is emerging in prayer and conversation in multiple contexts allows the vision for the future to be seen and for conversion to the future to happen.

SPIRITUAL & PRACTICAL RESOURCES

Practical and spiritual resources to enhance the work of Open Doors New Futures are:

Missional Bible Study: A 4 – 6 week Bible study series developed by the Diocese of Texas. The goal of this study series is to develop curiosity around missional communities and can be used before or during the Open Doors New Futures process. This study will deepen the community's well of scriptural and reflective experience for God to speak through. It is built to be flexible and practical. It can be done over 4-6 weeks for groups of various sizes and requires little as far as preparation and materials. It is available in English (adult and youth versions), Spanish, and Braille (upon request). Visiting the Diocese of Texas Missional webpage can be great inspiration and help clergy develop their own missional preaching, teaching strategy for the Open Doors New Futures experience. The website and download for the Missional Bible Study is accessible by [clicking here](#) or scanning the QR code on the following page.

Effective Organizing for Congregational Renewal by Michael Green and Metro Industrial Areas Foundation, available from the Congregational Support office or by order online. This booklet gives the basic information and processes for community organizing. You will recognize many aspects of the Open Doors New Futures Mission Search in the booklet, and the booklet will give you expanded information on practices to make it even more useful.

Trytank: Trytank (trytank.org) is a pioneering action research lab that has initiated groundbreaking experiments reimagining church engagement throughout the Episcopal Church. They use data to empower church leaders with actionable insights and adaptive strategies. It can be a resource for innovative ideas and a way to find inspiration for your own. It is coordinated by the Rev. Lorenzo Lebrija author of *How To Try*. (Accessible by [clicking here](#) scanning the QR code on the following page)

Holy Currencies by Eric Law. Law explores six currencies that he describes are like currents in a body of water that move nutrients around in the system. The six currencies are: Time & Place, Relationships, Gracious Leadership, Truth-telling, Wellness, and Money. The four intangible currencies are engaged both within and without the congregation: Relationships, Gracious Leadership, Truth-telling, and Wellness. These four intangibles are integral to the health of the two tangible currencies: Time & Place and Money. When congregations become detached from their local neighborhoods their access to local intangible currencies are reduced or can disappear. This profoundly impacts the congregation's sense of wellness. A significant outcome of the Open Doors New Futures process is encountering new sources of the four intangible currencies. The Vestry, Mission Search Team, and other leadership will do a Holy Currency assessment during the Leadership in Transition Retreat with your consultant at the launch of the Open Doors New Futures Mission Search.

Evangelism: Explore the Evangelism page on the The Episcopal Church website (episcopalchurch.org/ministries/evangelism). It has basic evangelism training for congregations and a number of ideas that have been successful around the church. Download the Evangelism 101 Handbook, and read and refer to it as a resource when appropriate during the Open Doors New Futures Mission Search. It is available in English, Spanish and French. (Accessible by [clicking here](#) or scanning the QR code on the following page)

Restart: The Episcopal Church website has a section devoted to re-starting congregations that have predominantly legacy members (episcopalchurch.org/ministries/church-planting-redevelopment). Go here to explore strategies and receive coaching and peer support. (Accessible by [clicking here](#) or scanning the QR code on the following page)

The Way of Discernment: Spiritual Practices for Decision Making by Elizabeth Liebert. This book shares spiritual practices that work through a variety of embodied practices for a variety of people to build holistic discernment that can be done as an individual or as a group. The practices lay the foundation for growing a person's or congregation's perception of God's work in the world and loving responses to it.

SPIRITUAL & PRACTICAL RESOURCES

Missional



TryTank



TEC Evangelism



TEC Restart



KEY INFORMATION

Open Doors New Futures Mission Search is a process that typically begins in the first three to four months after a new ministry starts, typically lasts a year or less, and includes five data and knowledge gathering events. The learning is cumulative as each event builds on one another. The prayer and discernment of the congregation, priest, and people and the discernment of the Holy Spirit's leading give the basic information you need to create a 5-year plan. An Open Doors New Futures Congregation Handbook explains the process and provides parishioners the opportunity for journaling and note taking throughout the journey. Encourage them to bring their Handbook to each event and debrief meeting.

If you and your congregation have an established ministry together and are seeking a new chapter, please refer to Appendix G for suggestions for how to best prepare for the Open Doors New Futures Mission Search together.

The Mission Search Team: A successful Open Doors New Futures Mission Search needs a team with a variety of skills to make it doable, enjoyable, and a spiritually uplifting experience. We have discovered special roles you may appoint for a successful Open Doors New Futures Mission Search! The Administrator (logistics planner), Scribe (note taker), Champion (one who exhibits enthusiasm, invites participation, displays gratitude), and Prayer Choir (team of intentional prayers) work with the Clergy and Consultant to make the events happen. Many hands make light work. Celebrate your Team and your successes as the process progresses.

See Appendix A for more details on Team Roles. An Open Doors New Futures Team Handbook details the Mission Search Team Roles and Responsibilities for each event and debrief meeting. The Handbook allows for much note taking for each event.

CONNECTING TO THE INTERIM PERIOD

The Open Doors New Futures begins during the Interim period and engages two resources to prepare the congregation for the process. *Grounded in God: Group Discernment for Listening Heart* (Suzanne G. Farnham, R. Taylor McLean, Stephanie A. Hull) and an appreciative inquiry process of a SOAR analysis (Appendix B) are completed by the congregation in preparation for their new call and the onboarding and vision undertaken in the Open Doors New Futures process. It is important to review the Congregation's SOAR from their Interim time. It will help you discern between actual goals and what the congregation has been saying because it is familiar. It reflects where the congregation has been. What has been in the past might not be the church's future. The hope of Open Doors New Futures is to help congregations move strongly into the future by meeting their neighbors where they are now in the present.

You are welcome to connect with the Interim Priest-in-Charge to discuss their experience in the Interim period and their impressions of the congregation.

CONSULTANT & CLERGY MEETING

The consultant will contact you. This meeting is an opportunity for you to meet the Consultant, share your ministry hopes, discuss the congregation, and ask questions about Open Doors New Futures. The Consultant is a resource for you and the congregation. They are invested in the flourishing and success of the clergy and the congregation.

Moving through the Open Doors New Futures events, the three analysis points below are a synthesis of adaptive change work for adaptive leaders and can be used as a tool to build functional leadership, understand the congregation's experiences of change, understand and resolve potential conflict, and help structure and define possible courses of action. The structure is adapted from the work of the Rev. Canon Jennifer McKenzie of Church Reimagined. As the congregational leader, develop these three action and attitude sets with your congregation to effectively move into the future:

- Define roles and elevate expectations
- Set boundaries and accountabilities
- Cultivate vision and bond the community to its future

In meetings with the Consultant, discuss if any of these leadership actions and attitudes have been present in your current work with the parish or to identify areas needing support. The Consultant can be a helpful sounding board on leadership strategy and the Open Doors New Futures process. You may wish to adopt the Conversation Covenant (Appendix C) for use in Vestry and other meetings. Setting these boundaries early on can be a useful strategy in promoting a faithful culture in community and building consistency between Open Doors New Futures meetings and other meetings.

CHOOSING YOUR TEAM

The success of Open Doors New Futures Mission Search depends on the partnership between the clergy, the consultant, and the lay team. The Mission Search Team is analogous to the Search Committee in former search processes. They are the people who will carry out the nuts and bolts of the meetings and will be your support in leading the congregation in a fruitful Open Doors New Futures Mission Search. Who you invite on your team can make or break your process. Referring to the Diffusion of Innovation model below, it is recommended to invite people who are Innovators, Early Adopters, and Early Majority to be members of the Team. While every congregation has Laggards and Resisters, this is not the place for their service at this time. They absolutely must be made to feel welcome at all the discussions, because protecting the minority voice is essential for a trustworthy leader and a successful Open Doors New Futures Mission Search. Everyone needs to know that their voice is valued, and that they will have many opportunities for input. They should not, however, be part of the Team planning and operation. Too much time will be lost in disruptive conversations and conjecture.

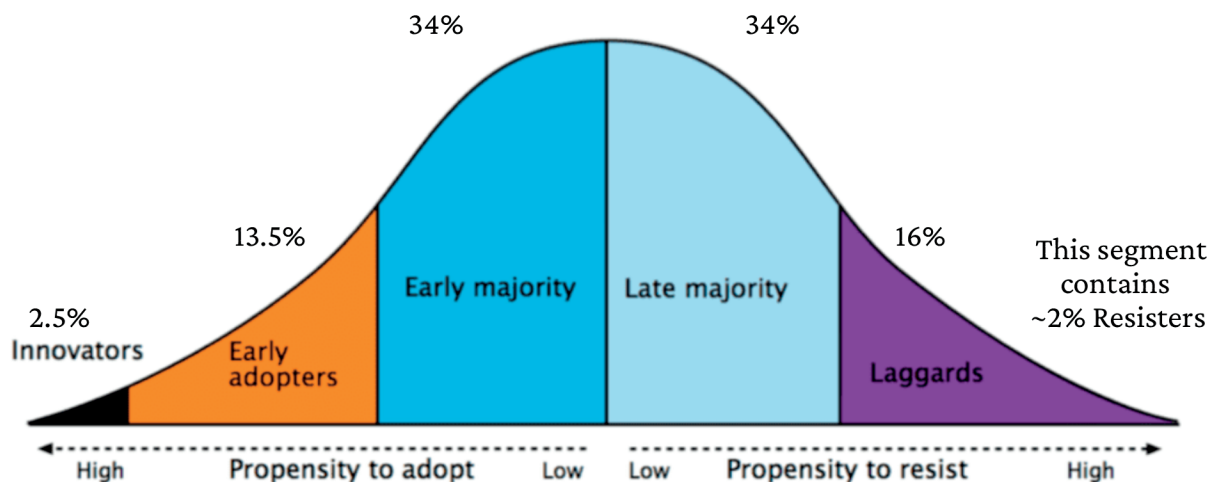
Qualities for Mission Search Team members are:

- Hunger for God
- Loving
- Cheerful
- Adaptive
- Sense of adventure
- Can-do attitude

Diffusion of Innovation

Dr. Everett Rogers

(The ability of any given group to accept innovative change)



ONBOARDING

The onboarding time of a new clergy partner allows the leadership and congregation to share information with you to build relationships through a process of sharing stories of their lives and the life of the church. These intentional experiences provide opportunities to discover new information and grow in knowledge and love. During onboarding you will learn the joys and sorrows, strengths and weaknesses of your congregation. The Living History especially will help clarify what aspects of congregational culture need healing, development, and boundaries. As the new cleric, you have opportunities to share yourself as teacher, pastor, preacher, and leader while building love, trust, and respect for one another as you discern God's call together.

The Leadership in Transition (LIT) Retreat is the launch event. It includes the Vestry and Mission Search Team, who are not necessarily the same people.

The Goals of the Leadership in Transition retreat are:

- To experience God's goodness together
- Orient the new Clergy partner and Vestry to shared practice and covenants
- Orient Clergy and Vestry to best group communication practices and Canons governing Clergy and Vestry
- Orient Vestry and Clergy to the Open Doors New Futures process and experience some of the tools and ideas behind the process
- To enjoy one another

The retreat can be held either onsite or at a nearby church or facility. It is a 5-hour event, facilitated by the Consultant, and includes: (See Appendix D for detailed resources.)

- Morning Prayer
- Dwelling in the Word Bible study (Ephesians is always a good source.)
- Appreciative Inquiry
- Vestry 101 (Roles & Responsibilities, Accountabilities)
- Conflict Cycle
- Holy Currencies Inventory: What do we have? What have we done? Who do we know? How might God resource our call?
- Webinar on Faithful Innovation: View and discuss how other churches have reimagined their ministry with neighborhood exploration and the grace and empowerment of the Holy Spirit (see QR code below)
- Overview of the Open Doors New Futures process, with dates if possible

Scan the QR code
or [click here](#) to
watch webinar on
Faithful Innovation
(Start at 3:45 and
end at 51:35).



FOUNDATION EXPERIENCES

You may find that you do not feel connected or certain enough of the spiritual capacity of the congregation to benefit from the Open Doors New Futures experience.

Many congregations, especially if they have felt it necessitated by circumstances to focus more on fundraising and less on discipleship, may need a refresher experience. Foundation Experiences are meant to create a new moment, a new sense of community, that builds greater sensitivity to God and one another. People date their experience of God and the church community when this happens. Below is a list of Foundation Experience resources that may be used to jump-start a community's experience of discipleship and following God together. Foundation Experiences are meant to awaken a new experience of God in the community and can happen before or after the Open Doors New Futures discernment process to build life, joy, and energy for ministry, mission, and life together. For a successful Foundation Experience, the clergy must cast a vision that answers: what do you want the parish to experience, what do you anticipate will be the outcome, and how will it prepare you to discern God's leading and cast the vision for the parish life for the next five years? If the Foundation Experience is to be done after the Open Doors New Futures process, how will it fulfill the plan the congregation has discerned?

The Path: Divided into three 8-week sections, this is a community wide experience for adults, youth, and families, that follows the arc of God's presence with humans, exploring how God has reached out to us, how we have responded, and what has grown out of these experiences. Sometimes called Salvation History, this Bible study brings all the connecting stories forward from Genesis to Revelation. There are links to free curriculums and abundant resources on the Diocese of Long Island Congregational Support webpage.

Revive: A ten-month long digital download curriculum using retreats, video studies, and personal study to help lay leaders grow in confidence as spiritual leaders in 3 sections. The first section helps participants to learn their preferred prayer style and how to lead communal prayer. In the second section the study of Scripture deepens one's personal capacity and growth in working with the Bible and leading others in scripture study. The third section explores personal call, ministry, gifts, and practice.

**EDLI Congregational
Support Page**



Revive



FOUNDATION EXPERIENCES (CONTINUED)

The Way of Love: Introduces and encourages experience in the six spiritual expressions of love and prayer in the Episcopal Church tradition: Turn, Learn, Pray, Worship, Bless, Go, Rest. Through study, practice, and preaching the community gathers together to re-experience the fullness of God's love in Episcopal spiritual practice together. Curriculum and resources available for adults, teens and children.

Being With: A small group experience spread over 10 weeks that helps people consider Christian faith in new and refreshing ways, without needing prior knowledge, but rather a simple willingness to share what you do know or feel. There are no experts in the room. What you may be feeling is as important as what you may be thinking. With a mix of short presentations and small groups discussions that offer lots of freedom of expression and less cross talk, Being With helps people hear one another into transformation.

Transforming Questions: An adult formation course designed to help both new Christians and longtime churchgoers move into deeper life in Christ. Over the course of ten sessions, participants engage the basic questions of the Christian faith through a combination of teaching and conversation. Participants gather to share a meal, then a leader gives a presentation about a central question of faith. In small groups, participants are invited into deeper reflection on and engagement with the topic through discussion questions. Participants will wrestle with some of the most basic questions of our faith: Who is Jesus? Does God answer prayer? Why do bad things happen?

The Way of Love



Being With



Transforming Questions



THE EVENTS

EVENT ONE: The Living History

Date: ____/____/____ (2-3 hours, usually scheduled after Sunday worship)

Clergy, Vestry, Mission Search Team, Consultant and the Congregation are invited to attend and contribute.

Description:

The Living History experience will give you more data and insight than five years of one-on-one coffee meetings. Seeing how the group interacts in sharing its stories: what is emphasized, what is omitted, where is there charity and space for each other, and where is anxiety and isolation from one another in the room. What gets negative attention and shut down? Where are they thoughtful or avoidant? Where is there laughter and expansiveness? All of this will tell you much about your church ministry partners.

All systems have some level of anxiety understood as an elevated feeling state of some kind. Surfacing and understanding how anxiety moves through your church system will help you understand sources and strategies for anxiety and conflict as it arises in the course of your life together and during this process. As you work together on your history take time to listen and discern. If you come to history that is difficult to talk about, slow down and use the Discernment Listening Guidelines. (Appendix J)

Goals:

- To engage the whole congregation in telling their stories and the story of the church
- To identify the places of power and health where the Holy Spirit has acted powerfully in the past
- To identify patterns or places of difficulty that might entangle God's vision as it emerges

Pre-work for Clergy and Consultant:

- Reviewing Family Systems will enrich your experience. Watch this simple 10 minute Family Systems video.
- Review the Fresh Start Family Systems in Churches article, the Cycle of Conflict, and Vitality/Viability Grid. (See Additional Resources)
- Consultant shares the Focused Conversation method using ORID (Objective, Reflective, Interpretation, and Decision) and its usefulness with Clergy.
- Check in with the Team 1-2 weeks prior for questions and clarity.
- Obtain a list of past clergy leaders and dates for the parish timeline.

The Living History Event Agenda

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith.

Hebrews 12:1-3

Event Agenda:

- **Prayer Choir:** Open in Prayer.
- **Clergy:**
 - Welcome everyone and ask for someone to invite the Holy spirit into the room by reading the scripture for this event. Offer a short reflection on the scripture. Introduce the Consultant.
 - Elicit from the group the norms for sharing, such as in the Conversation Covenant from College from Congregational Development (Appendix C). If items are not mentioned, suggest them, and ask the group for adoption of the Conversation Covenant.
- **Consultant:** Post and read the purpose and facilitate the event.
- **Clergy:** Lead closing in circle of prayer, whether as a whole group or divide into smaller groups so that everyone can contribute. Start and finish with silence. When people open their eyes ask if anyone heard or felt something of the Holy Spirit. Take note. Give thanks.
- **Clergy/Consultant:** Take pictures of all newsprint and butcher paper.
- **Clergy and Consultant Debrief:** Set a date soon after the Living History to debrief the experience and share insights. This debrief is best done in person, if possible, with the Living History posted so that you can both refer to and learn from the Living History. Identify outstanding patterns, especially when the Holy Spirit was powerful and present and when conflict erupted and how/if it was resolved. Is there anything that needs time, attention and love right now? What are ways to address this?

EVENT TWO: Neighborhood Exploration & Debrief

Description:

Neighborhood Exploration consists of 3 different activities that span the course of 1 week. Starting with a discussion of the latest demographic information on the neighborhoods around your parish in the Mission Insight Report (available from the Congregational Support Office), you will engage in an exploration of your neighborhood through demographic information, paying attention to how your area is growing, changing, and what the concerns of the people who live there are. The Neighborhood Prayer Walks include walking and praying through the surrounding neighborhoods and gathering places where parishioners prayerfully ask God to show them what God wishes them to see. The Neighborhood Conversations use the RootedGood Neighborhood Conversations tool (see Additional Resources) to help engage neighbors in short, structured conversations with three questions. Not everyone does all the activities, your extroverts may be happy to do the neighborhood conversations and your introverts may prefer prayer walking. People are free to choose. A gathering for debrief will follow the week of Prayer Walks and Neighborhood Conversations.

Goals:

- To identify changes and developments using demographic data study of the Mission Insight Report for your church's neighborhood/town
- To use the Neighborhood Conversations, Prayer Walks, and debrief to explore town or neighborhood changes and who is now present and what their concerns are through walking, praying and engaging with our neighbors
- To seek signs of God's presence and to listen for mission and ministry that the congregation may be called to engage

Pre-Work for the Clergy:

- Review *Effective Organizing for Congregational Renewal*.
- Review Missional Bible Study Series. Explore scripture and the call to make disciples and go out into all the world to seek and serve Christ in all people. Available in English, Spanish. (See Additional Resources).
- Check in with the Team 1-2 weeks prior for questions and clarity.

Clergy work with Prayer Choir:

During the Prayers of the People the Prayer Choir should offer intercession for the neighborhood, its families, peoples, joys and concerns. If laying on of hands is a practice in the congregation, ask those who will be going on Prayer Walks or seeking Neighborhood Conversations to stand in the middle of the congregation, and ask the congregation to lay hands on them as the Clergy Partner and Prayer Choir prays over them.

Part One: Neighborhood Demographics Discussion

Date: ____/____/____ (One hour)

Clergy, Vestry, Mission Search Team, and Congregation

Often done during coffee hour or a morning forum on the Sunday leading into the week of Prayer Walks and Neighborhood Conversations. The Mission Insight Report (available from the Congregational Support Office,) supplies data for a parish discussion of the present demographics of the neighborhood and what it might mean for your congregation's ministry prior to Prayer Walks and Neighborhood Conversations.

Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Romans 12: 2

Event Agenda:

- **Clergy:** As people assemble ask them to review the Signs of the Holy Spirit on the inside cover of their Handbooks.
- **Prayer Choir:** Open in Prayer.
- **Clergy:** Invite someone to read the scripture verse for this event. Offer short five-minute reflection on it.

Lead a discussion of the Neighborhood Demographics with the following questions:

- What has changed?
- What surprises you?
- Are the people living in our neighborhood/town represented in our church?
- Describe the average person in your neighborhood/town according to the data.
- What might be the aspirations of people living in our neighborhood/town?
- What might be the worries of people living in our neighborhood/town?

Invite the Congregation to take notes and answer the questions in their handbooks.

Remind the **Scribe** to summarize important learnings.

- **Prayer Choir:** Close in prayer.

Part Two: Neighborhood Prayer Walks & Conversations

Date: ____/____/____ (1 week window)

Clergy work with Administrator:

Print a map of the surrounding neighborhoods. Divide the map into walking routes for your Prayer Walk teams. Distribute maps to Prayer Walk teams. Discuss days/time for walks. Have copies of the directions for the Prayer Walks and Neighborhood Conversations ready to hand out on the Sunday of sending out.

Clergy work with Champion:

In the weeks leading up to the Neighborhood Exploration week make announcements for Prayer Walks and Neighborhood conversations, educate your parishioners to the details of Prayer Walks and Neighborhood Conversations. Clergy and Champion demonstrate the example introduction below during announcements and distribute the script. Give the example introduction below during announcements. Include the date of the Debrief Potluck or Brunch. Encourage people to participate and learn more about your neighborhood.

Sample self-introduction for neighborhood conversations:

Hello, do you live locally in _____? (If yes continue, if no, explain you are looking for neighborhood information and thank them anyway.) My name is (first name) _____. I'm doing research on the neighborhood and wondering if you would be willing to talk for a few minutes and answer three questions. The questions are: What are the assets of living here? What are the difficulties living here? If there is a spiritual place for you in (name of your neighborhood/town) where is it? If they agree to the conversation, proceed. If not, thank them for their time. If they ask where you are from, tell them you are also in the neighborhood/town and from (your church name) and we are exploring how best to love our neighbors, so we are talking to our neighbors to get information to help us be better neighbors.

See Appendix E for detailed directions for Neighborhood Prayer Walks.

See Appendix F for detailed directions for Neighborhood Conversations.

Part Three: Neighborhood Exploration Debrief Meeting

Date: ____/____/____ (2 hours)

Clergy, Consultant, Vestry, Mission Search team, and Congregation

Usually held on a weekday evening potluck supper or following church with a light lunch. The whole parish is invited to share photos, insights, and conversations. The session will end with a summary of the important things you have learned that need to be carried forward in your discernment.

As you work together on your debrief, take time to listen and discern. If you have difficulty in listening to a new inspiration or direction, slow down and use the Discernment Listening Guidelines. (Appendix J)

Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it.

Hebrews 13:2

Event Agenda: Consultant facilitates the debrief.

- **Prayer Choir:** Open in prayer.
- **Clergy:** Welcome everyone and ask for someone to open our hearts to hear the Holy Spirit by reading the scripture for this event. Offer a short five-minute reflection on scripture verse for this event.
- **Scribe:** Remind everyone of prior insight, learnings and inspiration.
- **Administrator:** Display slideshow of photos.
- **Consultant:** Invite participants to share why they chose the slide and facilitate discussion on Prayer Walks.
- **Scribe** or other designated person: Share aggregation of Neighborhood Conversations data.
- **Consultant:** Facilitate conversation on Neighborhood Conversations.
- **Prayer Choir:** Close in prayer.

EVENT THREE: Community Panel

Date: ____/____/____ (1 hour plus 30 minute debrief)

Vestry, Mission Search team, Clergy, Consultant, Congregation, and Community Leaders

Description:

An online Zoom or in-person meeting of local community leaders to hear what their work is, who they serve, what their challenges are, what they see as life giving, what they are building on and if they have any specific requests of the parish.

Goals:

- To introduce the new parish leadership to community leaders and the community leadership to the new cleric
- To listen for places of alignment, potential partnerships, and hear where God is at work in the neighborhood

Pre-work for the Clergy:

- Check in with the Team 1-2 weeks prior for questions and clarity.
- Brainstorm with Vestry and Parish leadership to create a list of four to five community leaders to invite to the Community Panel. These leaders may be people that the parish already has a relationship with and/or those you wish to cultivate new relationships with. In general, people seem reluctant to accept this type of invitation from the church, so if possible, build relationships with the invitees before inviting. Another option is to utilize parishioner contacts for invitations if available. Elected officials are not necessarily the best guests as they may use the time to campaign.
- Call/email community leaders, extend the invitation, and review what the invitation is for and the rest of the information in the letter. Send the email letter after you have spoken with the community leader directly.
- Review *Grounded in God*. Chapter 4: Engaging the Imagination, and Chapter 5: Catching the Signals (Signs of the Holy Spirit.)
- Acknowledge the RSVPs with the Zoom meeting link or the address of the in-person meeting place. Call anyone with a non-response. If they are unable to make the event, ask if there is someone else in their organization who would be an appropriate panelist. Resend meeting information the week of the event. If necessary, follow up with second phone calls.

Sample Invitation:

Dear {Invitee Name},

The Episcopal Church of {Parish Name} has recently called the Rev. {Priest Name}. We are engaged in a mission and vision process and would like to invite you to join us as a community leader to share your work. We would like ask you to participate in an in person (or zoom) panel presentation and discussion with other community leaders on {Date} at {Time} on the work you do in our community. We expect the meeting to last an hour to an hour and a half.

We will be asking the same four questions of all of our panelists:

- *Your name, your organization and who is your constituency?*
- *What are your challenges?*
- *Where do you see life and what are you building on?*
- *What might be a special request of our parish that you and/or your constituents have that would help you better serve the members of the community?*

We want to respect your time and the other participants. We also adhere to the RESPECT community conversation norms, (attached.) You will have ten minutes to share and we will have time for questions at the end each section. We hope you will join us and help us hear where God is calling {Parish Name} in our future work.

*Sincerely,
{Priest} and Wardens of {Parish}*

The Community Panel Event Agenda

But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.

Jeremiah 29:7

Zoom: Clergy is the moderator/timekeeper. Appoint someone to moderate the chat. If recording, let all participants know ahead of time. Encourage people to take notes.

In-person: Clergy is the moderator/timekeeper. Have a greeter at the door to show guests where to go. Set up refreshments ahead of time. Remind Scribes to take notes for the congregation.

- **Clergy:** As people assemble ask them to review the Signs of the Holy Spirit on the inside cover of their Handbooks. Post Signs of the Holy Spirit poster for guests.
- **Champion:** Welcome everyone either in-person or in the chat as they join the Zoom meeting.
- **Clergy:**
 - Welcome people, thank them for joining the people of _____ to listen to the voices and partners in our community. Outline the evening agenda.
 - Read the purpose of the Community Panel:
 - To hear from the leadership in the communities surrounding the parish, what their work is, who they serve, what their challenges are, what they see as life giving, what they are building on, and if they have any specific requests of the parish.
 - To listen for places of alignment, potential partnerships, and hear where God is at work in the neighborhood.
 - To introduce the new parish leadership to community leaders and the community leadership to the new clergy person.
 - Read the posted RESPECT community conversation guidelines.
 - Remind congregation of what we are listening for:
 - Inspiration, being deeply touched where God is at work, and sudden ideas
 - Potential partnerships
 - Alignment with ministry already in existence or to new ministry that may be emerging
 - Connections to previous Open Doors New Futures events and learnings
- **Prayer Choir:** Open in Prayer.
- **Clergy:**
 - Ask for someone to invite the Holy spirit into the room by reading the scripture for this event from the Congregation Handbook. Offer a short under five-minute reflection.
 - Introduce all the guests and call on each one in turn to present their responses to the three questions. Each Panel Member has ten minutes to speak. (Adjust the time in accordance to number of guests, keep the panel to an hour if on zoom.)
 - Invite the panelists to the Discovery Café event. Have invitations ready and ask the panelists for others they might recommend to join in the Discovery Café event. Provide panelists with Discovery Café date and invitations.
 - After you have heard from all the panelists, thank them for their contribution and give them the opportunity to leave the meeting.
 - Close the Community Panel with this or similar blessing: “Life is short. We don't have much time to gladden the hearts of those who walk this way with us. So, be swift to love and make haste to be kind and the blessing of God, creating, liberating, and drawing us ever closer be with you now and always.”
- **Consultant** facilitates Community Panel Debrief immediately following the Panel.
- **Clergy/Champion** send thank you notes after the event. Identify places where your congregation noted places of alignment or curiosity with the panelist. If desired, set a follow-up meeting to share information, resources, connections, and spaces. Invite the panelists to the Discovery Café event. Ask the panelists for recommendations of others to join in the Discovery Café event. Provide the panelists with Discovery Café Invitations.

EVENT FOUR: Discovery Café

Part One: Question Development & Planning

Date: ____/____/____ (1 hour) Scheduled for a convenient time shortly after the Community Panel. Can be done in-person or on Zoom

Clergy, Vestry, Mission Search team, and Consultant

Description:

The Discovery Café question development process uses the information, inspiration, and understanding generated in the previous events. The questions are constructed to ask how ministry in the congregation can connect to the surrounding neighborhood/community in mutual blessing and support. The Discovery Café experience requires one or two well-crafted questions that will engage your community with curiosity and investment in the work and vision of the congregation. The questions need to have a doable scope and result in new understandings and creative responses.

As you work together on your question take time to listen and discern. If you come to an impasse or difficulty, slow down and use the Discernment Listening Guidelines. (Appendix J)

Goals:

- To create a stimulating outwardly facing question that will engage the whole community (parishioners, neighbors, stakeholders, and community leaders) in reciprocal wellness and flourishing
- To develop an invitation list and review needs for event

Pre-work for the Clergy:

- Check in with the Team 1-2 weeks prior for questions and clarity.
- Read and share Café to Go and The Art of Creating Powerful Questions with the Team. (See Additional Resources)

Question Development: The Consultant facilitates the Question Development.

Planning:

Once the question is created, the group brainstorms for a list of people to invite to the Discovery Café. Drawing on established relationships noted in the Holy Currencies Assessment and the Community Panel, the group is encouraged to consider community leaders, church ministry volunteers, neighbors impacted by this topic, clients, people present in the community but not present at church, local people with an invested perspective on this topic, and people from varying age/gender/ethnic demographics to invite to have a deeper conversation. Modify the Sample Invitation template below for your question and context, then create an action plan that includes who will be responsible for the invitations and a timeline for extending them.

Sample Invitation:

{Church name} has been engaged in a future vision process on how best to love and serve our neighbors. We are seeking information from our community on where things are happening in our neighborhood, how we can support our neighbors, work together, or spark new ideas. We will be hosting a Discovery Café event where church and community members come together to ponder and brainstorm a question developed out of our Neighborhood Exploration that we all have a stake in together. We will be discussing this question, “{question}?”

We’re especially asking neighbors and community members from outside of {Church name} to come explore with us. We’d be honored to have you join us for this two-hour {morning/afternoon} event. Attached is an invitation card. Please RSVP __here__ so we know how many doughnuts/pierogis/empanadas to have on hand!

Part Two: The Discovery Café Event

Date: ____/____/____ (2 hours, often scheduled on a Saturday)

Vestry, Mission Search team, Clergy, Consultant, Parishioners, Community Panel members and others from their organizations, church ministry volunteers, clients, neighbors, people present in the community but not present at church are invited to come together for a two-hour community conversation.

Description:

The congregation and community members are invited to join in exploring question(s), created by the leadership team, that attract energy and focus attention on what really matters in the neighborhood. The conversations depend on dialogue and engagement and will provide opportunities to discover potential ways forward in service and growth in the community.

The Café culminates in each table's sharing of their insights and discoveries. Important discoveries harvested in the Café will be documented and posted for consideration and inspiration in the next steps of discernment.

Goal:

- To invite neighbors and community members and leaders to join the congregation in exploring questions that strengthen relationships, reveal resources, and inspire and encourage the congregation and community in mutual blessing

Pre-work for the Clergy:

- Check in with the Team 1-2 weeks prior for questions and clarity.
- **Clergy and Champion** encourage congregation in the weeks prior to event to be hospitable and present to Discovery Café attendees who do not attend church and to show love and respect to guests.

The Discovery Café Event Agenda

We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.

Romans 8: 28

Event Agenda: The Consultant facilitates this event and the debrief.

- **Clergy and Champion:** Welcome people and direct them to sit together filling in the tables.
- **Clergy:** Welcome everyone and ask for someone to invite the Holy Spirit into the room by reading the scripture for this event. Offer a short five-minute reflection on the scripture verse for this event.
- **Prayer Choir:** Open the meeting with prayer.
- **Clergy:** Introduce the Consultant.
- **Consultant** provides introduction and instructions to the Discovery Cafe.
- **Consultant** leads group discussion and “harvest” of experience, ideas and inspiration.
- **Clergy:** Thank all participants and bless the gathering.

EVENT FIVE: The Parish Planning Summit

Date: ____/____/____ (3 hours, usually scheduled for a Sunday after worship)

Clergy, Vestry, Mission Search Team, Consultant, and Parishioners: all work together to create a celebratory ending to the Open Doors New Futures process on this day.

Description:

Using the accumulated learning, insight, discernment, deep listening, and inspiration in the Open Doors New Futures process events, the congregation creates a vision of their congregation's call to mission over the next five years. Using "reverse engineering", the congregation creates a working draft plan of the goals and objectives for a five-year long-range plan.

Over the course of the next months the leadership refines the plan and this becomes the template for mission, growth and deepening in discipleship for the coming five years, refining as the Spirit leads.

Goals:

- To reach consensus on long-range commitments after combining the insights, inspiration, connections, learnings, and discernment of the Holy Spirit that emerged during Open Doors New Futures
- To create a basic five-year plan with yearly targets to achieve the goals specified by each of the commitment working groups

Pre-work for the Clergy:

- Check in with the team 1-2 weeks prior for questions and clarity.
- Invite and lead exploration of the the [Evangelism](#) page of The Episcopal Church website, the Experiment page at [TryTank](#), the Open Doors New Futures [list of practices of vital congregations](#), and the resources available at the [Invite Welcome Connect](#) website. (Accessible by [clicking the](#) underlined links or scanning the QR codes here). Listen for inspiration as you read through the different strategies and ideas.

[TEC Evangelism](#)



[TryTank](#)



[Open Doors New Futures](#)



The Parish Planning Summit Event Agenda

I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

Ephesians 3: 18-21

Event Agenda: The Consultant facilitates this event using Technology of Participation (creators of the Focused Conversation) designed to help a group create an actionable plan quickly.

Clergy and Champion:

Thank everyone for going on this spiritual journey. Name the Team members and Consultant, thank them. This is a good time for flowers/books to say thank you.

Clergy:

- Welcome everyone and ask for someone to invite the Holy spirit into the room by reading the scripture for this event. Offer a short five-minute reflection on the scripture verse for this event.
- As small groups take on specific commitments and “reverse engineer” them, eg: this is our preferred future, what must happen to get us there?, it will be useful for Clergy to float between groups, asking and answering questions. As you move in and between groups stay alert to leadings from the Holy Spirit and share them as you go along. Review the Five-Year Plan worksheet in the Congregation Handbook. As the planning groups work, encourage taking time to listen and discern. If there is an impasse or difficulty, slow down, and use the Discernment Listening Guidelines. (Appendix J)

Prayer Choir:

Close with thanksgivings and supplications inspired by the emerging plan, making their petitions known to God.

Clergy:

Close with blessings.

The Parish Planning Summit Follow-up

Following the main planning event the goals and plans to achieve them will need to be refined. The Clergy, Vestry and Team will work on refining the five-year plan, scheduling the events on the calendar as required, and recruiting people to undertake/lead ministries as needed. (The Five-Year Plan can be part of every Annual Meeting to celebrate achievements and keep momentum going.)

The Clergy sends refined draft of Open Doors New Futures Five-Year Plan to the Transition Ministry Team, copying the Bishop and the EMLI Director for potential mission funding and the ERELI Director for potential building and property projects.

The Clergy, Vestry, and Team meet with the Transition Ministry Team to talk about possible Deanery/Diocesan/TEC support for the work ahead.

The Open Doors New Futures Plan should provide the foundation for annual Mutual Ministry Valuation (MMV) the annual retreat/review to discuss how you are working together and set goals for the next five years, focusing, expanding, trimming, or releasing as necessary. An MMV is separate from the Open Doors New Futures events and is scheduled separately with the consultant.

APPENDIX A: MISSION SEARCH TEAM ROLES

Administrator	Champion
<i>For God is not a God of confusion but of peace. As in all the churches of the saints... All things should be done decently and in order.</i> <i>First Corinthians 14:33,40</i> This person is responsible for logistics: making sure that rooms are reserved, refreshments are present, supplies are there, and necessary copies are made and ready for the event. This person works with church staff and recruits help as necessary. The Administrator works with the Consultant and new Clergy Partner to make sure all is in readiness. This is an ideal role for your most dedicated list maker and task executor.	<i>So, let's encourage each other. Let's motivate one another. Let's stir one another up to love and good works. Let's meet together!</i> <i>Hebrews 10:24-25 (MSG Bible)</i> This person makes sure everyone knows about and is involved in the process and encourages them to participate. They ensure that personal invitations, bulletin announcements, and e-blasts reach the congregation. The Champion shows appreciation for the congregation's input in weekly congregational reports and personally encourages members and your Clergy Partner to attend all events. They help write thank-you notes and give public thanks for the ongoing work. This is an ideal role for your most enthusiastic cheerleader.
Scribe	Prayer Choir
<i>This, then, is how you ought to regard us: as servants of Christ and as those entrusted with the mysteries God has revealed. Now it is required that those who have been given trust must prove faithful.</i> <i>1 Corinthians 4:1-2</i> This person is responsible for taking notes and managing all the newsprint and notes generated during the process. The Scribe may be asked to take notes on a newsprint pad and needs to be able to write clearly and quickly. The Scribe pays special attention to writing down the important learnings from each event, and communicating what has been learned at the previous meeting at the beginning of subsequent meeting to help build cumulative learning. (They are not asked to transcribe all newsprint but to keep it all together in case a reference is needed.) This is an ideal role for your most perceptive observer and reporter. It is good scribing practice to alternate colors of markers between different speakers or sections. Make sure your markers or pens are fresh and have ink in them. Keep blank copy paper available in case needed by members during events.	<i>Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.</i> <i>Philippians 4:6-7</i> Prayer is essential for discerning God's direction. The Prayer Choir prays for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit and for God's leading in the Open Doors New Futures process for the parish. They attend events, write prayers, and intercede for the congregation and neighbors. Topics include understanding, love for neighbors, God's will, vision, agility, and strength. This role suits intercessory prayer groups and those with a deep love for God's work and church ministry. Use event intentions as prayer prompts. The group can be established or assembled for this purpose, but more than one person is preferred. Designate a liaison to coordinate with clergy and produce the parish bulletin for sharing prayers. Pre-work involves gathering, identifying a liaison, praying for the congregation and Holy Spirit's guidance, and praying together. Set meeting times and places.

APPENDIX B

SOAR Model Analysis for Churches (Appreciative Inquiry)

STRENGTHS <i>What can we build on?</i>	• What are we most proud of as a church? • What makes us unique? • What is our proudest achievement in the last year or two? • How do we use our strengths to respond to the great commandment to love God, love our neighbors, and reach out to the stranger? • How do our strengths fit with the realities of the surrounding community and Jesus' call to go forward and make new disciples? • What do we do or provide that is world-class for our stakeholders: parishioners, community, potential disciples, or mission partners?
OPPORTUNITIES <i>What is our surrounding community seeking?</i>	• As we explore our values and aspirations as a church, what are we deeply passionate about? • Reflecting on our Strengths and Opportunities, who are we and who is God calling us to become, and where is God calling us to go in the future? • What is our most compelling aspiration, our deepest sense of God's call? • What strategic initiatives (projects, programs, processes) would support following God's compelling call?
ASPIRATIONS <i>What do we care deeply about in our ministry?</i>	• How do we make sense of the opportunities provided by the forces and trends surrounding our church? • What are the top 3 opportunities to focus our efforts on? • How can we best meet the needs of our stakeholders, those who have a vested interest in our vitality and mission? • Who are possible new disciples or mission partners? • How can we positively differentiate ourselves from other faith communities? • What are possible new mission areas or partnerships with which to build new discipling relationships? • What new expressions of our strengths and core values might deepen the vitality of our relationships with the surrounding community?
RESULTS <i>How do we know we are succeeding in following God's call?</i>	• As we explore our values and aspirations as a church, what are we deeply passionate about? • Reflecting on our Strengths and Opportunities, who are we and who is God calling us to become, and where is God calling us to go in the future? • What is our most compelling aspiration, our deepest sense of God's call? • What strategic initiatives (projects, programs, processes) would support following God's compelling call?

APPENDIX C

Conversation Covenant from College for Congregational Development

1. **Try on:** An invitation to be creative and open to suspend judgment for a moment and look at something from a different perspective.
2. **It's okay to disagree. It's not okay to shame, blame, or attack oneself or others:** Disagreement is okay – it honors individuals and their differences and is an act of faith that the community is mature enough to understand and embrace significant differences.
3. **Practice self-focus:** Requires the use of “I” statements; speaking in the first person about what one feels or believes.
4. **Practice “both/and” thinking:** Opens oneself up to hearing that a number of opinions and beliefs can coexist without canceling one another out
5. **Be aware of intent and impact:** Intent is my intention or motive in doing or saying something. Impact is the effect or consequence my speech or action has on another person or persons.
6. **Maintain confidentiality:** We agree not to tell each other's stories with people outside the group, unless given express permission to do so.
7. **It's okay to be messy:** No one is perfect, it is okay to make mistakes.
8. **Say ouch:** Permission to literally say ouch as a way to alert the group that the impact of some words or actions are having.

APPENDIX D

Leadership in Transition Retreat Resources

Morning Prayer for Discernment

As we begin the day, we focus on our calling to live faithfully, for who knows what today holds?

Opening

Alleluia! O God, may the empty tomb
fill our hearts with faith. Alleluia!

Prayer

Jesus, our way, our truth, and our life: As the gift of
this new day unfolds, open our hearts and minds to
you, that we may see you clearly and follow where
you lead; to you, risen Savior, we offer praise, now
and always. **Amen.**

Praise

A Song of Our Adoption (Ephesians 1:3-10)

Blessed are you, the God and Father of our
Lord Jesus Christ, *

for you have blessed us in Christ
with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.
Before the world was made, you chose us to be
yours in Christ, *

that we should be holy and blameless before you.
You destined us for adoption as your children
through Jesus Christ, *

according to the good pleasure of your will,
To the praise of your glorious grace, *

that you have freely given us in the Beloved.
In you, we have redemption through the blood
of Christ, *

the forgiveness of our sins,
According to the riches of your grace*

which you have lavished upon us.
You have made known to us, in all wisdom
and insight,*

the mystery of your will,
According to your good pleasure which you set
forth in Christ,*

as a plan for the fullness of time,
To gather together all things in Christ,*
things in heaven and things on earth.

Morning Prayer for Discernment (continued)

Scripture

The angel said to the women at the tomb, "I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here, for he has been raised, as he said."

Matthew 28:6

Meditation

The Trouble with Easter

But ... I want the tomb full, like temple or tent —
with the Holy enshrouded in fabric un-rent.

Yes, I want death preserved in sweet-smelling spice;
not my neighbor perspiring the aroma of Christ.

Julia McCray-Goldsmith

How will we together embrace the gift of life in all its fullness today?

Affirmation of Faith

Celebrant Will you continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of the bread, and in the prayers?

People: I will, with God's help.

Celebrant Will you persevere in resisting evil, and, whenever you fall into sin, repent and return to the Lord?

People: I will, with God's help.

Celebrant Will you proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ?

People: I will, with God's help.

Celebrant Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself?

People: I will, with God's help.

Celebrant Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?

People: I will, with God's help.

Morning Prayer for Discernment (continued)

**Christ Jesus, though in the form of God,
did not exploit equality with God
but emptied himself,
in the form of a slave,
born in human likeness.
And being found in human form,
he humbled himself
and became obedient to the point of death —
even death on a cross.
Therefore, God also highly exalted him
and gave him the name
that is above every name,
so that at the name of Jesus
every knee should bend,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
and every tongue should confess
that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.**

Philippians 2:5-11

Prayers

In the work we do this day,
May the risen Christ teach us.
In the challenges we face this day,
May the risen Christ guide us.
Through the people we meet this day,
May the risen Christ renew us.

Here, the people may add particular intercessions or thanksgivings.

As we respond to the hungers and hurts of this world,
May the Spirit of the risen Christ strengthen us.

Lord's Prayer

Song: Seek Ye First the Kingdom of God

Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and its righteousness and all these things will be added unto you.

Allelu-alleluia.

Knock and it shall be opened up to you, seek and you will find, ask and it will be added unto you.

Allelu-alleluia.

Chorus: Alleluia, alleluia! Alleluia, allelu-alleluia!

Prayer

Jesus, our friend and savior: Guide us in this new day, that we may know God's desire for us and gain strength and courage to live as beloved children of God. **Amen.**

Going Out

Alleluia! O God, may the empty tomb
fill our hearts with faith. **Alleluia!**

Dwelling in the Word Bible Study

Ephesians 3: 14 – 21 Paul's Prayer for the Readers

For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth takes its name. I pray that, according to the riches of his glory, he may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love. I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

- Read through silently. A word or phrase that stood out for you?
- Read again aloud. Ask what is God speaking to you about in your ministry?
- Read again aloud. What is God asking you to do?

Appreciative Inquiry: God's Power in our Church Life

Divide the group into groups of two. Ask each pair to interview one another and to listen closely as they will report out their partner's answer. They will each have 5 minutes to tell their story. The Consultant keeps track of time and at 5 minutes asks partners to switch.

The appreciative question is:

"Recall a time that was truly life-giving at {Parish Name}, when you felt most alive, most connected to God. Where were you, what were you doing, who was with you, what did you feel, did anything happen as a result of the experience?"

At conclusion of sharing time, ask for a group of two to volunteer to share each other's story. As they speak, the consultant scribes brief descriptions of the life-giving event ie:

"Child's baptism, whole family present, when congregation laid hands on child and family in prayer felt held by God." Always check with the person whose story has been told if this captures the essence of the story. Ask the first group to invite a second group and so on until everyone has shared.

Switch color markers between stories to help group differentiate stories.

Post newsprint and ask the group what stands out in the stories. Can they identify any patterns or threads that connect the stories. Scribe the connections and post them. At the conclusion introduce the group to the debrief questions used after each MAP event:

- What have we learned about our community at {Parish Name}?
- How might you describe God connecting to people here?
- Is there new information? Inspiration?
- What do we need to carry forward in our discernment of what God desires to have happen here.

Scribe the responses.

Webinar on Faithful Innovation



Holy Currencies Inventory

Read *Holy Currencies* by the Rev. Eric Law and absorb the key concepts of flow of currencies/resources within and among systems, common contribution by all parties, and reciprocity as the key to sustainability.

The intangible currencies: relationship, wellness, truth telling, and gracious leadership are as important as tangible currencies: space and time, money.

Consider each of the currencies below and make as clear an assessment as possible.

Time: Make a list of paid staff and volunteers who are in ministry in your congregation and the amount of time they give. What is focused internally and what is focused externally?

Place: Attach a floor plan of your church facilities and any other properties that can be accessed for ministry. What spaces are used by whom and when? Where and when are there open spaces and times?

Gracious Leadership: List the skills, tools, models, processes and presence offered within and outside the church to create gracious environments {Grace Margins} wherein space is created for mutually respectful relationships to be formed, truth told, and work accomplished together.

Relationship: List the internal and external networks of mutually respectful connections leaders and members have with members and non-members: Congregational, Denominational, Diocesan, Community, Cultural, Civic, Ethnic, Business, Governmental, Educational, Inter-faith and Ecumenical. Please list as many connections as you are aware of.

Truth: List the ways your congregation, as individuals and corporately, have articulated with members and non-members a wholistic truth that empowers people to action in their neighborhoods, community, nation, and planet.

Wellness: List how your church has participated in building up physical, social, economic, ecological and spiritual health in your ministry, neighborhood, town, nation, and earth that has a sustainable, regenerative and circulatory flow of resources, human, financial, and natural resources.

Money: What financial resources does your parish currently list? What sources and amounts are internal: pledges, endowments, and investments? What sources and amounts are external: grants, programs, gifts, and fundraising?

Overview: With a group from your parish analyze the lists for connections and relationships. What is the flow between the six currencies and between each of the currencies internally and externally? Is their reciprocity in both tangible and intangible resources, is everyone contributing to wellness?

Mark the areas where there is flow between internal and external currencies. Ask how to express gratitude and build upon the grace that is there. Mark each area where there is no internal or external flow between currencies. These are your areas of greatest potential growth and grace.

APPENDIX E

Neighborhood Prayer Walk Directions

What Is a Neighborhood Prayer Walk?

It's not just walking around. It's not just praying. It's walking through your neighborhood or "parish", praying with your eyes and your heart wide open. Notice signs of hope and need, and how God calls you to both. Reimagine how your ministry could join God and your neighbors.

Guidelines for Prayer-Walking

- Whether you're near your church or in another neighborhood, plan your route ahead of time. Walk on a variety of days and times, not just Sunday morning. What's happening Tuesdays at 5pm?
- Meet at church and pray with the Prayer Choir before you leave.
- Form pairs of people, ideally covering different areas.
- If your area isn't very walk-friendly, head to common gathering places: shopping centers, groceries, dog parks, town squares, community gardens, the church's five-block radius, and more.
- As you walk, look with care and pray either in silence or aloud softly. Limit chatting or focusing on each other. Focus on the neighborhood.
- Take your camera with you and take photographs of things that strike you.
- Though it's not primary, be open to interaction with people on the way.
- If anyone asks what you are doing, be prepared to respond: "We're from (Name of Your Church), and we are praying and getting to know our neighborhood better." Offer to pray, if it feels appropriate.

Things to look for:

You will be gathering impressions and noticing in an appreciative way, any evidence of the following:

- People groups: Who's around and where are they? Who's is standing at bus stops, hanging on street corners, going into stores and businesses, playing in parks? What are seniors doing? What are the age, gender, ethnicity of the people you see? How are they dressed?
- Places of activity: What are the places of activity?
- Structures: What are the types and conditions of homes, roads, parks, businesses? How much "free space" is there in the community? What is the mix of private and public space? Are there vacant lots that are idle?
- Services: Where do people go to shop, eat, study, worship, and receive assistance? Who provides the services and who is receiving?
- Signs of change: Note housing under construction, for sale, demolition, and stores/businesses opening or closing. Have closed-up shops been replaced or vacant for a while? Notice languages on shop signs and buildings being used differently from their original purpose.
- Signs of hope: Where do you see evidence of God's grace and God's people at work? Examples could be houses of worship, nonprofit organizations, uplifting artwork, playing children, faith symbols, social gatherings, gardens. Look for local assets that could be connected with neighborhood needs.
- Signs of need: Where was there evidence of hardship, hurt or injustice. Are there people who appear homeless? Are there day laborers waiting for work? Is what you see specific to particular areas or affecting the neighborhood as a whole? Be aware that marginalized people and social problems are often hidden, especially in communities that appear well-off.

APPENDIX E (CONTINUED)

Neighborhood Prayer Walk Directions

How Should We Pray?

- *Discernment:* Ask God to show how you can pray with greater insight for the people, events, and places in the community.
- *Blessing:* Pray for the person, home, school, business, situations you see.
- *Empathy:* See and feel what your neighbors live with every day. Pray for brokenness and for blessings and gifts in the community.
- *Scripture:* Prayer based directly on scriptures like Jeremiah 29:5-7; Luke 10:1-2; Mark 12:30-31; or Revelation 21:3-5a.
- *Silence:* Allow silence for God's spirit to speak to you, or through you.

Concluding the Neighborhood Prayer Walk — perhaps over a meal — gather to share your prayers and observations:

- What did you learn about the neighborhood?
- Where was God's presence especially apparent?
- What surprised you?
- What was hard? What was engaging?

Bring any notes with you to the debrief meeting. Be ready to share briefly why the photo is important! Send any photographs to your photo point person.

APPENDIX F

Neighborhood Conversations Directions

The sensory questions that begin the Neighborhood Conversations packet found in the Congregation Handbook are designed to help participants elevate a sense of new eyes and ears to experience your neighborhood as a new person and to open your mind and heart. Pray before you start your exploration.

Going out two by two, you can start a conversation with a stranger by asking if someone is local to the neighborhood. If they are, introduce yourself by first name and tell them you are gathering information on what life is like in the neighborhood. Let them know you are in the neighborhood, too, and are part of your church. Tell them that you want to ask three questions. Are they comfortable with a brief discussion? If yes, proceed, if no, thank them and seek out the next person. (If someone says no, do not be discouraged! We don't know their story, and today may just not be the day for them.)

In three separate conversations, ask these three questions:

- What are the assets of living in our neighborhood/town?
- What are the challenges of living in our neighborhood/town?
- If there is a spiritual place for you in our neighborhood/town, where is it?

Bring any notes with you to the debrief meeting. Send your notes to the point person who will aggregate the answers.

APPENDIX G

New Chapter for Settled Congregations

How do we prepare for the Open Doors New Futures Mission Search?

You have come to a time in your congregation's life where it is clear that old ministries are winding down but you don't know where to go from here. To help you prepare your congregation to discern a new mission, it is necessary to revive or introduce discernment prayer practices to build personal and communal awareness that help congregations discover God's leading for their future. There five events of the Open Doors New Futures Mission Search will build your congregation's capacity for conversation about mission and for mission discernment and action.

It helps to make the distinction between mission and ministry:

- Mission is the overall vision or call of a congregation, that builds transformation of life into deeper Christlikeness and more freedom to love.
- Ministries are the actions taken to pursue and fulfill a mission, these are the strategies that are the vehicle of transformation.

To prepare people for the mission discernment process participating in the following activities will substantially increase the success of the Open Doors New Futures experience: (You can choose any mixture, but make sure to include the activities with asterisks.)

***Discernment retreat:** a weekend morning retreat or quiet day that helps people identify how they already hear God and cultivate other practices that will deepen their ability to recognize the direction of God. See Appendix H for retreat details.

***Grounded in God: Listening Hearts Discernment for Group Deliberations** by Suzanne G. Farnham, Stephanie A. Hull, R. Taylor McLean: a powerful, prayerful, and practical guide for conducting meetings, discerning God's leading, and reaching consensus. Chapter discussion questions are found in Appendix I.

***Holy Currencies Inventory:** based on the book by the Rev. Eric Law, *Holy Currencies*, building sustainable mission, the inventory introduces the awareness of all the ways God provides support for our lives and the life of our community. The basic principle that giving and receiving is circular, everyone gives and everyone receives, keeps the currencies/currents flowing in the system and keeps the system healthy.

Law outlines six currents/currencies of power that move through a community: space and time, relationships, truth telling, gracious leadership, wellness, and money. There are four intangible currencies and two tangible currencies. We tend to focus on the two tangible currencies of space/time (our buildings and when they are available) and money. But without the four intangible currencies: relationships, truth telling, gracious leadership, and wellness, the two tangible currents dry up. The inventory helps the congregation to see possible ways that God may be resourcing them that they just didn't see, or places to explore for resources that may seem indirect but can have big future impact on a congregations resources. The great mission killer is the idea that because we may not have money in the bank now, it means that God has no other way of giving to us than what we have done in the past or are doing now. We put limits on God and our ability to discern God giving to us.

APPENDIX G (CONTINUED)

New Chapter for Settled Congregations

***Holy Currencies Inventory:** (continued)

The inventory opens up people's perception of the congregation's presence in the neighborhood, connections that members may have with giving partnerships in the community, of relationships with leaders, groups, business people, government; of community wellness potential and partnerships, of all the grace that is waiting to happen. While a congregation may not immediately discover connections that increase their bottom line it opens their eyes to the ways God may be seeking to define mission and fund ministry.

It can be an energizing and revelatory exercise and is necessary to help shift attention from just the bank account and onto God. It is easy to lose site of God's abundance and potential when sitting around the same table with the same repair bills and financial statement month after month. God has ways and ways of getting things done, more than we can ask or imagine. The Holy Currencies inventory helps open our eyes to all God can be for us and the abundance of the Kingdom of God that will emerge in the Open Doors New Futures experience. See page 37 for the group inventory format.

Missional: Bible Studies: These bible studies on the themes of Mission, Going, Relationship and Gathering while directed towards building new communities are really useful in building community awareness of God's call to go out and love people in the ways that them will feel like love and concern. Bible study is to Christian community what a tuning is to an orchestra, it gets us listening to one another, tuning in to one another and hearing directions in the music. Bible study tunes our hearts to the key of God. Bible study on the themes of mission prime our hearts to hearing God speak through the words, topics and people of scripture in conversation with our with our conversations and experiences in our communities. This can be a 4 – 6 week study and is available to people on all different levels of biblical experience.

Spiritual Gift Inventory and Workshop presentation: One of the ways that God resources the church's mission and its ministries is through the spiritual gifts of the Holy Spirit. This straightforward study, workshop and inventory explores the individual spiritual DNA of each person and how the gifts of the Holy Spirit are individualized ways for each of us to feel God's power in our lives, to learn how it works, and to bring it forth into the world. Jesus had all the spiritual gifts and did amazing things by teaching us, imparting the Holy Spirit to empower us. When we act together, each of us empowered in our individual spiritual gifts combined. we as the body of Christ can do amazing things. Starting with each participant reading the lead in essay and in taking the Spiritual Gift inventory, the group comes together for a Saturday retreat or a series of three/four consecutive Sunday forums. Using the attached power point the clergy person or other trained process person, leads the congregation through a series of group reflections, imagination exercises and listening/mapping their life for God's presence and experiences of the Holy Spirit. Again, this event helps the congregation tune their hearts to hearing God's call in their life and to see how God may be resourcing the mission that emerges through the gifts of the people present, and those yet to come in the Open Doors New Futures Mission Search.

APPENDIX H

Discernment Retreat

Morning Prayer for Discernment (15 minutes)

Leader: *As we begin the day, we focus on our calling to live faithfully, for who knows what today holds?*

Opening

Leader: Alleluia! O God, we seek your face

People: fill our hearts with faith. Alleluia!

Prayers

Jesus, our way, our truth, and our life: As the gift of this new day unfolds, open our hearts and minds to you, that we may see you clearly and follow where you lead; to you, risen Savior, we offer praise, now and always. **Amen.**

My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end. nor do I really know myself, and the fact that I think I am following your will does not mean that I am actually doing so. But I believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you. And I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing. I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire. And I know that if I do this you will lead me by the right road, though I may know nothing about it. Therefore will I trust you always though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death. I will not fear, for you are ever with me, and you will never leave me to face my perils alone. **Amen.**

"The Merton Prayer" from Thoughts

Scripture

For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth takes its name.

I pray that, according to the riches of his glory, he may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love.

I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

Ephesians 3: 14 - 21

Meditation

The desert is always the same, the sky is always beautiful, the road deserted....

The only thing that is always new is God.

Carlo Carretto

Silent reflection: *How will we ask for new eyes to see God and to discern God's leading and the needs of God's world?*

Excerpted from Daily Prayer for All Seasons. Used with permission

APPENDIX H (CONTINUED)

Morning Prayer for Discernment (continued)

Affirmation of Faith

Celebrant Will you continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of the bread, and in the prayers?

People: I will, with God's help.

Celebrant Will you persevere in resisting evil, and, whenever you fall into sin, repent and return to the Lord?

People: I will, with God's help.

Celebrant Will you proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ?

People: I will, with God's help.

Celebrant Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself?

People: I will, with God's help.

Celebrant Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?

People: I will, with God's help.

Prayers

Leader: In the work we do this day,

People: May the risen Christ teach us.

Leader: In the challenges we face this day,

People: May the risen Christ guide us.

Leader: Through the people we meet this day,

People: May the risen Christ renew us.

(Here, the people may add particular intercessions or thanksgivings.)

Leader: As we respond to the hungers and hurts of this world,

May the Spirit of the risen Christ strengthen us.

Lord's Prayer

Song: Seek Ye First the Kingdom of God (1982 Hymnal #711)

Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and its righteousness and all these things will be added unto you.

Allelu-alleluia.

Knock and it shall be opened up to you, seek and you will find, ask and it will be added unto you.

Allelu-alleluia.

Chorus: Alleluia, alleluia! Alleluia, allelu-alleluia!

Prayer

Jesus, our friend and savior: Guide us in this new day, that we may know God's desire for us and gain strength and courage to live as beloved children of God. **Amen.**

Leader: Alleluia! May God lead us and guide us!

People: fill our hearts with faith. Alleluia!

APPENDIX H (CONTINUED)

Bible Study (35-40 minutes)

Romans 12: 1 – 8 The New Life in Christ

I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.

For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think, but to think with sober judgement, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another. We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness.

- Read through silently. A word or phrase that stood out for you?
- Read again aloud. Ask what is God speaking to that needs renewing in your mind?
- Read again aloud. What is God asking you to do to discern the will of God?

At the completion of the discussion ask someone in the group to close in prayer

Break (15 minutes)

Decision Types and Discernment (15 minutes)

Give a brief didactic explanation on the 3 types of decisions, making use of either newsprint or projector. Different circumstances call for different decision types. Have handouts ready.

1. Tactical
2. Strategic
3. Transformational

Characteristics of the 3 Types of Decisions

	Tactical	Strategic	Transformational
Leader role:	Expert	Synthesizer	Facilitator
Tone:	Confident	Vision casting	Non-anxious
Key questions:	What's wrong?	What is our objective?	What question do we need to be asking?
Problems:	Solved	Plan to answer	Managed
Interactions:	Directive	Inspiring	Multi-level engagement

APPENDIX H (CONTINUED)

- What in our common life right now calls for tactical decisions? (what contractor is needed, what brand of wafers to use in communion, what copier contract is best, etc)
- What in our common life right now calls for strategic decisions? (a congregation-wide educational or spiritual experience, annual stewardship planning, capital campaign, etc)
- What in our common life right now calls for transformational decision making? (call of a new clergy partner, new outreach ministry, long range discernment, etc)

Interim PIC closes the conversation on decision types saying:

Transformational decision making occurs in liminal times, when what has functioned well in the past is not answering the needs of today, and a way forward is not clear. It requires prayer, scripture, conversations, and discernment of God's leadership. It is a period of letting go and letting God.

Interim PIC opens the conversation on discernment saying:

When you hear the word "discernment" what does that bring to mind? (record answers on newsprint)

If the following thoughts are not mentioned in the brainstorm, make sure you add in:

- Discernment is the process of hearing and following God's desire as best we can.
- Discernment requires both listening and conversations, within and outside of the congregation. It uses prayer, silence, scripture, observation and listening for God's voice in all of these things.
- Discernment requires us to listen to our history, to the facts of our present common life, to the current situation of our neighbors, and to community leaders also serving the community.
- The primary question is not, "What do we want to do" but rather "What does God want us to do here?"

Ways of Hearing God Inventory (25-30 minutes)

Interim PIC shares this short statement before the group begins the inventory: (found on the next page)

It is important to ponder the ways that God has been present to you, how you hear and see God. We all hear God speaking to us in different ways. Creation is said to be panentheistic, that God is everywhere and can be experienced anywhere at any time. How and where do you hear and experience God?

Distribute the Hearing God Inventory. Ask the group to take a minute of silence before filling out the sheet.

When they have finished (~ 5 minutes), ask people to divide into groups of three to share their results and describe their experiences to one another.

Bring group back to together to debrief.

Discussion questions:

- What stood out for them?
- Did they notice any similarities in their stories? If so, what were they?
- Is there anything else people would like to share about this experience?

APPENDIX H (CONTINUED)

Ways of Hearing God Inventory

When do you hear/experience God? Circle all the answers that resonate:

Silence	Your senses
Art	Your dreams
Scripture	Your pain
Literature	People
Dance	Events
Imagination	Communion
Nature	Community
Pleasure	Specific spaces
Music	Scholarly work
Liturgy	Scientific discovery

Are there other ways God speaks to you?

Discuss the following questions in small groups. Select a volunteer to report the group insights, learnings, and leadings.

- Describe your experience of God reaching out to you.
- Have you ever made a conscious effort to discern God's voice in your life? How have you gone about it? How did it work for you? Did it affect your relationship with God?
- Have you ever resisted listening to God's call?
- When God asks you to do something, have you found that God gives you what you need to carry it out? How did it feel to receive grace and strength?

APPENDIX H (CONTINUED)

Signs of the Holy Spirit (15-20 minutes)

Post the Signs of the Holy Spirit poster (Appendix O). (A larger size may be obtained from a copy shop.) Hand out individual copies or refer to the Clergy Search handbook. Going around the room, ask people to read one of the signs until all seven signs have been read.

Discussion questions:

- Do you recall a time when you worked as a group when energy was high, ideas flowed, connections were made, and direction was clear?
- Do you recognize any of these signs from the discussion of how you each have heard God?
- Do you recall any times in the life of the parish where one or more of the signs was present and empowering?

Retreat Debrief (20 minutes)

Let's take some time to reflect on our retreat experience.

- What words, images, thoughts still linger in your mind? What conversations or information stood out for you?
- What surprised you? What were some of the feelings you experienced or connections/associations in your life as we worked together on discernment?
- What are some key insights from today? What new vantage point has this retreat given us?
- What do we want to do with what we have learned about discernment? What do we want to bring forward in our life together?

Close in prayer by having the group form a circle, each person praying for the person to their left until the circle is completed.

APPENDIX I

Grounded in God Discussion Questions

Chapter 1

1. What about discernment has stayed with you since the retreat?
2. How do you take time to get settled in God's presence?
3. Where might we need the mind of Christ in our deliberations tonight?

Chapter 2

1. How do you feel about silence?
2. What does it mean to listen with our whole self? Who do you do that with?
3. How might silence be useful in our work today?

Chapter 3

1. In a new experience, what questions do you ask to help your understanding?
2. What gets lost when we interrupt others?
3. Where in our work today might we need to listen deeply to each other today?

Chapter 4

1. Describe times when you have had an image, Bible verse, dream, or intuition suddenly arise that changed your direction? Pause between stories to absorb what you hear.
2. Were you able to use the pause to absorb the story or did you formulate your response?

Chapter 5

1. Describe times in your vestry work where joy, energy surges, persistence in message, convergence, and/or fruitfulness have been present?
2. What was your response? Did you identify it as the Holy Spirit?

Chapter 6

1. How does speaking for yourself only, expressing your own thoughts and feelings, referring to your own experiences, avoiding the hypothetical, and keeping away from generalizations, build trust, openness, and mutual respect?
2. What actions might you take to encourage trust, openness, listening, and mutual respect that facilitates building consensus?

Chapter 7

1. How can a group conducting business as God's people resist conforming to the dominant culture of the secular world in decision making?
2. How do we experience being the Body of Christ with God as a living presence in our decision making?

Chapter 8

1. How might we shape our agendas that prepare a way to find the Holy Spirit in our meetings?
2. How might we experiment using music, scripture, silence, and prayer in our meetings?

Chapter 9

1. How might we build up reflective sharing, reverent listening, creative exploration of scripture, and other aspects of discernment in the life of the wider congregation?
2. How might we model holding our desires and opinions, even our convictions, lightly so that we might hear God?

DISCERNMENT LISTENING GUIDELINES

You are encouraged to use these guidelines for parish mission, community ministry, and personal life decisions.

1

Take time to become settled in God's presence.

2

Listen to others with your entire self (senses, feelings, intuition, imagination, and rational faculties).

3

Do not interrupt.

4

Pause between speakers to absorb what has been said.

5

Do not formulate what you want to say while someone else is speaking.

6

Speak for yourself only, expressing your own thoughts and feelings, referring to your own experiences. Avoid being hypothetical. Steer away from broad generalizations.

7

Do not challenge what others say.

8

Listen to the group as a whole — to those who have not spoken aloud as well as to those who have.

9

Generally, leave space for anyone who may want to speak a first time before speaking a second time yourself.

10

Hold your desires and opinions — even your convictions — lightly.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

1. *The Art of Powerful Questions: Catalyzing Insight, Innovation, and Action* by Eric E. Vogt, Juanita Brown, and David Isaacs: dioceseli.org/powerfulquestions
2. Discovery Café Guidelines: dioceseli.org/discoverycafe
3. A Recipe for Collect Writing from *Earth & Altar*: dioceseli.org/collectwriting
4. *Grounded in God: Listening Hearts Discernment for Group Deliberations* by Suzanne G. Farnham, Stephanie A. Hull, R. Taylor McLean: dioceseli.org/groundedingod
5. *How to Lead When You Don't Know Where You're Going: Leading in a Liminal Season* by Susan Beaumont: dioceseli.org/leading
6. Spiritual Gifts Quiz: spiritualgiftquiz.org
7. [Spiritual Gifts Powerpoint](https://dioceseli.org/spiritualgifts/powerpoint)
8. Webinar on Leading Faithful Innovation: dioceseli.org/faithfulinnovation
9. Cafe to Go: dioceseli.org/cafe-go
10. Cycle of Unmanaged Conflict: dioceseli.org/cycle-unmanaged-conflict
11. Viability and Vitality: dioceseli.org/what-we-do/resources/viable-and-vital-ministry-practice
12. Family Systems Theory: The Congregation as a System: dioceseli.org/family-systems
13. Bowen Family Systems Therapy: dioceseli.org/bowen
14. [Antagonists in the Church](https://dioceseli.org/antagonists-in-the-church)
15. RootedGood Neighborhood Conversations Tool: dioceseli.org/rooted-good
16. Missional Bible Study Series: dioceseli.org/missional
17. Invite Welcome Connect: invitewelcomeconnect.com/checklists-tool-kits

Handwriting practice lines consisting of 20 sets of three horizontal dotted lines.

OPEN DOORS NEW FUTURES: WHAT DOES GOD WANT TO DO HERE?



OPEN DOORS NEW FUTURES Mission Search, has been developed from the strong work of the Mission Action Plan done by the Anglican Diocese of Toronto, extending thanks especially to Canon Janet Marshall, Director of Congregational Development, the work of Open Doors New Futures done by the Diocese of New York, and the work of Susan Beaumont in *How to When You Don't Know Where You're Going: Leading in a Liminal Time*. We have modified the process and added new tools. The Consultant team of the Diocese of Long Island has shaped this process over a three-year period, and we are deeply indebted to them.

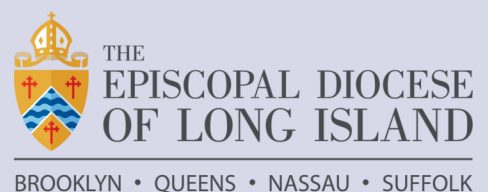
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