



EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN CONNECTICUT

PARTICIPATING IN GOD'S MISSION

OVERVIEW TO REGION NEEDS ASSESSMENT FINAL REPORT FOLLOWING JESUS IN A NEW MISSIONAL AGE

INTRODUCTION

Earlier this year, the Working Group created by Resolutions #4 and #9 of the last two Annual Conventions of the Episcopal Church in Connecticut (ECCT) hired the consulting agency, CCS, to conduct a "Region Needs Assessment."

In April and May, CCS's team met with over **350 Episcopalians** in Connecticut from **65 parishes, 26 focus groups, and four Region Convocations**, including **20 individual** interviews. CCS also conducted an e-Survey in which **504 people** participated. The consultants asked:

- How do we understand this new missional age and how are we engaged in God's mission in our neighborhoods?
- How do we perceive the wider diocese, including our Regions?
- What do we need to engage more fully in God's mission locally and across Connecticut?

FOUR KEY RECOMMENDED AREAS OF ACTION

Taking into consideration all of the conversations and survey results, CCS learned that parishes, worshiping communities, and individuals needed more resources in four key areas of action:

1. **Connecting:** To facilitate greater communication among Episcopalians in Connecticut.
2. **Collaborating:** To nurture cooperation among people, parishes, and initiatives within and across Regions.
3. **Forming:** To provide training and experiential opportunities to form disciples and apostles in this new missional age.
4. **Transforming:** To support parishes that are becoming more engaged in God's mission in the neighborhood.

The following page provides an overview of the questions, and the top responses, by the participants in the in-person conversations and e-Survey. Read the [full report](#) for more details and comments from participants.

THE DATA

Q How does your parish/group participate in God's mission in the community and what activities are you involved with? What needs exist in your community?

The number one way that most parishes are engaged is by addressing economic challenges such as homelessness, hunger, and other basic needs. People also named a variety of other ways, from refugee resettlement to beginning efforts to address the opioid epidemic.



Q How would you characterize your parish community: "life-giving and full of vitality"; "needs some shaking up"; or, "we have a long way to go"? What are your parish strengths and challenges? How can your parish be strengthened?

Most people said their parishes are "life-giving and full of vitality" and named lay leadership as a top strength. They said that changing demographics (*decreasing members and the increasing age of parishioners*) was the biggest challenge and that parishes can be strengthened through increased staffing and greater faith formation.



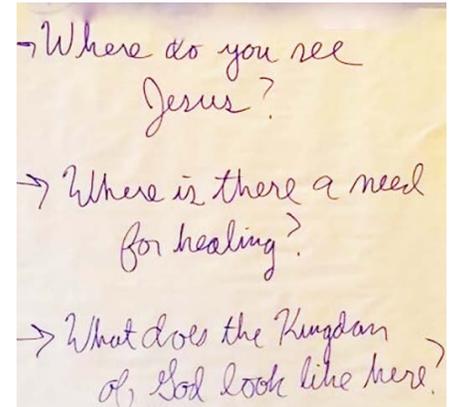
Q ECCT is in the midst of its discovery of what it means to be a parish in a new missional age. How would you describe your parish's level of awareness and investment in this idea?

About 60-65% of those interviewed have heard about the "new missional age" and approximately the same percentage say they're interested and invested in the concept, even as many in our pews are unfamiliar with missional language and ideas. Nearly all participants reported knowing that a cultural and demographic shift is taking place in the church and wider society.



Q What is your overall perception of your relationship with the staff of the Episcopal Church in Connecticut? Do you feel a connection to the wider body of Christ (ECCT and Regions)? What is your general reaction to the creation of Regions?

79% of respondents felt positive or very positive about their relationship to the bishops, canons, and staff of the Episcopal Church in Connecticut and appreciated their work. About 53% said they felt connected to Regions. Considering the Region structure only launched in 2016, this is a remarkable start. Also promising, over 55% of respondents had a positive or very positive perception of the Regions. In comments and conversation, people expressed a great appreciation for the Region Missionaries and most reported having met or worked with them.



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

Respondents said that Regions can best empower participation in God's mission by facilitating collaboration and communication. People named communication infrastructure, increased connection through the Regions, and training/resources for mission as the principal ways to achieve this.

BACKGROUND TO THE ASSESSMENT

What ECCT has learned from these CCS interviews and survey in 2018 is consistent with what we heard from earlier interviews and listening sessions over the past four years. This previous work included:

- the year-long ECCT “rebranding” effort in 2014;
- two years of research and discernment by the Taskforce for Reimagining the Episcopal Church in Connecticut (TREC-CT) in 2014-2015;
- Resolution #4 in 2016 (“Next Steps in God’s Mission”) and subsequent Listening Sessions at Region Convocations;
- Resolution #9 in 2017 (“Assessing Our Resources for Participating in God’s Mission”) and the follow-up work with CCS.

[Read more background details](#)

DECISIONS AHEAD

On September 8, 2018, the Leadership Gathering (quarterly meeting of the combined Mission Council, Standing Committee, Commission on Ministry, and Trustees for Donations and Bequests) considered the CCS report. In addition, Region leaders met at The Commons on September 12, 2018 for a review and discussion of the findings. The full report is now available to all participants in the assessment. The report, along with this overview, is submitted to our 2018 Annual Convention, fulfilling the call of the 2017 Annual Convention to “report back to the 234th Annual Convention as to its findings, including the results of the Region Needs Assessments, and any other recommendations to assist the Episcopal Church in Connecticut in its next steps in God’s mission.”

Over the next year we will share the findings from the needs assessment broadly across the Episcopal Church in Connecticut and make some specific decisions about our common life on such questions as:

- How do we collectively go forward in this new missional age as Episcopalians in Connecticut?
- Can parishes, worshiping communities, Regions, and Ministry Networks name and quantify the specific resources that they need in the four areas of actions identified in the report?
- What are we willing to commit to, individually and corporately, in order to follow Jesus more faithfully?

The Working Group overseeing this Region Needs Assessment wants to thank each person, parish, and group that participated in the assessment. We give “glory to God whose power, working in us, can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine: Glory to God from generation to generation in the Church, and in Christ Jesus for ever and ever.” (Ephesians 3:20,21)