Episcopal Church in Connecticut

Region Needs Assessment
Final Report

June 27, 2018
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INTRODUCTION
In April 2018, the Episcopal Church in Connecticut (ECCT) retained CCS Fundraising to conduct a Region Needs Assessment, for the purpose of:

- Identifying programs and activities to further participation in God’s mission across parishes and Regions

- Ascertaining participants’ experiences with and perceptions of what it means to be a parish and a Region in a new missional age

- Determining the resources necessary to:
  - Enable further education about what it means to be a parish and a Church in a new missional age and the spiritual practices basic to it
  - Promote the Regions as a vehicle for collaboration
  - Empower Episcopalians in Connecticut to join God’s mission and take action in the world
The following individuals have been integral to the process of the needs assessment:

**Resolution 4/9 Working Group**

Bishops: The Rt. Rev. Laura J. Ahrens, Bishop Suffragan
The Rt. Rev. Ian T. Douglas, Bishop Diocesan

Mission Council: Duo Dickinson
The Rev. Lisa Hahneman

Standing Committee: The Rev. Rowena Kemp
The Rev. Peter Thompson

Officers: Lynn Brooks, Treasurer
The Rev. Sandra Cosman, Secretary of the Diocese & of Mission Council
Sandra Lynch
The Rev. Adam Yates, Secretary of the Convention

Staff: Karin Hamilton, Canon for Mission Communication and Media
The Rev. Tim Hodapp, Canon for Mission Collaboration
Louis Fuertes, Canon for Mission Finance and Operations

Fundraising Professionals: The Rev. Suzanne Culhane
Maryann Doyle
Acknowledgements

Region Missionaries
Maggie Breen
The Rev. Carlos de la Torre
The Rev. Rachel Field
Erin Flinn
Eliza Marth
The Rev. Rachel Thomas

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Alison Hollo, Senior Administrator, Office of the Episcopate
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Amber Page Gehr, Administrator for Transitions & Clergy Support

CCS Team
Lauren Costello, Executive Director
Jared Melville, Assistant Vice President
Brian Nevin, Principal & Managing Director
Tiffany Reed, Assistant Vice President –Strategy & Operations
Needs Assessment Methodology

In preparation for the assessment, CCS worked with the Rt. Rev. Ian T. Douglas, Bishop Diocesan; the Rev. Timothy Hodapp, Canon for Mission Collaboration; and Karin Hamilton, Canon for Mission Communication and Media, on the following materials:

▪ **Background statement and meeting request letter**: The background piece provided a brief history of activities undertaken by the Episcopal Church in Connecticut and the Resolution 4/9 Working Group prior to engaging in the needs assessment; provided highlights and background information on the diocese as a whole; outlined the purpose of the Regions and Region Missionaries; and defined what it means to be a parish in a new missional age and the spiritual practices basic to this age.

▪ **Discussion prompts**: CCS worked with ECCT staff to prepare discussion prompt questions for use with parish clergy and lay leadership, with focus groups, and with individual influencers.

▪ **List of assessment participants**: An invitation list consisting of 65 parishes, 18 influencers, and 28 focus groups was developed in order to ensure that the voices of Episcopalians across the Regions were captured.
We are especially grateful to those that made their time available to participate in a one-on-one interview or focus group. These individuals shared their opinions and provided invaluable feedback and suggestions regarding what it means to be a Church in a new missional age, the Regions, the programs and activities required to more fully participate in God’s mission, and the resources required to do so. Over the course of the Region Needs Assessment, CCS met with:

- 65 parishes
- 20 individuals
- 26 focus groups
- 4 Convocations: Southeast Region, Northeast Region, Southwest Region, and Northwest Region

To date, the voices of more than 350 individuals were captured, including those in attendance at Region Convocations. Conversations with select key individuals are ongoing.

CCS also created an e-survey, distributed via ECCT’s E-Newsletter, Region Missionaries, and to those clergy not invited to participate in a personal discussion. The e-survey was completed by 504 individuals, a truly impressive result.
Participants

Parishes

All Saints Chapel, Cornwall
Christ & Holy Trinity Church, Westport
Christ Church, Ansonia
Christ Church, Pomfret
Christ Church, Greenwich
Christ Church, Guilford
Christ Church, New Haven
Church of Our Saviour, Plainville
Church of the Holy Trinity, Middletown
Grace Church, Old Saybrook
Iglesia Betania Church, Stamford
L'Eglise de L'Epiphanie, Stamford
St. Alban's Church, Simsbury
St. Andrew's Church, Madison
St. Andrew's Church, Meriden
St. Andrew's Church, Kent
St. Andrew's Church, Milford
St. Barnabas' Church, Greenwich
St. James' Church, New London
St. James' Church, Glastonbury
St. James' Church, Danbury
St. James' Church, West Hartford
St. John's Church, Essex
St. John's Church, Niantic
St. John's Church, West Hartford
St. John's Church, Vernon
St. John's Church, Bridgeport
St. John's Church, New Milford
St. John's Church, Pine Meadow
St. John's Church, Salisbury
St. John's Church, Guilford
St. John's Church, Stamford
St. Luke's Church, Darien
St. Luke's Church, New Haven
St. Mark's Church, Mystic
St. Mark's Church, New Canaan
St. Mary's Church, Manchester
St. Michael's Church, Litchfield
St. Michael's Church, Naugatuck
St. Monica's Church, Hartford
St. Paul's Church, Wallingford
St. Paul's Church, Southington
St. Paul's Church, Windham
St. Paul's Church, Riverside
Participants

**Parishes**
St. Paul's Church, Fairfield
St. Paul's Church, Brookfield
St. Paul's on the Green, Norwalk
St. Peter's Church, South Windsor
St. Peter's Church, Hebron
St. Stephen's Church, East Haddam
St. Stephen's Church, Ridgefield
St. Thomas' Church, New Haven
St. Timothy, Fairfield
The Church of the Good Shepherd, Hartford
The Episcopal Church At Yale, New Haven
Todos Los Santos, Meriden
Trinity Church, Hartford
Trinity Church, Tariffville
Trinity Church, Brooklyn
Trinity Church, Southport
Trinity Church, Newtown
Trinity Church, Lakeville
Trinity Church, Torrington
Trinity Church, New Haven
Trinity Episcopal Church, Collinsville

**Individuals**
The Rt. Rev. Laura J. Ahrens
Joy Anderson
Maggie Breen
Barbara Casey
Barbara Curry
The Rev. Carlos de la Torre
The Rt. Rev. Ian T. Douglas
Jim Elrod
Maryann Doyle
The Rev. Rachel Field
Erin Flinn
The Rev. Tim Hodapp
Judy Holding
Anne Lynn
Bill Nickerson
Eliza Marth
Walden Moore
Sharon Pearson
Chuck Royce
The Rev. Rachel Thomas
Participants

**Focus Groups**
- Camp Washington Board of Directors
- Christ Church Cathedral Chapter
- Commission on Ministry
- Companions in Mission
- Deacons
- Disaster Response Ministry Network
- Board Members of Donations and Bequests
- Episcopal Church in Connecticut Staff
- Episcopal Church Women
- Faith Behind Bars and Beyond/New Life Journey
- Finance Committee
- Heads Up! Hartford
- Hispanic Ministry Network
- Holy Landers
- Living Local Joining God
- Mission Council
- North Central Region Leadership Team
- Northeast Region Leadership Team
- Northwest Region Leadership Team
- Social Justice and Advocacy
- South Central Region Leadership Team
- Southeast Region Leadership Team
- Southwest Region Leadership Team
- Standing Committee
- The Resolution 4/9 Working Group
- Women’s Ministry Network
FINDINGS

Please note, not every participant/group answered every question. Therefore, quantitative results are based only those who answered the specific question, and percentages may not equal 100% due to rounding. Unattributed statements are included to support opinions, attitudes, and perceptions expressed during interviews.
How does your parish/group participate in God’s mission in the community and what activities are you involved with?

- Addressing economic challenges (homelessness, hunger, basic needs, etc.)
- Serving immigrant communities
- Activism/Advocacy
- Spiritual development
- Refugee resettlement
- Education
- Addressing the opioid epidemic
- Sustainability/Environment
- Legal services

Parishes are active in their communities. A select few parishes indicated that they had little involvement in their community, and ministries that did exist were largely staff-driven; or, when asked what ministries existed at their parish, replied that individuals were very active in their community, but there were no or few church efforts.

*Other activities mentioned include global mission trips, non-violence efforts, interfaith work, collaborative faith formation, Celtic worship services, and Living Local Joining God.
Community Needs

What needs exist in your community?

- Addressing economic challenges (homelessness, hunger, basic needs, etc.)
- Activism/Advocacy
- Serving immigrant communities
- Other
- Addressing the opioid epidemic
- Education
- Refugee resettlement
- Sustainability/Environment
- Legal services

Some parishes noted that they were unsure of what needs existed in their community; others expressed that their congregation had a passion to make a difference but no direction.
Clergy and laity overwhelmingly described their parishes as places where people truly care about one another. People are generous with their time and want their church to thrive. In many parishes there is a nostalgia for crowded Sunday Schools and church pews, and anxiety regarding how to attract young families with demanding schedules.
Parish Strengths

The graph below consists of the most frequently mentioned parish strengths.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strength</th>
<th>Length</th>
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<tr>
<td>Lay leadership and volunteers</td>
<td>Long</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong community</td>
<td>Medium</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community outreach</td>
<td>Medium</td>
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<tr>
<td>Welcoming community</td>
<td>Medium</td>
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<tr>
<td>Music</td>
<td>Medium</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clergy/Staff</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diverse community</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facility</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth ministry</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faith-filled</td>
<td>Short</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finances</td>
<td>Short</td>
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Parish Challenges

The graph below consists of the most frequently mentioned parish challenges.

- Changing demographics
- Finances
- Facilities/Capital needs
- Developing lay leaders
- Parochialism
- What it means to be in a new missional age
- Decline in attendance
- Need for more clergy/staff
Parish Needs

How can your parish be strengthened?

- Additional clergy/staff
- Faith formation
- Facilities needs
- Communications / Technology infrastructure
- Youth ministry
- Lay training

Many participants indicated a desire for increased capacity for staff and clergy, as it would allow them to better address some of the challenges mentioned on the previous page.

E-Survey Results

- Youth ministry
- Lay training
- Faith formation
- Facilities needs
- Communications / Technology infrastructure
- Additional staff
ECCT is in the midst of its discovery of what it means to be a parish in a new missional age. How would you describe your parish’s level of awareness and investment in this idea? (On a scale of 1 to 5; 5 being very aware/invested, 1 not at all.) The chart below represents the mean response.
New Missional Age

ECCT is in the midst of its discovery of what it means to be a parish in a new missional age. How would you describe your parish’s level of awareness and investment in this idea? (On a scale of 1 to 5; 5 being very aware/invested, 1 not at all.) The chart below represents the distribution of responses.
 Representative Comments

“I think awareness and buy-in is low, but that is changing. We are trying to get people interested in finding God in the neighborhood, but it is difficult finding extra time and energy to educate on this.”

“I feel we are in a process where folks are hungry for change and an optimistic future. We’re still figuring our what works and what doesn’t, but that process feels like we’re moving toward something.”

“Our parish is a power participant with high involvement at Convention and Convocation. I think having clergy and vestry members involved is critical to a parish understanding the language and concepts of a new missional age.”

“The parish is hearing more and more about the Region and these concepts. The leadership is still getting comfortable around the concepts and changing culture.”

“We think this is great and trying to get our community to be more aware and wrestle with the gospel and what we are called to do. We can go much deeper.”
New Missional Age

Representative Comments

“Awareness is medium to low, but I understand building awareness takes time. We’ve talked about this at church, and while the language isn’t being adopted, many parishioners understand the realities.”

“I think we are still in very beginning stages, but I am seeing good participation in Convocations and clergy are meeting together more to discuss collaboration. We are still trying out what regional collaboration can look like. I think some of the language itself creates more questions than provides answers.”

“Our Vestry is somewhat aware and a few parishioners are involved with diocesan committees. We are open to collaboration, shared resources, and being mission focused, but need the tools to do so.”

“You can’t expect untrained lay leaders to do this by ourselves, and the demands on clergy are already too great. We need tools and a little bit of guidance and support.”
There are varying levels of awareness of the definition of a parish in a new missional age and the spiritual practices. Likewise, investment varies widely, as well. In general, awareness is higher amongst clergy and lay leadership, and lower among the “average parishioner,” but there remain lay leaders who are unfamiliar with the idea.

CCS believes the results indicated are higher than the actual level of awareness and investment that exists throughout the Episcopal Church in Connecticut. Those involved in parish interviews and completing the e-survey are more likely to be attuned to the activities of and messaging from ECCT and therefore more likely to have a passing understanding of the new missional age. This likely skews their perception of the existing awareness and investment among laity. It is important to note that the majority of parish interview respondents indicated that the average parishioner is likely to be completely unfamiliar with the concept of the new missional age. However, some participants reported a sense that folks would be invested in the idea, and indeed a subset of those argued that their parish has already embraced the idea of being a missional church before this language was used to describe it.
New Missional Age

Many recognize and support the idea of being a missional church, but the language is too new to have been fully adopted; some expressed that there is confusion about what it means to be “missional” and in a “new missional age.” Parishes that consider themselves to be already active in their communities view this as simply new branding/language. A few went even further and noted that they found it to be somewhat dismissive of work that has been happening at the parish level for a long time. Additionally, there is a conflation of outreach and what it means to be a parish in a new missional age; many or most believe that by being active in their community, they are a missional parish. Interestingly, 13 parishes mentioned that they had or were considering the exercise of “walking the neighborhood.”

Isolated parishes, parishes in transition, and parishes in dwindling membership present an opportunity for the Episcopal Church in Connecticut, in that they may be more willing to take risks or be uncomfortable. However, in parishes struggling with membership and pledge decline, sometimes the anxiety present prevents parishioners from focusing attention on the new missional age and its practices.

Many participants noted that the delivery of the good news of the new missional age must be personal. Many indicated that it was a face-to-face discussion or workshop that helped them to understand better and become energized by the new missional age and the spiritual practices basic to it. Participants expressed the importance of articulating examples and success stories of the results of trying on the spiritual practices.
New Missional Age

Nearly all participants understand that a cultural and demographic shift is happening in the church and that they need to adapt. However, many folks are still asking for a clear vision and goal as it pertains to being in a new missional age. Providing tools for parishioners to engage further in the ideas basic to a new missional age will be essential.
What is your overall perception of your relationship with the staff of the Episcopal Church in Connecticut?

- Very Positive: 21%
- Positive: 66%
- Neutral: 13%
- Negative: 0%

Many participants commented on the improving relationship their parishes had with ECCT, and some noted the accessibility of the Bishops as a contributing factor. Although some participants shared negative experiences, none of the interview groups and individuals who had the opportunity to respond to this question expressed an overall negative perception of their relationship with ECCT and its staff. Many mentioned the excellent work of Bishops, Canons, and staff, and expressed a universal desire to have more time with them. There is an appreciation for the path down which Bishop Ian is leading the Episcopal Church in Connecticut.
Do you feel a connection to the wider body of Christ?

Many parishes and individuals who feel connected to ECCT reported their feeling of connectedness stems from having local parishioners involved on various ECCT leadership committees or from working closely with ECCT during times of transition. A sense of regional identity and connectedness was stronger among parishes who are well represented at Convocations. Many felt a regional identity is slowly building, however many parishes still feel more connected to their local communities or to a “sub-region.”
How have you connected/interacted with others - churches, clergy, region missionary?

“The Convocation has been a good way for parishioners to connect with others in the Region. Our region missionary has also preached at our parish and attended some ministry meetings, which was a great way to get to know her and the work of the Regions.”

“A group of interfaith clergy meet regularly to discuss the needs of the community and explore ways we can collaborate. We’ve had shared services, volunteer days, and have marched together.”

“As a missionary, I reach out by phone and email. I preach on Sundays and hold forums open to whomever wants to join. I listen to their stories and what they love about their communities. I then try to pair parishes and people interested in the same things. I also communicate opportunities with other Region Missionaries.”

“We typically connect around things where we don’t have a critical mass. For example, we’ve combined youth groups for events and mission trips. We also support food banks and pantries with other parishes.”
Connection to the Body of Christ

What community partnerships and/or collaboration exists at your parish or group?

“Our congregation has always been involved in the community. A few ministries have grown into incorporated nonprofits, and there are lots of civic-minded parishioners.”

“Music and worship services are a major way we interact and connect with other parishes and denominations, including outdoor worship, services on Saturday, and Celtic services.”

“We are a resource to the community. We host AA and NA meetings, the Boys Scouts, the local garden club, and other community groups. We also host events with community health organizations to provide things like meditation and mindfulness courses, medical services, and HIV testing.”

“Our soup kitchen is the second largest in the state, so we interact with the community through that ministry.”

“We work with local social workers to provide hard goods, like backpacks, school supplies, clothes, etc. to those who need them. We also hold community dinners for anyone to join.”
Perception of the Region Structure

What is your general reaction to the creation of Regions?

- **Very Positive**: 42%
- **Positive**: 20%
- **Neutral**: 9%
- **Mixed**: 9%
- **Negative**: 3%

The above graph represents the aggregate results, including the reaction of focus groups, clergy and laity, and individuals. Focus groups expressed universally positive reactions to the creation of the Regions. Non-staff individuals were most likely to express wariness or a “wait and see” attitude. There is near unanimous support for the role of the Region Missionaries.
Perception of the Region Structure

Representative Comments

“I think we can do more together and generate new ideas through meeting people from other churches. The work that remains is to engage and empower.”

“I think the regions offer an opportunity to grow the ministry networks and get more people tapped into what is happening in ECCT.”

“The Regions don’t feel very relevant to many parishes, especially those in remote areas. In some ways, I feel the Regions create more work for people who are already overcommitted.”

“I think the Regions are helpful and spread awareness of opportunities to become involved. We still need to spread the word in order for this to go to the next level.”

“I think most Deaneries were not very active and had reached their end. The Regions and Convocations have grown and feel fairly relevant to many parishes.”
Perception of the Region Structure

Representative Comments

“*I don’t see the difference between deaneries and Regions, but I like that the Regions are resourced and there are missionaries. We are a border town in our region and do feel more connected to parishes outside our Region.*”

“*Regions help reinforce and widen ministry networks. It’s still early stages, but I see it helping parishes become part of a broader network.*”

“I don’t see Region structure has much impact on us directly. This could change, but the need isn’t visible to us. We are the most resourced Region in terms of people and assets, and this feels like the center wants local resources spread out regionally.”

“It’s in its early days but I think Regions are a great idea. I like getting to know people and making connections with other parishes. The regions encourage pride in ECCT.”

“The Regions weren’t bold enough; they are too similar to the deaneries. How is this going to be different?”
Perception of the Region Structure

In general, participants understood the need for the Region structure, but many lacked understanding of the goal in creating the Regions. Many noted that in some ways it seemed like the deaneries with a different name. It was often noted that the average parishioner has no knowledge of the Regions and their purpose; even among those familiar with the Region structure, who had met their Region Missionary, and even attended Convocation, there are some who lack an understanding of their purpose and the vision behind their creation. Select few participants were completely unfamiliar with the Regions.

Parishes that already collaborate with other denominations or nearby Episcopal parishes are struggling to see the need for the Region structure. Many recognize regional collaboration will be critical for small or struggling parishes, as well as more resourced parishes that may be starting to experience a decline in membership and pledges.

Some clergy and laity, regardless of parish size or current activity level, expressed concern for what Regions portend for time and resources needed to participate in the Region. Many identified a need to discern how the Region would benefit their own parish.

Some perceived a gain in momentum through the creation of the Regions and the hiring of Region Missionaries, but that momentum seems to be dissipating. Others noted that this process was an important inflection point and were anxious to see what next steps will be taken. Most are eager for some direction and want the Regions to have more structure and play a greater role in their work, both in the operations of their parishes and in their mission ministries. It was recommended that ECCT “dream big” in regards to the Regions and what they can do and be.
Most parishes and individuals have either met or worked with their region missionary, however many participants were unclear on the specific role or the job description of the region missionary.

It is evident from the needs assessment conversations that the current Region Missionaries are universally liked and commended for their work to date.
How the Regions can Empower

How can the Regions and the Region Missionaries better empower parishioners, parishes, Ministry Networks to participate in God's mission?

- Facilitate collaboration
- Facilitate communication
- Story-telling
- Education about Regions and new missional age
- Resource/asset mapping
- Expert consultants
- Shared staff
- Communications training
- Collaborative youth ministry
- Sharing best practices
How the Regions can Empower

E-Survey: What resources do you need in order to meet your parish’s needs, and to be more faithful to God’s mission in the world?

- Communications infrastructure
- Increased connection through the Regions
- Training/resources for mission and community ministries
- Asset/resource mapping
- Funding for local parish needs
- Practical resources regarding parish life
- Centralized/shared resources
- More digital media
- Other communications infrastructure
- Wi-fi in our parish
How the Regions can Empower

Representative Comments

“The Regions need to get people to dream big and have a sense of possibility for a future better than the one we have now. If we can believe in the resurrection, we can believe in alleviating hunger.”

“The Regions and Region Missionaries can strengthen the way we communicate and collaborate with each other. More awareness and education, and bandwidth for the Region Missionaries is needed for this to be successful.”

“If we can get people and parishes to volunteer together, worship together, and just be together, we will have a stronger church. Creating community beyond individual parish walls will make it easier for people to adopt new church homes if theirs close.”

“We want the regions to connect women through more fellowship events, storytelling, and creating safe spaces to have conversations. We want to lift up women's voices, ministries, and issues, and have clergy training on women's issues across ECCT.”
How the Regions can Empower

Representative Comments

“The Regions can help facilitate organic and bottom-up relationships by connecting parishes and individuals who are passionate about the same things.”

“The Regions could provide a structure that supports parish life, builds fellowship, and increases the impact and influence of our ministry and mission. I envision more shared staff and resources, bigger regional events that people are excited to attend, and greater connectivity and awareness of what is going on in our state.”

“Parishes can learn and grow from sharing stories, best practices, resources, and opportunities with each other, even on the practical things like shared bookkeeping services or gas purchasing.”

“I think people would be inspired and motivate by what’s going on across ECCT. The Regions should be a way for us to know what’s going on and which parishes and parishioners are ready and willing to collaborate.”
Other Findings of Note

Region Leadership Teams
In general, Region Leadership Teams are still figuring out their purpose and goals, but most enjoy the process, understand the purpose of the Regions, and are enthusiastic ambassadors of the new missional age. Notably, there was one Region Leadership Team that had a very difficult time answering the question, “What is your mission or purpose of your group, and what do you do when you get together?”

Episcopal Church Women
The Episcopal Church Women described their goal as “enriching women, spiritually, through both outreach and in-reach” and that they “live their faith through service.” Every member of the Board who attended was familiar with the idea of a new missional age. They expressed the desire to work more closely with Region Missionaries and to help facilitate ministries that originate in the Regions. They also expressed a desire to hear from ECCT how they can best be of service. They report that they are flexible and aren’t the type of organization that does things a certain way simply because that’s how it has always been done. They want to “step out into the neighborhoods, instead of waiting for people to come and fill our pews,” asking: “What does the neighborhood need?” ECW can be a resource for ECCT and the Regions moving forward in joining God’s mission in the community.
Other Findings of Note

**Heads Up! Hartford**
Heads Up! Hartford reported that they are going through the process of strengthening their board and would like to begin fundraising differently. Heads Up! encourages collaboration and connections between parishes, could be replicated across the state or within Regions, and is a vehicle for faith formation for youth; all characteristics that would place it in alignment with ECCT’s vision.

**Faith Behind Bars and Beyond, New Life Ministries, and Holy Landers**
A need exists for ministries that provide services to the broader secular community to better secure funding from non-parish and non-ECCT sources that build capacity and grow resources. Volunteer members highlighted assistance could be provided with identifying foundations that support human and social services and writing grants/completing grant applications. Members extrapolated that helping ministry networks that are eligible to explore and secure 501(c)3 nonprofit status could open the door to community funding opportunities.

**Spanish Language Speakers**
The need to more fully integrate Episcopalians who speak Spanish was important to both the Hispanic Ministry Network and select parish participants. Offering workshops in Spanish, as well as instant translation services, were two recommendations.
Other Findings of Note

Demand on Clergy Time/Resources
Participants of parish discussions, focus groups, and individual conversations mentioned the demand of clergy time and financial resources. Many indicated that the clergy conference was financially difficult for some priests; others indicated that clergy were being asked to do more with less time and fewer resources.

Struggling Parishes
Respondents do not wish to expend limited resources to keep struggling parishes open. This was coupled with the expressed need for “hospice” and a clearly defined plan for when parishes close or merge that treats parishioners with dignity and respect. Parishes with declining membership and decreasing pledges also seemed more open to shared regional resources as a way to lower their operational costs and offer more education, formation, fellowship, and mission opportunities. Some participants recognized regional fellowship-building opportunities can result in a greater likelihood that members of recently closed parishes will assimilate into neighboring ECCT parishes.
BECOMING A CHURCH IN A NEW MISSIONAL AGE
Becoming a Church in a New Missional Age

The desire to build relationship – among parishioners, parishes, Ministry Networks, Regions, and ECCT – was consistent throughout assessment discussions. From these discussions, CCS has identified four key recommendations through which programs and initiatives could be pursued to further ECCT's participation in God's mission:

- **Collaboration**: grow partnerships among people, parishes, and programs within and across Regions
- **Transformation**: help parishes join God’s mission in the neighborhood
- **Formation**: provide resources for the formation of disciples and apostles in a new missional age
- **Connection**: facilitate greater connection among Episcopalians in Connecticut

Participants are eager for next steps to be determined following the assessment. Many asked us when they would receive summary results of the survey, and indicated that it was important that momentum generated through the establishment of the Regions and hiring of Region Missionaries not be lost.
Collaboration

Bring greater clarity to the specific role and job description of the Region Missionaries who are called to catalyze, connect, convene, and build capacity. Clarity should be provided around their job description and what each of these verbs means specific to their work in parishes and Regions in a new missional age.

There is a desire to have assistance in developing ministry networks where stories, best practices, and resources can be shared. Greater levels of fellowship, efficiency, and impact could be generated by strengthening relationships and connectivity among ministries across ECCT, and the Region Missionaries are uniquely positioned to do this.

Promote the Regions as a vehicle for collaboration and increased relationship building, and consider expanding Region Missionaries’ capacity to work with parishes and parishioners. Region Missionaries, or other ECCT staff, should:

- Play a greater role in communicating among parishes and Regions
- Connect parishes and inspire collaboration between them
- Provide assistance to parishes in launching their ministries
- Facilitate workshops on beginning programs, volunteer management, communications, and other practical matters associated with being more active in the community
- Consider driving a Region-wide ministry in which parishes and individuals can participate
Transformation

Provide resources that will allow for the transformation of those parishes invested in joining God’s mission in the community. Participants in the needs assessment expressed a desire for further education about what it means to be a parish and a Church in a new missional age and the spiritual practices basic to it. They want more specifics regarding what it means to join God’s mission in the community. There is a strong desire to better understand the vision for the Episcopal Church in Connecticut.

Widely share a vision that includes:

- The broad adoption of the spiritual practices basic to a new missional age
- Increased collaboration through the Regions
- A Church that is more empowered to join God’s mission and take action in the world

Give examples of parishes trying on the spiritual practices and the vision of becoming a Church in a new missional age are related. Provide opportunities for parishioners to experience what it means to be a parish in a new missional age and “try on” the spiritual practices.

Strengthen parish leadership, administration, and operations through local and regional lay training and educational opportunities, including communications, education, coaching, workshopping, etc. This would serve to build agency among laity and develop the muscle of trying things on. Focus engagement efforts toward those who may not be previously involved or interested in the Regions, especially if clergy or lay leaders are vocal in support of the workshop.
Better utilize ECCT's physical spaces and resources to assist in the formation of apostles and disciples as ECCT pursues its vision of following Jesus into the neighborhood.

As the official camp and conference center of the Episcopal Church in Connecticut, ECCT should consider using a renovated Camp Washington as an incubator for enhanced Youth Ministry and adult faith formation programs. Consider conducting a visioning exercise for Camp Washington to determine how it can be maximized in the new missional age and determine what renovations/enhancements must be made to achieve this vision.

Trying things on in a new missional age requires a deeper understanding and relationship with language and practices associated with it. More opportunities to utilize the spiritual practices basic to the new missional age are needed to grow that understanding and build a confidence and skill set required to try things on. The mission of Christ Church Cathedral is to be a resource for apostleship in Hartford, ECCT, and beyond, and would be a natural home for modeling the exercise of listening to God's message, discernment, and taking action through trying things on at the parish and local level.

Further address the identified need to fund ministry creation, development, and sustainability. For some parishes, capital and operational needs hinder their ability to create or grow ministries, whether they are based around formation, fellowship, worship, or outreach. A ministry grant program could provide vital resources at the parish, regional, and diocesan level.
The desire for improved communications, communications training, additional tools for communication, etc., came up in every focus group, individual interview, and parish meeting. Participants expressed a desire to know what is happening across ECCT and with their partners in mission and fellowship. ECCT must develop communication methods that allow for parishioners, parishes, Ministry Networks, and Regions to find others working on similar ministries and communicate directly and efficiently. ECCT should consider developing, or making more-widely available, an asset and resource map that includes both mission-focused efforts and practical parish resources. It should capture programs that are happening at the parish level, Region level, and with Ministry Networks and ECCT; as well as contact information for the lay or clergy leaders. It should also include practical parish resources that could support potential collaborations, e.g., capacity of meeting spaces, available parking, commercial kitchens, etc., and local and regional professionals relevant to parish life.

Many suggestions regarding ways to connect with each other were mentioned, and CCS recommends ECCT:

- Improve the ECCT website as an informational, educational, and social networking hub
- Increase use of digital media, including podcasts, vlogs, and video messages from Bishops and Canons and other community leaders to parishes
- Utilize the Gospel and story-telling to communicate what it means to be in a new missional age
- Work with Region Missionaries to develop Region-specific communications plans
- Install wifi in every parish
- Continue to offer social media training to parishes

ECCT should also consider retaining a communications firm to conduct an audit and provide more specific guidance regarding next steps in enhancing communications.
Next Steps

Send a summary of this report to assessment participants.

Implement next steps offered in this report that can be achieved with existing resources. (E.g., offering clarity around the use of spiritual practices.)

Offer an update of the Needs Assessment process and recommendations at Convention and provide an update regarding next steps.

Consider how best to provide resources to parishes, Ministry Networks, and the Regions to accomplish the vision of joining Jesus in the neighborhood through enhanced programming and new initiatives. Provide opportunity for clergy and lay leadership to learn about options for parish-centered resourcing efforts.