



## CORE CHURCH

### CORE ACTIVITIES OF EVERY EPISCOPAL CONGREGATION

#### 1. Worship and Prayer

Individually and corporately, sharing Eucharist in community, praying privately and together

#### 2. Christian Formation and Discipleship

Study, growing in knowledge and awareness of God, sharing faith and the Good News of Jesus with others

#### 3. Faith Community Support, Care and Fellowship

Get together, eating together, having fun, caring and responding to each other in times of need

#### 4. Outreach

Reaching outside of a faith community to others in need, near and far, embodying the love of Jesus

*Every aspect of the core activities has a central purpose to be in relationship with God and each other in Christ.*

### EVERYTHING REVOLVES AROUND RELATIONSHIPS (CONNECTIONS) IN HEALTHY FAITH COMMUNITIES

One's personal *relationship* with God in Christ Jesus

An individual's growing and maturing in the faith calls for *relationship* with others

Others gather and form caring *relationships* in faith community

God calls faith communities to be in *relationship* with the world, near and far

### THE CRITICAL NEED FOR ASSESSMENT

Periodically assessing the mission and ministry of a congregation is essential to remain vital and forward moving. Even when things are going smoothly it is always a healthy practice to take an internal look at what is going well, what needs attention and what should be ended for lots of good reasons. COVID has had the greatest impact on the church of any outside force in decades. It has shaken the church, forced shut-downs, driven changes and mandated adoption of new technologies. **There has never been a more important time to assess our congregations then NOW.** This is a huge opportunity caused by major disruption that can turn into a unique time to address necessary and vital change for our churches!

Assessment doesn't need to be complicated. It is often done through surveys , focus groups or whole congregation facilitated gatherings. Leadership assessments should be done through mutual ministry reviews. Many resources for those reviews are available in the Episcopal Church. All assessments should be made based on the core values, mission and vision of the particular congregation. CORE CHURCH proposes looking at the

basic activities of a church and aligning each with how it reflects the four aspects of relationships that are the basis for our healthy and faithful existence in Christian community.

### **ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS THAT INTEGRATE CORE ACTIVITIES AND RELATIONSHIPS**

1. What opportunities and resources does your church provide to support:
  - An individual's personal prayer life and need for worshipping alone
  - An individual praying and worshipping with another person or small group
  - Praying and worshipping as a whole congregation
  - Your congregation's praying and worshipping with those outside your faith community
  
2. What ways does your church support and resource:
  - An individual's study to grow in the knowledge and awareness of God and ability to share the Good News of Jesus
  - Opportunities for 2 or more to gather in small groups to grow in the knowledge and awareness of God, one with the other, and to share their faith and the Good News of Jesus in relational ways
  - Large group gatherings of persons from the congregation to foster knowledge and awareness of God, one with the other and to share their faith and the Good News of Jesus in relational ways
  - Opportunities for your congregation as a whole to go outside its walls and be in relationship with others as it shares its faith and the Good News of Jesus
  
3. How does your congregation resource and encourage:
  - Individuals to show support, fellowship and caring for other members in need
  - Small groups to care for each other when in need and to have fun and fellowship
  - Getting together as a whole to care for each other in need and to have fun and fellowship
  
4. In what ways does your church resource and support:
  - Individuals being able to go into the world and embody the love of Jesus in a relational way
  - Opportunities for 2 or more in small groups to go into the world and embody the love of Jesus in relational ways
  - Opportunities for the whole congregation to go into the world and embody the love of Jesus in relational ways

We now know that churches must become hybrid organizations, doing much of their getting together online AND in person. ZOOM, Facebook Live and other digital modalities are here to stay. These new ways of building relationships offer great opportunities for our congregations to expand their reach! Connecting with each other has just gotten easier.

Small group ministries have always been a part of the Episcopal Church but in ways that are often task oriented. The altar guild, choir, vestry, etc. have specific work and may not adequately fill people's need for a deep bond of relationship. That bond can often be best found in groups that are specifically formed for that purpose. **Small groups that study scripture, talk about personal experiences of God, pray and take care of each other are the foundation for healthy congregations.** They are an essential way to connect new people into the heartbeat of a faith community.

A recommended handbook for small group development:  
*Planning Small Groups with a Purpose*, Steve Gladen, 2018.