

The Zacchaeus Project:

*Discerning Episcopal Identity at the
Dawn of the New Millennium*

**A 50th Anniversary Project of
The Episcopal Church Foundation**

Co-Directors

**Dr. Thomas P. Holland
The Rev. Dr. William L. Sachs**

*Project managed by
Cornerstone*

June 1999

Contents

Letter from the President	Pg. 2
Summary of Findings	Pg. 4
Section I. Introduction	Pg. 6
A. Overview of Project	Pg. 6
B. Methodology	Pg. 7
C. Emphasis on Laity	Pg. 7
D. Important Questions	Pg. 8
Section II. Findings	Pg. 9
A. A Strong Commitment to Worship and Tradition	Pg. 9
1. Centrality of Worship	Pg. 10
2. Beliefs and Doctrines	Pg. 11
3. A Powerful Calling	Pg. 13
B. Creative Ferment and Vitality in Local Congregations	Pg. 15
1. Pulling Together	Pg. 15
2. Sharing a Religious Journey	Pg. 18
3. A Sense of Mission Leads to Outreach and Evangelism	Pg. 20
4. Education	Pg. 23
5. Leadership	Pg. 24
C. Tensions in the Church	Pg. 27
1. In Cultural Change	Pg. 27
2. In Beliefs	Pg. 29
3. In Leadership	Pg. 32
4. In Christian Education	Pg. 34
5. In Structures beyond Congregations	Pg. 36
6. In Linkages	Pg. 39
D. Embracing Diversity and Change	Pg. 41
1. Women in Leadership	Pg. 41
2. Wide Acceptance of BCP, Worship, and Practices	Pg. 42
3. Diversity in Congregations	Pg. 43
Section III. Sharing our Episcopal Journey of Faith	Pg. 47
A. Structure in Changing Context	Pg. 48
B. Shifts in Spirituality	Pg. 49
C. Hopes and Challenges for the Future	Pg. 50
Section IV. Appendix	Pg. 53
Section V. Acknowledgements	Pg. 59

Summary of Findings

A. Commitment to Worship and Tradition

- The Prayer Book and liturgy emphasizing the Eucharist have become core dimensions of Episcopal identity and are viewed as central to peoples' lives and the life of congregations.
- Living with questions of faith and tolerating ambiguities in beliefs are common patterns among many Episcopalians.
- For most Episcopalians, their profound sense of community thrives through their calling to follow Christ together inspiring a sense of mission and outreach.
- An emphasis on both affirming tradition and welcoming innovation is a consistent feature of Episcopal congregations.

B. Creative Ferment and Vitality in Local Congregations

- Episcopalians celebrate a powerful feeling of “pulling together” with a sense of common purpose and mutual support.
- A heightened emphasis on worship, and especially on the sacraments, has accompanied the increased emphasis on the role of the laity. Though its implementation may fall short of perfection, this ideal of shared ministry is firmly held by many Episcopalians.
- Energy for outreach, evangelism, and Christian education is widely apparent.
- A clear sense of shared ministry of both clergy and lay leadership in local churches has been an important fruit of the Episcopal Church's shift in emphasis over the past fifty years.

C. Tensions in the Church

- Difficult questions related to sexuality, doctrinal clarity, and other volatile issues, are not distracting local congregations. When these issues surface, members often seek ways to engage them with thoughtfulness and Christian understanding.
- On the other hand, these issues do affect many congregations' perceptions of wider Church structures.
- Among the most difficult of all congregational challenges are conflicts with clergy and a widespread perception that effective leadership is absent.
- The linkages between local congregations and wider structures are seen as ineffectual and growing weaker. There is widespread confusion about the roles and functions of bishops,

and financial support from local congregations to diocesan and national structures is in sharp decline.

D. Embracing Diversity and Change

- The increasing role of women as ordained and lay leaders is not an issue for most Episcopalians.
- A major challenge to the Church today is to draw on both its Christian traditions and its search for contemporary spirituality in a way that will strengthen Christian community.
- Local congregations seek to be inclusive and to affirm different cultures but recognize the challenges inherent in diversity issues.

Zacchaeus: The View from the Tree

He entered Jericho and was passing through it.
A man was there named Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was rich. He was trying to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was short in stature. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree to see him, because he was going to pass that way. When Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, hurry down, for I must stay at your house today." So he hurried down and was happy to welcome him.

Luke 19: 1-6

Section One: Introduction

Zacchaeus

About 2000 years ago in the city of Jericho, a short man named Zacchaeus climbed up in a sycamore tree so that he could get a clear view of Jesus. What motivated Zacchaeus to climb that tree? Being short, he had become accustomed to having to work for a clear view when there was a crowd. But there were other factors. His search for a vantage point may have been a longing – a search for change and a different and better perspective for his life. With this view an astonishing new possibility arose. He saw Jesus. That perspective became life-giving.

Something similar may be said for the Episcopal Church. The Zacchaeus Project, like its namesake, has been **a search for what it means to be Episcopalian and how this Church actually works at the grassroots where its foundation lies**. Although the Zacchaeus research team was uncertain what it would discover, with perspective it has found abundant sources of new life and challenges for the future.

Overview of the Project

The fact of change in the Church is undeniable; but what has been its true dimensions? To uncover what it actually means to be an Episcopalian today, The Episcopal Church Foundation in 1998 commissioned a study it titled The Zacchaeus Project. The occasions for this initiative were the fiftieth anniversary of the Foundation's beginning, the early stages of a new Presiding Bishop's tenure, and the end of one millennium and beginning of another. The study investigated how Episcopalians at the grassroots level currently view themselves and their Church. Directed by an Episcopal lay person and sociologist, Thomas P. Holland of the University of Georgia, and a parish priest and historian, William L. Sachs, Rector of St.

Matthew's Church, Wilton, Connecticut, the study took an open-ended approach to inquiry about the Church's life.

Methodology

With the guidance of a national advisory panel, nine diverse dioceses were identified and used as sites for intensive interviews: Central Florida, Massachusetts, North Carolina, Texas, West Missouri, Kansas, Minnesota, Nevada, and Los Angeles. Five interviewers from across the country, all Episcopalians, three of whom are priests, one a historian, and one a sociologist, assisted the project's co-directors in gathering qualitative data. The largest segment of the project's data result from their experiences in hearing lay Episcopalians in congregational groups recount their experiences of the Church.

Meeting with approximately 2,000 people in 250 separate individual or focus group interviews representing nearly five percent of Episcopal congregations, the interviewers used a set of questions addressing three basic themes in each group's experience of the Episcopal Church: success, failure, and the future. The goal of this interview process was to:

- tell stories about how Episcopalians work together – both successes and failures;
- describe how they view their Church locally and beyond;
- identify what sort of resources they utilize; and
- articulate how they see their futures.

Underlying these categories were basic issues of common faith and life and an opportunity to assess the sense in which the Church's identity as a faith community is changing. In addition to data drawn from lay people in the target dioceses, focus groups were organized in other locations with specialized groups, including seminarians, clergy, young adults, and residents of an Episcopal retirement community. The data drawn from these group discussions was supplemented by quantitative information secured from independent statistical researchers. More specific information on the project's sources, initial questions, and methodology, as well as a complete presentation of the statistical findings can be found in this report's appendices.

Emphasis on Laity

The Church's identity rests largely with its membership, and for this reason, the Zacchaeus interview process focused on lay people in local Episcopal congregations. Studies of Episcopal identity typically have analyzed the Church through the eyes of theologians and bishops. In general these constructs have reflected advocacy of one or another ideal of Church life

with only select reference to data drawn from actual Church life. Thus ideals often mingled uncertainly with realities.

A few years ago an Episcopal priest and scholar, the late James Hopewell, realized what should have been apparent. Not only are congregations the basis of Christian life, they embody *“an abundant system of language and meaning.”* *“I concluded,”* Hopewell continued in the introduction to his book, Congregation (Fortress, 1987), *“that a group of people cannot regularly gather for what they feel to be religious purposes without developing a complex network of signals and symbols and conventions.”* This seemingly obvious fact had nearly been lost among mainline church leaders. It had become instinctive to see most local congregations as islands of provincialism and prejudice. Ecclesiastical identity, it became easy to presume, lay at the top of the denominational structure where church leaders articulated sophisticated positions and programs which would enlighten the ordinary members. For decades mainline American denominations, including the Episcopal Church, viewed themselves in hierarchical terms, not unlike major American corporations. To be closer to the top was to be nearer the Church’s true sources of identity. What was written about congregations consisted mostly of laudatory but unreflective histories of particular places which Church leaders generally ignored.

However, the simple fact that the Church’s lay members represent the vast majority of its numbers should not be overlooked. The role or importance of bishops and other clergy is not intended to be diminished; nor is it intended to demean the Church’s diocesan and national structures in which both clergy and laity give dedicated service. But popular and scholarly perspectives on the Episcopal Church often have equated it with its official structures and designated leadership at the diminution of the lay perspective.

Important Questions

This report will lead the reader to reflect on a series of important questions.

- What draws people to the Episcopal Church and sustains their involvement in its various ministries?
- What core commitments are shared and how are differences handled?
- What distinctive religious perspective does the Episcopal Church cultivate and how does that shape its formation?
- How are spiritual and organizational resources used to carry out ministries?
- How can Episcopalians embrace new spiritual forms while preserving the best of Episcopal traditions?
- What are the growth areas of the Church?

- How are congregations connected/disconnected with wider Church structures?
- What are the major challenges facing the Church and what preparations are needed to deal with these challenges?
- How are ministries fostering effective leadership for the future?

The findings provided in this report should inform Episcopalians at all levels of the Church as they envision the future together.

While this report summarizes the findings from those conversations, it should be seen as an invitation to others to continue the dialogue about Episcopal identity and vocation. In what ways are your own experiences similar to or different from those noted here? What are the implications of your views on the issues addressed here for the future of our Church?

From the perspective of this project, it may be possible to assess what holds together one American religious tradition. In the midst of obvious conflicts and uncertainties, is the Church weak or strong? Is the future direction of the Church clear and is there commitment to it? These data offer new insight.

Section Two: Findings

Like Zacchaeus seeking Jesus, the people we interviewed were eager to meet and share their stories of success, failure, and the future. From these interviews emerged key findings.

- A. Episcopalians are committed to worship and an Anglican tradition that binds them in Christian community and forms a spiritual framework for personal growth and ministry.**
- B. Creative ferment and vitality characterizes Episcopal life in local congregations.**
- C. Profound tensions are impacting the life and relationship among congregations and judicatories.**
- D. Episcopalians are successfully embracing diversity and changes in the life of their congregations.**

A. A Commitment to Worship and Tradition

What resulted from Zacchaeus' impulsive sprint to the sycamore tree? Did he simply gain momentary advantage to witness a public event but yet retain his anonymity and ability to return to the habitual patterns of his life? Not at all! Jesus recognized Zacchaeus and called him down

from the tree. After he saw Jesus, Zacchaeus realized that a new kind of commitment could give him the purpose he had sought. Among Episcopalians today there is a similar progression. In seeing and encountering Jesus, Episcopalians are finding a deep pattern of commitment to Him and to the Church through sacramental liturgy and worship practices.

The Prayer Book and the liturgy emphasizing the Eucharist have become core dimensions of Episcopal identity. **Over 95 percent of respondents in both independent surveys and interviews agreed that the Eucharist, liturgy, and the Prayer Book were central to the lives of their congregations.** Most Episcopalians see these practices as central to their lives and to the life of their congregation.

Centrality of Worship

The emphasis on worship with the Eucharist as its center is clearly understood and frequently voiced by respondents.

- *“The weekly celebration of the Eucharist is the major component of Episcopal identity”* members of one West Coast congregation announced.
- *“Worship is the thing I think about,”* a staff member at a nearby congregation remarked. *“The worship here has been revitalized. We now often see newcomers cite worship as what attracted them.”*

For a few newcomers, Episcopal *“liturgical traditions are complex and hard to pick up,”* especially for the numbers of persons now active in Episcopal churches who grew up in other religious traditions.

- A convert from a more fundamentalist church recalled his gradual absorption into the Church’s worship life. *“After a decade I can finally begin to really understand why Holy Week and Easter are the center of our faith. The Vigil has become very powerful for me. It is robust; it entails risk.”*
- Commenting on what was uniquely Episcopal about a congregation they had visited, several seminary students replied without hesitation. *“It is very Eucharistic. It is all about the Table.”*
- The feeling of joining with others in an open-ended faith journey was also a powerful lure for the members of another congregation. *“I think there’s a real sense here of embracing Episcopal tradition; that we are Episcopalians is really important here. There is a real love for the denomination. Compared to some other places, it’s such an open-minded place with a spectrum of thought. This is the place I’ve chosen to take my faith journey in; if it wasn’t here I’d be in some real trouble.”*

- “*We are Christians who happen to be Episcopalians in our tradition,*” was an opinion offered with some regularity. But during the same conversation, members of the group were certain of their loyalty to the Church. “*The Episcopal Church has a long history and many rich traditions that shape our liturgy. That is our common ground. Also, it doesn’t discourage thinking, facing your doubts, and struggling with them. I believe that is a major attraction. It certainly has been a major part of my growth.*”

Episcopalians also tend to be fascinated with early Christian experience and cite it in broad ways as their ideal of faith and common life. The impressions that have been raised by this fascination have had a lasting imprint. **Episcopalians find the images of an intimate community of worship and ministry to be formative.** These images enhance our sense of the importance of living out our faith in community. As with Zaccheus, Christ comes to have meals with us as we are, and being in His presence changes our life.

Beliefs and Doctrines

Being Episcopalian means several things. *The Book of Common Prayer*, the centrality of the Eucharist, and the ministry of all baptized persons have become core dimensions of our identity. While a few people still miss the *1928 Prayer Book*, the new one has become widely accepted and valued as a strong foundation. **The Prayer Book is seen as central to the congregation by over 95 percent of respondents.**

- “*Because of our Prayer Book, you can go anywhere in the country and feel right at home in the worship services,*” said many respondents.
- “*That was a traumatic time for this church,*” recalled several seniors. “*We lost some members, and even those of us who stayed really missed the regular Morning Prayer service. Now the young folks just assume this Prayer Book has always been used, and I suppose they don’t need to hear about all the conflict we went through to get here.*”

It is important to remember that **the faith of the Episcopal Church –and of the Anglican Communion generally – has never been reliant upon adherence to specific doctrines such as those upheld by other Christian denominations.** For most Episcopalians, it is clear that the imposition of some sort of doctrinal uniformity would confound their revered sense of being a diverse people of God on a shared religious journey. Many Episcopalians, past and present, have not only tolerated some ambiguity in the Church’s beliefs but have even cherished the opportunities for searching and questioning it has provided. At a time when many

Americans define themselves as spiritual seekers, one of the Episcopal Church's attractions may be the extent of its openness to such a quest.

While changes in practices and assumptions have been troubling to some, newcomers to the Episcopal church from other denominations often note how the liturgy quickly has become a rich source for deepening their understanding of Christian traditions, roots, and symbols. Such features as regular reading of Scripture, repentance and forgiveness, passing the peace, focusing on Christ's presence in the Eucharist instead of on a preacher, participation by the laity, and the liturgical symbols and calendar, are held up as enriching worship and contributing to spiritual growth of numerous respondents. Younger women also note the importance to them of seeing women in positions of liturgical leadership.

In a few sites, however, participants voiced dismay over the Episcopal Church's tolerance for what they saw as too wide a range of views and beliefs. Some stances, such as denying the resurrection or advocating acceptance of homosexuality, fall outside the boundaries of the historic Christian faith, they stress, and Episcopal leadership has substituted political correctness for biblical truths.

- *“God established standards in this world, and we have to live with them. We do want to be embracing, but we must do so within God's rules and in obedience to His commandments. We will love those people whom we oppose at arm's length, but we can't minister with them. We are called to obedience and discipleship, not to popularity or acceptance of whatever's trendy. The Bible has already told us God's view of this world, and we must be faithful witnesses to that truth. It sets us apart as Christians,”* explained one evangelical seminarian.
- *“Do you believe in what the creeds say, or not? If you do, we are united, but if you don't, then your foundation is gone and we part company,”* said another.
- *“Our national church is being unfaithful to the Bible when it just accepts those who preach things that deny God's word to us,”* worried a member of another group. *“We can't be faithful to Him if we accept as leaders those who deny His word and commandments. Christ does expect obedience to his instructions, such as the Great Commission, once we become His disciples. Becoming disciples and helping others become disciples is what we are all about. I'm sorry the national church and our bishops have forgotten that, but we certainly won't. Their disobedience is pushing us out, but we will be faithful to God, whatever the cost.”*

It has always been difficult to define Episcopal belief with finality. Living with questions is a concept that many Episcopalians endorse. Yet this sense of ambiguity need not imply a

disregard for basic Christian doctrine. At one level the Church historically and continuously has affirmed its allegiance to core Christian beliefs. For instance, it requires its ordinands to affirm publicly their conviction that Holy Scripture is the inspired Word of God and contains all things necessary to salvation. It should not be surprising then that Zacchaeus interviewers generally found that traditional theological views prevail among members of our Church. While Episcopalians typically distance themselves from fundamentalism and literal interpretations of some accounts in Scripture, they are clear in affirming Jesus as the Son of God and consistently refer to Him as their savior, exemplar, and guide. In worship Episcopalians continue to recite one or another of the ancient creeds, typically the Nicene, and while interpretations of such key concepts as the Incarnation and the Resurrection may vary, their centrality is affirmed.

A Powerful Calling

When asked by Zacchaeus Project interviewers who they felt called to be, many replied that they were “*called to be God’s people in this neighborhood.*” The important point here is that ordinary Episcopalians are finding a new vitality in their local congregations. The powerful feeling of “pulling together” – of intensely local loyalty – is indeed something new, and with strong spiritual underpinnings. The patterns of working together in local churches that it encourages, and the kind of search for connections that emerges from it, indicate a new sense of commitment to the Church.

- St. Luke’s Church in the western United States, provides rich evidence of this commitment. Over the past five years, it has experienced phenomenal growth after several years of decline. As they reflected on this breath-taking experience, they were convinced that their success was an outgrowth of their being led by the Holy Spirit into a new vision of what the congregation could be. In describing the deepening of their spiritual lives individually and collectively, they acknowledged that they were continually stretched. “*We must continue to grow and to ask the tough questions,*” one man poignantly commented as others in the group nodded energetically.

A liberal congregation, St. Luke’s nevertheless has developed regular, honest dialogue with a nearby Episcopal Church that is more conservative. “*The experience invited us into story-telling and dealing with differences in a loving way – learning to love people whose opinions were diametrically opposed to our own.*” They sensed that they were being led “*to live on the edge*” in following Christ. For St. Luke’s people, this meant that who they are and what they believe as Christians is linked to a sense of common struggle and journey. Despite this apparent clarity, they willingly

accepted a certain ambiguity in explaining their beliefs and identity because their sense of common journey was based on the conviction that *“we’re a church called to continuously live with questions.”*

Blends of personal spirituality and common conviction are apparent all across the Church. This ability to form a deep sense of shared commitment out of individual quests accounts for much of the Church’s grassroots strength. Many respondents see themselves as a people on a journey, and are clear and consistent in identifying Jesus Christ as their guide.

- *“Somehow, underneath it all, we are all called to follow Jesus,”* the members of a southern focus group announced.
- A suburban congregation, like most, measured success in its life by the extent to which its members participate. *“There’s a kind of interdependence that’s growing as we grow,”* one lay leader noted. *“I don’t think anyone, including the newcomers, would say this is a cliquey church.”* Asked what they as a church were called to be, members of this focus group answered almost in unison: *“we’re called to be leaders – to participate, grow, give things a try.”*
- When asked what their recent experiences had taught them, the members of another congregation had a ready answer: *“when Christ calls us to do something, He will provide the resources, if we will be faithful and follow Him.”* Another person in the group added, *“we are on a journey following Christ, not just trying to be Episcopalians. We are disciples of Christ. And that takes many forms.”*

To be an Episcopalian today, many would agree, entails patience with a certain level of incompleteness in one’s belief within broadly orthodox limits for the sake of asking what God would have them do next. **Their belief centers on the sense of being a people that worship God and follow Christ because they feel called to discover for themselves the meaning of discipleship.** The sense of being called, of being on a shared “journey,” and of common “struggle” are typical points of reference today. Such self-understanding is a key feature of our Church’s distinctiveness. Certainly other Christian churches include the ideal of being called as a diverse people on a common journey. But for many Episcopalians at this time, this ideal has virtually acquired the importance of a creed. **An emphasis on both affirming tradition and welcoming innovation is a consistent feature of Episcopal life and offers an important clue to our identity.**

To be sure, there are Episcopalians who seek a greater doctrinal clarity than they feel their Church’s leaders usually offer. But it is also apparent that many Episcopalians largely affirm

the Church's direction. They prize their sense that the Church is willing to consider different voices and perspectives.

With great conviction, **most Episcopalians state that their profound sense of community exists not for its own sake, and certainly not for the sake of institutional loyalty alone. Their calling to follow Christ together inspires a sense of shared mission.** *"We are called to be the presence of Christ through serving others in need in this area,"* was a widely held conviction. For some Episcopalians this calling takes priority over denominational loyalty.

Questions for Discussion

1. A strong theme in this report is the importance of the Eucharist and traditional forms of worship in the Episcopal Church. In what ways is worship important and life-giving in your congregation? In other words, how does worship impact the life of your congregation?
2. Among many Episcopalians there is a new feeling of working together, as evidenced by some of the patterns we discovered. What patterns do you see in your situation? What impacts are new forms of cooperation having for you and others?
3. An important theme discovered in this project concerned the variety of ways in which Episcopalians unite a shared sense of faith and worship with a collective sense of purpose. How does your congregation sense a vocation or calling? How is vocation different from mission or purpose?
4. Though the Episcopal Church affirms its allegiance to core Christian beliefs, it can be said that the doctrines of the Episcopal Church are sometimes difficult to define with any finality. How does this sense of ambiguity affect the faith formation of your congregation? Is it viewed as a strength or a weakness?

B. Creative Ferment and Vitality in Local Congregations

Pulling Together

Most Episcopalians are feeling a sense of togetherness in their local congregations. For Episcopalians today, "pulling together" entails far more than developing successful projects, despite the importance of such initiatives. "Pulling together" at its deepest level entails seeking

and finding a deep sense of common purpose and mutual support. At the grassroots, numerous Episcopal churches are pulling together in shared efforts.

- One lay leader in a congregation in the Northeast United States captured this sense of how Episcopalians are joining with one another in new common endeavors. *“The development of relationships that are significant was evidence of our success. I saw it in terms of group growth as well as personal growth, and the opportunities for service that came with that growth.”*
- Members of a church in a southern state proudly described their recent success at working together in a capital funds drive. *“We greatly needed money to repair this old church and expand our parking area. There are so many people coming in that we’ve long since exceeded our capacity.”* The gratifying result was that *“we far exceeded the consultants’ advice and even our own goal. We don’t have a lot of wealthy families, so we didn’t follow the rule that you have to get the bulk of the money up front from a few people. Ours was just the opposite – the bulk of the money came from small contributors. As the money came in we saw many people hard at work on a vision. The whole process was a time of great growth in faith, seeing it in action. We grew in our readiness to trust God and each other.”* When asked what accounted for the successes they had realized, members of this congregation saw that working together was paramount. *“We really listen to one another, respect our differences, and come to conclusions much easier than I ever expect. We hang in there together and work through difficult problems. There’s a deep sense of connectedness among us.”*
- At a church in a western state, one man described how a Bible study group at the church supported him in a time of family crisis. *“I asked for their prayers, and everybody immediately prayed. It brought me to tears. It was the tenderness and care and expression of love by these people for our family, some of whom only know us from seeing us at church. It is the outpouring of care and love that permeates this place.”*

Typically, **the experience of coming together arises in the midst of a shared sense of congregational activity**, as is so often the case when Episcopalians envision revitalizing their local communities.

- In only a few years, the leader of an urban ministry program based in a local congregation had galvanized educational efforts that now draw support from other churches, urban as well as suburban. Yet she was reluctant to take personal credit for

the success. *“The reason I see it is a success is because it is not based on the sole striving of one individual person. It has been a kind of process-oriented program development. We had a committee in process, and we also gathered a lot of information from outside of the committee: gender-wise, geographic-wise, and racial and class data.”* The sense of process she described had begun with a small group of people but steadily expanded to include an elaborate network of church people from various Episcopal congregations.

But challenges resulting from change can often impact that sense of drawing together. Managing key transitions in congregational life is a good example.

- *“We recently brought in an interim rector. Our former rector had been with us for fourteen years, so this really was a big change. For a while there, we were rudderless with no rector. The congregation recognizes now that the interim rector brought us through this big change.”*
- A participant in this focus group from a neighboring congregation recalled a similar experience. *“Our rector had been with the congregation for thirty years. After he left, the search process took longer than we thought it would. But eventually we called a new rector, and now it is a totally different congregation. Previously the people felt unsure, but now with greater confidence we are doing the job of the church and feel that much will happen with our new rector. We are growing by leaps and bounds. There is also much new enthusiasm between the congregation and community groups.”*

A feeling of drawing together also pervades the experiences of congregations that must face painful conflicts and losses.

- One western state congregation had to address the horrendous reality of a rector’s misconduct. To compound the matter, the former rector had also sown dissension among lay leaders before the first allegations surfaced. With little reservoir of trust, and the fresh challenge of overcoming enormous pain, the congregation nevertheless went to work. Although some church members left, most of its leaders committed themselves to the congregation’s future. The successful conclusion of a recent building program attested to the progress they had made. With progress a new sense of pulling together was apparent. *“The building program reflected a new spirit of cooperation present in the parish. We discovered a new working together among ourselves. After all the tensions we had to overcome, we now have new harmony, sharing, and mutual respect,”* one man stated. Then a woman in the group added,

“we now see ourselves as the Episcopal Church in this town. We’re a community of searching people. We see ourselves as a gathering place, a center for community. And, of course, we want to be a place for reconciliation and acceptance. My favorite thing about our church is that little sign outside that says, ‘the Episcopal Church welcomes you.’”

- At one northeastern congregation, it was an anticipated event that failed. *“The church did a rummage sale, and we failed. It was on a Saturday, and it was a lousy day. We felt bad because people had put a lot of time into it. All things considered there’s gotta be a better way.”*

As this experience demonstrates, **the sense of working together which Episcopalians now express is commonly rooted in a commitment to faith, community, and ministry in a given place.**

Sharing a Religious Journey

Many Episcopalians regularly express a sense of being on a shared religious journey. In a way that transcends any ideological divide, they believe that their personal faith has drawn them into building a faith community with others.

- In one site on the West Coast, the link between personal spirituality and shared beliefs and tasks appeared clearly in the following exchanges. It began when one man described his personal struggle. *“God is calling me to accept myself, with all my flaws, and to get away from guilt. To move toward openness.”*
A woman quickly replied, *“what you’re asking, along spiritual lines, is really vital for us. I wonder, is the vestry so spiritually oriented?”*
Another woman, currently a warden, then added, *“I feel that, for the results, we are being led. There was a guiding light. And I prayed before, during, and after vestry meetings. And I kept wondering, ‘why did God put me here?’ And I tried to listen to the others. The vestry as a whole became very clear about its spiritual dimension, and the results confirmed the emphasis. So, is our church better today than it was three years ago – absolutely! Are there more young people – yes. Is there more vitality – yes. You can say ‘yes’ across the board.”*
- Another congregation in a small southeastern United States town, appears to be a rather typical Episcopal Church. Its vicar and curate serve 250 members, and the annual budget has passed \$100,000. Yet the congregation is only five years old and has no building. Because communicants gather on Sundays in a local YMCA, all the

furnishings necessary for worship must be trucked in each week. At times the “Y” forgets to leave its building open, and services must be held in the parking lot. Despite the sense of impermanence, the congregation’s sense of identity and purpose were intact. “Mission” and “community” were frequently cited ideals, and an evangelical style clearly marked the life of this congregation. Yet its members also eagerly affirmed their sense of being Episcopal. *“Those old Anglican ideas of ‘tradition, reason, and scripture’ are really vital for us,”* one commented. *“The Episcopal structure is what enabled us to survive and grow.”*

The challenges of this congregation are a result of its success. They have purchased land at the edge of town and are considering whether to proceed with plans for their first building. Among themselves they debate whether such a step will interfere with their strong sense of identity. Will a focus on bricks and mortar force them to revise their current ideals of community and mission? *“The church is the people of God,”* they maintain, *“it is the community of disciples, not a building.”* In the clarity of that affirmation, one senses a substantial capacity to address this moment of transition. One also finds an important clue to the new vitality spreading through local Episcopal congregations.

This group’s experience is not as unique as it might appear.

- Halfway across the country, in a small town, another new Episcopal congregation shared a similar story. It began eight years ago and now has nearly 100 members. They reflected proudly on this achievement as their first building rose nearby. In its brief history this congregation has worshipped in several schools and a former car wash. Like their counterparts in the South, these communicants have a clear sense of themselves apart from the physical structures they utilize. *“For me the building is not the sign of success,”* one reported. *“The success is that we were able to come to consensus.”* *“Our commitment as a church family is the evidence of our success,”* added another. *“We still like each other after our four locations.”*

Through this journey they share their commitment to the Christian faith and to one another. *“A community of caring people”* is how they often describe themselves, and to this phrase they readily add words like “gifts discernment,” “teamwork,” “common purpose,” and “empowerment.” Given their diverse religious backgrounds, some of these members are not certain what being Episcopalian really means. They wish their diocese and the national Church structures would do more to tell them! But they cite the centrality of worship, links to other churches, service to the community, and freedom to grow as clues.

Instances of the revitalization of old congregations also abound. A small church in a northeastern United States suburb found that an all-congregation retreat enhanced its effort to be more intergenerationally cohesive. Another congregation, located in a poor section of a large city, raised several hundred thousand dollars to repair its building and expand service projects. A third congregation in the same area reported its worship services are overcrowded, straining facilities. Similar experiences can be cited from numerous churches across the country. Clearly many Episcopalians at the grassroots are working together well.

- One congregation named their recent call of the first woman rector in the diocese as their example. They had been “*a passive, unchallenging group unwilling to take risks*” they confessed. Now the members of this congregation described themselves as “*enthusiastic with new energy and optimistic attitude.*” A fresh feeling of “*ownership, partnership, shared leadership and a building passion*” was evident.
- Members of one southeastern United States congregation readily cited the fortieth anniversary celebration of their founding as a pivotal moment. “*It was a week-long celebration. Each program of our church made a banner to express its ministry. We collected pictures, stories, and memories from folks who had been here, including many that had moved elsewhere. The whole parish really came together for the celebration. We were without a priest then, but that didn’t stop our enjoyment. We just pressed forward and had a wonderful time together.*”

A Sense of Mission Leads to Outreach and Evangelism

The experiences of expanding buildings do not mean an inward turn by Episcopalians. Energy for outreach and evangelism initiatives is also widely apparent. Most respondents see their spiritual growth as leading to ministry and outreach. From soup kitchens to schools, from organizing worship services in nearby nursing homes to building a clinic in a remote South American village, Episcopalians often engage as volunteers in outreach and community service programs. Likewise, they serve in public leadership positions, from local school boards to the U.S. Congress, and they describe all these roles as forms of ministry and service. The principle of all believers being ministers is assumed in every congregation we encountered.

- In the words of one typical respondent, “*The gospel transforms your life. After a while, you just want to share God’s love with others, whether they come to this church or not. As I reflected on how God loved my own hurt parts, I began to want to respond to others who were hurting or in need. When I was invited to help with the shelter project, I was hesitant at first, but soon knew that was where I was*

supposed to be. The inward journey and the outward journey are linked parts of a whole life.”

Outreach efforts do not necessarily carry an expectation that recipients will attend worship, though that is welcome. Attracting new members through offering ministries to their localities is a common hope. *“Between 1993 and 1996, we went from 25% of the parish being newer members to 37% being new, and the majority of those came from the vicinity.”* Almost every congregation, including the very small ones, describe a variety of community service projects they have initiated and sustained. Larger congregations often take the lead in drawing together with other churches in the area for cooperative efforts, from homeless shelters and soup kitchens to schools and job training programs. ***“We’re here to love and serve those in need, in whatever form that takes,”*** say a number of respondents.

- In several congregations, people explained the care with which they initiated projects. *“When the social service agency first asked us to provide shelter for the homeless in this town one night each week, several of the parents of young children objected due to the possible danger to kids. We went slow and engaged everyone in extensive discussions. Eventually, we agreed to try it for just one month and see what happened. Of course nothing bad ever happened, so we extended it a little longer. Soon, those same parents and their kids were here to help set up the cots, make the beds, prepare the meals, and do the cleaning up afterward. Now we wonder why it took us so long to get going.”*
- *“We are Christ’s presence right here in this old part of town. We are energized by God’s love for us and want to pass that along to others in need, so we have developed a range of social service projects in this neighborhood. Our extensive work on outreach programs has attracted a large number of other churches in town to join in.”*
- One small congregation assisted the Hispanic people who work in the chicken processing plant in their town. Their efforts featured basic education including instruction in the English language.
- In a large urban area, a small church cited its capacity for reflecting the neighborhood’s diversity and addressing its issues as the core of their member’s sense of themselves. *“We’ve created an environment where people of all nationalities and backgrounds can come together and worship with each other. The people on our rolls speak forty-two languages, and we’ve created an environment where everyone feels welcome.”*

- Nearby a congregation which recently achieved parish status took over the pre-school program which had been housed in their building. In a community where less than ten percent of residents attend any church, the program has tapped an unanticipated longing for religious instruction for children.
- At another site, respondents explained, *“This church is known as the ‘doers’ in town because of our many community outreach projects. When the mayor asked us to take on the revitalization of a very poor neighborhood, some of our folks talked with some other churches about it. In the course of those discussions, we began to realize that others had felt crowded out by our activities. We agreed to pull back a little and work more carefully on inclusion of other churches, instead of just trying to do it all ourselves like we had in the past. That has really made a difference. Now that we are partners, we can do so much more together.”*

Many congregations are actively engaged in a number of community service and outreach projects. And in some instances, Episcopal outreach initiatives assume quite large proportions.

- In an industrial area of a large city, a new mission congregation of Hispanic Episcopalians had to address the fruits of its success: the question of whether to move from an old store to a larger and more church-like building. The congregation began when its vicar began celebrating the Eucharist in a nearby park on Sunday afternoons. Although its rolls number seventy people whose capacity for financial support is limited, the congregation’s income has passed \$750,000 annually because it operates a janitorial service.
- Over breakfast in a midwestern city, a young brother and sister and their father described their involvement in a multi-congregation mission program with the Episcopal Church in a poor Caribbean country. Twelve congregations now regularly send teams to work and teach with laity and clergy there, and two years ago a youth contingent went to work as well. They refurbished the pews in a rural church and ran a medical clinic for several weeks. Now the mission teams that go there regularly include youth members as school calendars permit.

Clearly relating to the congregation’s social context is important for most Episcopalians, and they often name successes in such efforts.

- *“We have signed a covenant with Habitat for Humanity which followed the experience of a group from our church going to the inner city to work on a house. It*

was fun time, and it was worthwhile time. Since then, we have worked together on building houses regularly.”

- Realizing not only that the neighborhood in which their church sits had shifted from affluence to indigence, but that they had ignored this change, the members of one congregation became energized. *“We’ve had a fund drive to raise \$150,000 for kids’ events in the area, and we began a center for kids. We did a survey of the area and found the number of single parents rising, so we are preparing to expand our programs. We are really carrying forward a sense of mission with them.” “That’s right,”* a fellow parishioner commented. *“People are now being drawn to church from the neighborhood. We are no longer a smug little isolated club. The people who are coming are a little bit of everything. The church is being utilized; it is more open. We are growing in ways we never imagined.”*

Education

Often the forms of vitality Episcopalians name reflect their congregation’s ability to provide Christian education programs for children and adults. In some instances, the educational experiences are distinctive. And at other times the educational experience has involved seeking a general renewal of faith in the congregation.

- *“Several years back we decided to start up a summer vacation Bible school for the children. Things really came together then. People who had never before taken much time with other people’s children came in and got involved. Some of us went to the cathedral for training and resource materials. Others took responsibility for activities. Many people joined in and together made it a great success. New families were drawn in and many of them started attending the worship service Sundays,”* one southern congregation reported. *“My confirmation class was a wonderful experience,”* another young adult commented. *“There were eight of us who spent several months together in a study group. It was a wonderful, warm, happy time for us. The closeness and inspiration made that Easter the best I’ve ever experienced. I am so thankful for that time.”*
- *“We are an Hispanic congregation within a larger Anglo congregation. We found out about some religious education materials developed by the Anglican Church in Chile, so we contacted them, and they shared the materials with us. It has been very well received by our Hispanic members and has contributed to their growth in faith and leadership.”*

- Like many other churches, one large, midwestern congregation credited the Alpha program for attracting new members and for generating a new enthusiasm among veteran parishioners. *“It has promoted parish growth and strengthened us internally. We got an incredible amount of fellowship with people within the parish. Time with other people on the prayer team did so much to invigorate the life of this parish. And on Sundays now I look around the pews and realize I know at least half the people there. I couldn’t have said that prior to Alpha.”*
- Another congregation traced its new life to a Faith Alive weekend. *“Our church had for a long time been very conservative – the “frozen chosen.” We had little change in leadership. But Faith Alive was a fantastically successful experience for the whole church. What came out of it was tremendous development of programs within our church, and outreach as well. We have grown in numbers in the past few years. We’ve found that we have something to offer to attract people.”*

This research indicates that Episcopalians are creative and open in seeking out forms of religious instruction and educational materials from a variety of sources. They view the availability of quality programs and materials as being an important element to the life and faith formation within their congregations.

Leadership

Leadership can take a variety of forms, as this report presents. Pastoral care groups, retreats, discussion and prayer groups, and special campaigns and plans – across the face of the Church there are references to a shared sense of process that entails a new sense of shared faith and purpose at the grassroots. The exercise of leadership has always been recognized as central to the Church’s life. But many Episcopalians today link the exercise of leadership to an overall sense of spiritual community rather than to particular functions reserved for formally defined offices.

Though tensions associated with the professional leadership in church structures have been identified by this research and will be addressed later in this report, leadership in the areas of worship and ministry is widely accepted and is most often presumed to be a responsibility that clergy and laity share. Ironically the heightened emphasis on worship, and especially on the sacraments, has accompanied increased emphasis on the role of laity. This suggests that there has been a decisive shift in the Episcopal Church’s life over the past half century. While the place of ordained leaders and such designated bodies as vestries remains intact, a broad and rather informal view of leadership has taken hold. The idea of the ministry of all baptized persons has

become a widely accepted ideal. The result is that in almost every setting a sense of shared responsibility focused on mutual spiritual growth and mission is apparent.

- The staff of a large, urban congregation expressed their responsibility as helping *“baptized persons know how to live in the world.”* They sensed they had not done enough to create a true Christian community, and they admitted they required help with nurturing lay persons and redefining lay pastoral ministry. Grateful for a strong clergy and lay staff team, they also fretted that they continued to reflect an outdated, hierarchical model of the Church. Sunday morning seemed to emphasize the cult of the senior clergy, and challenged their verbal emphasis on the ministry of the laity. This staff realized that they must undergo drastic change in order to live up to their commitment of emphasizing the ministry of all baptized persons.
- *“We need to be hosts, receiving and supporting the new people coming to us,”* another group declared. *“More important than the money we raised in our fund drive was the intangible benefit – we saw many people hard at work on a vision. The reality was this was faith at work: hard work and real deeds of faith.”*

At a number of places, additional enthusiasm for Episcopal structures and authorities was evident. Many report with gratitude the effectiveness of their clergy.

- *“The diocese has been helpful as we have moved from mission to parish status. The diocese has used us as a showcase, and our priests have made good connections through the diocese,”* said one respondent.
- A Texas congregation praised their new rector for a fresh sense of initiative. *“With our new rector we’ve identified six areas of need, and one was pastoral care. We hoped he would respond to this need we had felt, and he has. We see that his style is to be as inclusive as possible. We designed a congregational survey before we began our recent interior renovation. The congregation’s voice was heard, and we got going quickly. It was important in this process to create a sense of place and role for people. We created some new leaders, and as we did, we became more cohesive. That process, and its results, gave us something tangible, something people could see. And it happened fast, in just six months.”*
- In the upper Midwest section of the United States, a small-town congregation applauded its rector after its merger with another congregation. *“We did it pastorally. She stepped in, and it worked. We had a few bulls in the china closet, but she led us through it.”* *“It was a form of grief, with one church having to close in order for the*

two to merge,” added another. “She had to do a lot of that for us, to show us the way. So we healed the closing of these two churches. We had to say good-bye and we did.”

- *“Our last rector was a great Bible teacher. I miss his Bible classes. That’s what drew me here. But the rector we have now is such a people person. That’s what we needed, and that’s what we found.” “Let’s face it,” another communicant in this group added, “there is such a new sense of spiritual attention here. With so many families in this area in crisis, our rector has done a fine job. There is a new sense of families being enhanced.”*

When they pause to consider the extent of their successes, most Episcopalians are clear about what accounts for their success: leadership from both laity and clergy. In part, of course, “leadership” refers to the Church’s designated offices and figures. *“The vestry functions as our leaders. They as a group have the authority to guide us toward solutions,”* is a conviction that often appears. **A very clear sense of lay leadership in local churches has been an important fruit of the Episcopal Church’s shift in emphasis over the past fifty years.**

These often-articulated sentiments illustrate how success not only entails the realization of practical goals in congregational life, it requires the grounding of that experience in the awakening of a collective spirituality. These successes could be described as the realization of a collective sense of vocation in a particular place. The significance of the union of these forces must not be minimized. In an era when American religious life is seen as deeply troubled and spirituality is stressed in terms of its private and personal quality, we have discovered something quite different for Episcopalians. There is a powerful new spiritual commitment that centers on finding a shared and dynamic sense of spiritual purpose in a local setting.

Questions for Discussion

1. If you were in Zacchaeus’ situation at dinner with Jesus, what aspects of congregational life would you be happy to talk about? What aspects would you steer away from?
2. If a member of another church asked you to tell a story about a successful experience in your congregation, what would you tell?
3. Is there also a story of failure that would be important for understanding your congregation? What lessons have you drawn from the experiences of success and failure?
4. Leadership is cited as a key factor in congregational success. What is your understanding of religious leadership? What must laity expect from their clergy, and what can clergy expect from their lay leaders?

C. Tensions in the Church

When Zacchaeus encountered Jesus, his life was changed. We can imagine that Zacchaeus' life was different in many ways from how he had lived prior to that wonderful day. Probably he found, like we all do, that making some changes came fairly easily, while others were tougher to achieve. That realization has always faced the Church. St. Paul's letters reveal some of the tensions that arose in the process of establishing the Church. Throughout Christian history one of the principal challenges has been learning how to address tensions that arise among believers. Respondents were asked about what tensions they face, especially those intractable ones for which solutions are not immediately apparent.

Included among their responses are:

- Tensions in culture
- Tensions in beliefs
- Tensions in leadership
- Tensions in education
- Tensions in structures beyond congregations
- Tensions in linkages

Tensions in Cultural Change

As it enters the new millennium, the Episcopal Church, as well as other American religious groups, faces enormous societal issues. The culture of the nation with its emphasis on material wealth, leads to increased tensions and stresses on individuals, families, and communities. Parents as well as children feel both pushed and ignored. Social mobility is increasing as families are less tied to a given geographic area. Finding a strong sense of community and belonging is a hunger for many. Forming and nurturing core values and meanings for life are functions that churches can serve. **With over 350,000 congregations gathering weekly for worship, fellowship, and mission-oriented outreach, churches, as formative institutions in the lives of their members, are the largest and most important community grouping in the fabric of American society and have a greater ability to be the resource for meeting such deep human concerns than any other group.**

At the very time when there is uncertainty and lack of clarity, the Episcopal Church, like other mainline denominations, is wrestling with its identity and role in this changing culture. A great deal of initiative lies with local leadership and local programs. If the emphasis on local initiative portends a general revitalization of the Episcopal Church, what obstacles must be

overcome to realize this hope? Many of these problems have confronted the Church for generations, but the tensions they provoke are no less real nor the sense of urgency any weaker today.

The social environment in which these questions arise makes them especially important. In a culture that will become more highly fragmented and demanding, churches will be even more important as sources of belonging, meaning and community. They will be among the very few institutions capable of coping with these societal demands, yet at the same time they will be faced with absorbing members' diverse expectations about proper forms of worship and ministry in their local communities. Educating and nurturing children in the Christian faith and increasing the skills of the laity in the areas of congregational leadership, pastoral care, and mission will continue to be high priorities, and many local churches are looking to the wider Church structures for effective resources to meet these demands. Is the Church at a national level able to devise adequate programs to bring congregations together, yet retain its historic sense of local form?

Our respondents often expressed hesitations as they struggled with these questions.

- As one put it, *“even after the so-called ‘Decade of Evangelism’ many of us are still ambivalent about inviting people to church, actively reaching out, getting newcomers involved, and keeping programs going. There’s a lot of church-shopping going on out there, and people are hungry. But we don’t want to seem pushy and are so reserved that I’m afraid we don’t make them welcome. We do have a strong sense of community here, but somehow I think it must be difficult for a visitor to break into that. How can we become more effective as evangelists?”*
- Another respondent was even more despairing. *“The diocese isn’t doing anything about outreach, about Christian education, about the seminaries, or anything else I can see. And neither are the national offices. I’m afraid we’re becoming congregationalist in our approach, and losing our rich Anglican heritage. But when there’s nothing going on at the top, who’s left to do the work?”*

Many Episcopalians share concerns about the capability of programs sponsored by diocesan and national offices to generate effective responses to social and religious concerns.

- One person in a focus group was concerned that *“we are overshadowed by the fundamentalist churches around here. They have clear and simple answers to everything, and that’s attractive to people who feel confused. Then you read in the newspapers about another conflict at meetings of our national Church and you have to face your neighbors’ questions about why you belong to this Church. Our polarizations are weakening us, while those with neat answers to everything are*

expanding rapidly. Can we find ways to express our beliefs faithfully without demanding that everyone else agree with us? Our problems with that make me worry about our survival.”

In other words, Episcopalians must find a way to be flexible while retaining a clear and consistent sense of our central beliefs.

Tensions in Beliefs

There are acute issues of belief and differences in the ways many Episcopalians approach the Christian faith. While conflicts over changing the Prayer Book and ordaining women were major challenges of the previous generation, other thorny issues are present today. Among some Episcopalians, strong affirmations of the Church’s traditions, especially its worship, coexist with loud protestations based on their perceptions of what Church leaders now uphold.

There are a number of Episcopalians who seek greater doctrinal clarity than they feel their Church’s leaders usually offer. This sentiment is heard with some frequency across the Church. And at times members of local Episcopal churches join their feeling of uncertain beliefs to frustrations with the Church’s leadership.

- *“It is good to be in a place bound by tradition, a root that goes back; that is what brought me here,”* a woman in a suburban northeastern congregation said. Then she added, *“but there is something I am missing. It seems like we don’t have doctrinal cohesion within the denomination. I don’t know if this is accurate or not. But I hear it, and it is a hot issue. We need a doctrinal center in what we are doing.”*
- A member of a focus group in a southern congregation stated, *“we really are evangelical and try to stay focused on the Scriptures. God’s Word shows us what we are supposed to do, not the Bishop. The Bible says we are to preach the Gospel, bring in the lost, reach the unreached. The diocese and the national church are about all sorts of things that have little to do with Christ’s commission to us. They have wandered off into apostasy.”*

It is difficult to gauge the extent to which such a perception exists in the Church, but frustration is apparent in a variety of places. For some who share this outlook, the sense of doctrinal confusion and even apostasy gives rise to a fear that the Church may split. But most traditionalists try to balance unease at aspects of the Church’s direction with their profession of commitment to the Christian faith and the Church’s traditions

The most charged issue today comes as no surprise. In a number of the sites we visited, we encountered **a polarization between those who advocate open acceptance of persons with homosexual orientation and those who reject it as betraying biblical proscriptions.**

- As one elderly resident wearily put it, *“Back in my generation, we argued about race and whether women should be priests, and now that we just seem to have dealt with those issues, up comes this new problem that really pushes my buttons again.”*
- Another hoped to find resources to help her congregation deal with this explosive issue effectively. *“We have begun to face and deal with diversity, but I think we still have a long way to go. We’ve gotten past the tokenism of the past, but we still don’t draw upon the richness of our many differences.”* *“Some differences seem to paralyze us,”* she continued. *“Surely there are some places where such changes have been dealt with effectively. I wish we could find ways to learn from them, draw on their experiences and resources, build on our strengths, and move forward, instead of staying stuck as we are.”*

This issue is seen by some as just the visible edge of a much deeper, systemic problem. They define this problem as the movement of the Episcopal Church away from its historic Anglican roots in faithfulness to the Bible, respect for the Church’s traditions, and obedience to God’s commandments and moral standards. Others argue with equal ardor that this issue is the place where the extent of God’s love for all people can now be realized and accepted. For this group the word “inclusion” carries the weight of the Gospel’s intention almost as much as the word “justice.” In between these two positions are many who describe the moment as an opportunity to understand better what is meant by belief and to discover what it means to practice the Christian faith.

Some congregations we encountered have worked directly on the question of sexual morality and have reached an acceptable conclusion together, while others have avoided addressing the issue out of a belief that the Bible has put it to rest, or out of sheer inertia. The most extreme advocates want to find a way to force the issue in order to best their opponents. Some make noises about leaving the Church in order to practice their vision of the faith in its pure form. But while many in the Episcopal Church may appear divided into hard and fast camps on the specific issue of homosexuality, and broader questions of sexual morality and the Church’s teaching stance, a different reality pertains in the congregations. **In locality after locality these difficult questions are not the staple of daily life. But when these questions surfaced, as they did with some frequency, most often members of local churches are trying to find a way to**

engage the issue thoughtfully, as an expression of their commitment to Christ and to one another.

- *“I don’t care what the Bishop says. I’m clear on this issue. It’s wrong and he’s wrong. That’s all there is to it, and I don’t care what anyone says.”*

“But you HAVE to care. This issue could destroy our whole Church.” “If that’s what the Church is about, you can just count me out. My spiritual growth is the point, not that issue.”

“But don’t you see how you and I move forward in our spiritual growth is tied to the question of how we treat people who are different from us. When some of our brothers and sisters are excluded from the table, we all are hurt. It took us a while to accept women as priests. Can you think how past attitudes of rejection affected them? It was destructive to men, too. Now we are discussing whether people whose sexual behavior differs from ours are humans. Can any person become a baptized believer? How can we think about our spiritual growth when we are rejecting some people in God’s name? It doesn’t work like that. You can’t be loving and rejecting at the same time.”

“Oh yes I can. I accept the person but not the behavior.”

“So how did you apply that to women who wanted to be priests?”

“That’s entirely different.”

“Well, if we can’t find a solution right here in this small group, it shouldn’t surprise anyone that huge national meetings haven’t resolved it. I don’t think they ever will until we begin building some agreements locally. We should be patient and continue working on them instead of burying our heads in the sand and hoping it will just go away.”

This point-counterpoint exchange not only illustrates the challenge of addressing this tension, it underscores the centrality of the congregation in our Church’s life. Ways to facilitate new links and exchanges of information among congregations, without trying to control such occasions, are being explored in some congregations. Redefining the priorities and programs of dioceses and the national structures must begin, our respondents believe, regardless of the difficulties or conflicts that may emerge in such a process. If structural changes are to have validity, the experience and wisdom of numerous local leaders must be tapped. However, despite obvious ambivalence about the Church’s hierarchy, many of our respondents hoped to find ways to draw their locality into better partnership with it. The resilience of this hope should be a major source of encouragement for the Episcopal Church’s professional leadership.

Tensions in Leadership

In the face of the many other demands on churches, one of the central issues is leadership. Despite the positive aspects of leadership discussed in the previous section of this report, many respondents expressed ambivalence regarding the leadership capability within the Church hierarchy. In numerous places members of Episcopal churches seek help dealing with difficult issues, such as setting local priorities and nurturing a common faith commitment, yet they distrust what the Church's leaders offer.

- In the words of one respondent, *“I wish somebody would finally put the basics of faith in order for everyone, but do so without sacrificing the rich and creative differences we bring. We want to be engaged with and own our programs, but we find our time and energy stretched beyond their limits. We want to welcome others but find some of them beyond our tolerance and threatening our core commitments.”*
- As another person put the matter: *“Developing stronger lay leadership is a major need. We want to be more effective leaders in the church and the world, but where is the preparation? I don't think we're just supposed to be junior priests. We have different roles. But how do I practice my faith in my job, where power and authority are such issues? How do I practice my faith in my neighborhood and right here in church programs? What do you do when a volunteer drops the ball? I hope there will be resources to help us become better leaders.”*

Learning how to be effective leaders in voluntary organizations is a challenge, especially to those with strong business backgrounds and demanding careers. Those who have come through difficult experiences in congregations agree that they should place inclusiveness and community over efficiency, even if important decisions have to be postponed; but they wonder by what authority they should proceed. They realize that their approach to situations in their local congregation is likely to be different from what they would presume in their professions. They have grasped the crucial difference between informal influence and formal authority. But they are not always clear on how and when to use either, nor in what ways the Episcopal tradition might instruct them and wider Church structures might guide them.

- *“We are so busy here that we are exhausted, and then we aren't sure how to work together effectively on our ministries,”* explained one woman. *“Everyone works full-time in demanding jobs, and only the retired people have much time and energy to work on church projects. I try to think of my job as a ministry, but often it's just busy work. By the end of the day I don't have anything left to give. There are so many*

needs, but you can't do everything. How do we set priorities in our efforts? How do we become effective leaders and develop effective ministries? We need help with these issues."

Confusions over leadership priorities, authority, and role are not limited to the lay leaders in local churches. Among seminarians and clergy similar sentiments are heard.

- At one seminary, for instance, when asked to name a significant challenge, students readily named leadership, both clergy and lay. ***"Our Church needs to have a vision for forming leaders. We are on different terrain and we need to decide how to get where we're going. We are about forming leaders."***

How they would distinguish between the leadership roles of clergy and laity was not so clear.

"Lay leadership is needed," one student agreed, *"it can't be just the priest's role."*

"But what does that mean?" asked another.

And when a third commented, the complexity of the issue became, *"It is too easy to dismiss the clergy. We have to get people like CEOs involved in leadership."*

This discussion, which began with a ringing endorsement of lay leadership, failed to clarify either the clergy role or the sense in which religious leadership is distinctive, much less the ordained offices of the Episcopal Church. Simply saying *"leadership must be the catalyst"* as one seminary student did is appealing but incomplete. It appears that despite considerable expenditure of energy on leadership issues, the Church has little clarity.

Many respondents expressed fears and uncertainties about the reliability of Church structures and lack of clarity about such basic distinctions as the differences in responsibilities between ordained and lay persons. These tensions become more severe as lack of clarity about even how to conceptualize and address these issues becomes apparent.

Among the most difficult of all congregational challenges, and the one Episcopalians often list as an experience of failure, are conflicts with clergy.

- The leaders of one historic congregation recounted their conclusion that the rector who had been there for over two decades had lost the parish's confidence and was not performing productive ministry. *"We felt powerless, and frustration was building with no outlet. We got a mediator and had a large meeting, but it was a blood bath. It was wrenching. At first things seemed to improve; but just when we thought we might have turned the corner, the rector suddenly decided to leave. So looking back, as*

hard as we tried, we just failed to handle it well. I still feel a sense of failure. And we're not entirely over it yet; there are still divisions."

- A similar report came from the Southeast. *"We spent a lot of money to get our new rector. We thought he would be good for us. But he immediately went about creating problems. And then, he suddenly announced he was leaving. And on his last day he told us this congregation was going to die, so we should just sell the property and everyone could leave."*
- One congregation that experienced clergy misconduct felt *"beleaguered, left out, and alone. We were a broken family."* But through prayer, small groups, conversation, and finally, a new rector, they realized they had hope for a new beginning.

Whatever the sources or forms of conflict and failure, the experience can devastate a congregation. The effects of failure and the perception of inadequate professional leadership can leave an apparently lasting imprint.

Tensions in Christian Education

In a number of congregations, respondents expressed concerns about the quality of resources for education. **They sense a lack of materials and a failure of commitment by wider Church structures. But even more agonizing than the apparent lack of materials is the sense of lack of leadership for Christian education.** They perceive gaps in clergy skills in this important area, and the demands on clergy and lay leaders' time is a further distraction from this responsibility.

- *"I know it is a hard thing. But you have to address education on basic things, not always talking about just social issues. Liturgy and the Bible are what we need. You have to work at ways to teach them to children."* *"The age group between 12 and 17 is crucial,"* said one person. *"It's got to begin in childhood. We need to be able to discuss the issues of the younger group in terms of the Christian tradition."* *"We have the same problem at our church,"* commented one man, *"we can't draw the kids."* *"And adults,"* another person in the same group added. *"In-depth study is needed for adults. Our people still don't understand why we're passing the peace."* *"Many people in the Episcopal Church don't understand Scripture, many just don't study it. We all need a little Bible study,"* a woman commented as heads nodded around the table.

- *“I think the seminaries just don’t understand what we really need, both for our children’s religious education or for preparing priests to deal with the realities of parish life,”* said one, repeating the words and sentiments of many others.
- At one southwestern congregation, the widely used Journey To Adulthood curriculum for youth *“will take a lot longer for us to adapt to it. Our Christian education director found it, and it looked good, but it required many mentors. We couldn’t find enough mentors, so it did not happen as we hoped.”*

There was a lack of effective connection between congregations and seminaries. Respondents in both groups regretted that no one seemed to know how to hear their needs, draw on their strengths, and to convey an adequate response and partnership.

We found seminary leaders and students also troubled by their weak ties to congregations and frustrated by what they saw as outmoded and dubious practices of their diocesan structures, especially diocesan Commissions on Ministry.

- *“The diocesan C. O. Ms. never seem to ask what congregations need in the way of priestly competencies,”* one student ventured. *“The C. O. Ms. seem to me to be largely composed of older people who want new priests to confirm their old image of the Church. They have little in the way of either theological or practical understanding of the priesthood, and they have little awareness of the future needs of the Church at any level.”*
- Another student endorsed this strong criticism. *“Well, I try to get invited to diocesan meetings whenever possible, but it’s very difficult when you’re not really wanted. I don’t know how to get the doors open wide enough to join the conversations.”*

The sense of exclusion and of facing institutional demands that are products of a by-gone era were expressed by many respondents.

Many congregational leaders would agree. They seek more effective partnerships for the purpose of securing better religious education materials for Sunday schools and adult classes. In part this is a search for clear direction. As a result many Episcopalians borrow Christian education materials from non-Episcopal sources. Granted, there are Episcopal programs such as E.F.M. and D.O.C.C. which are widely used and praised. But they are seen as independent of official channels.

- *“The example I would use is this:”* expressed one person. *“In the Catholic Church I know where they stand on various things. You may not agree, you may not like it, but you know where the Catholic Church stands. I do not know where the Episcopal Church stands. I am one of those persons that likes strongly defended core beliefs*

that they stick by.” For another person there was a revealing comparison. “Think of this dichotomy: Episcopal private schools provide top-flight education; Episcopal Church Christian education is horrible.”

- *“We borrow from other churches whatever is successful: we use Cursillo, and we also use Alpha”* was a refrain that was frequently heard.
- One respondent clearly understood that all these issues could be summarized in terms of leadership. *“We don’t do well with our youth. Sometimes we complain about the quality of the seminary graduates we see, but religious vocations are begun or neglected in the congregation. I wish there were good resources to help us improve our Christian education program right here. What we got from the diocese was just way out of date and useless. We’re trying out some materials we got from other denominations now. I have no idea how they may or may not relate to what the diocese is looking for in postulants. I hope we can find some ways to improve in this area, but it will take all of us working together and not just separately in our own sites.”*

At the heart of this feeling is the sense of not knowing where to turn. Suspicion and lack of interest often characterize local awareness of education programs that are offered by diocesan and national offices. But in some instances there is praise for diocesan initiatives, and distinctions drawn between the diocese and the national Church.

Tensions in Structures Beyond the Congregation

A major challenge for the Church today is whether it can draw upon both its Christian traditions and the contemporary spirituality search in a way that can renew a sense of denominational life beyond the local congregation. The pride in our denominational identity and loyalty to our institutional structures that once were abundant can no longer be presumed. That does not mean that among members of our congregations, commitment to the faith and the Church is less powerful. *“I’ve learned to trust God,”* a lay person reported. In her congregation *“it’s not the end of the world if you disagree. It’s like a family. You hold your ground and you don’t run away.”* Rather, for Episcopalians, commitment must be nurtured and sustained.

In our random sample survey of congregational lay leaders, we found those respondents to be less positive about their relationships with their dioceses than were churches in the interview sample. This suggests that the interview findings on this issue may underestimate the degree of dissatisfaction among Episcopal churches with diocesan relations. Respondents in both

the survey and the interviews were similarly negative about their relationships with the national church, its offices and leaders.

While most respondents in our local congregations saw themselves increasing in strength, they also were deeply critical of judicatories and other parts of the national Church, especially their leaders and structures. **The linkages between local congregations and wider structures are often seen as ineffectual and growing weaker. And to make matters worse, there is widespread confusion and doubt about the roles and functions of bishops. The result is that legitimacy and financial support from the local congregations to wider Church structures are declining,** and without marked changes, this downward spiral can be expected to continue. In part, this dis-connect is fed by the expectations of many newcomers to the Episcopal Church who bring prior experiences in more congregational denominations. It is also fed by numerous experiences of disappointment with the efforts of dioceses to address congregational needs effectively. Many respondents expressed (and illustrated with emotional stories) their distrust of diocesan and national structures and their disappointment with seminaries. Clearly they have little faith in the capacity of these institutions to understand and grapple with local needs. National and diocesan conventions and convocations were also criticized for being prone to invite controversy instead of cooperation and having no clear relevance to congregational life or needs.

These issues are part of a longing for more effective connection with the wider Church. To be truly linked to the rest of the Church is to have one's perspective and one's needs appreciated and addressed. Yet many people are frustrated after years of seeking effective links with their own Church and feeling rebuffed.

- *“The national Church is devoted to causes, the local church is devoted to Christ,”* is how one lay person expressed it.
- *“This church had two priests in a row who got involved with personal misconduct,”* related one church leader. *“We tried to get help from the bishop, but he just avoided us. In one of those situations, he eventually showed up and told us he was replacing our priest with another one, without asking our opinion about anything. He implied that somehow the problems were our fault. Then he put the priest from here into another congregation where he did the same thing.”* Another member of this group added, *“sometimes I think the diocese is a priests’ protection society, rather than any sort of resource for our ministries. What in the world do they do if they aren’t even looking out for the quality of priests? I’m sorry but I just don’t trust them any more. I hope it isn’t too late for them to change and become a useful resource for us.”*

- In another diocese a senior respondent said, *“I hope we will see some major changes among the bishops. Those guys see themselves at the top of some pyramid of power, telling us what to do, when really they ought to be at the bottom, asking us what we need, supporting us and helping us do our jobs here better. **The local congregation IS the Church.** The Church is not a set of abstract ideas, reports, or announcements coming from Manhattan. Do they understand what it means to model your faith? Businesses are recognizing the importance of servant leadership and teamwork, but **the Church hierarchy seems stuck in the past and incapable of change.** Their behavior sends a clear message they don’t have a clue about what we are facing or learning or needing. That chasm is just going to get wider and wider unless somebody wakes up and makes some serious changes. I hope it’s not too late.”*
- *“I have no idea what anyone in New York does at all, and I don’t really believe they want to know about us or serve us. I’ll be surprised if your report will make any difference. Are you sure they asked you to do this? Or is this just one more empty gesture of pretending to listen,”* was a blunt but common opinion.

While local and special interest networks will probably continue to provide important kinds of resources, many respondents also wished that our formal offices at all levels would become more responsive to their concerns and serve their needs. Conclusions at the local level view the national Church as having drifted apart and consequently serving mainly their own bureaucratic inertia in the hope of survival, instead of coming together around common purposes that support and serve congregations. These views fuel growing disaffection and diminishing interest in providing financial support or participation from the congregations. Such occasions as diocesan and national conventions draw especially sharp criticism for their reliance upon legislative models that invite conflict and polarize issues, instead of drawing members together to work on shared affirmations and concerns. A broad range of Episcopalians see bridging the chasm as hopeless and pointless, while even those who wish that changes would occur don’t believe they have any influence to help make that happen.

- *“Diocesan and national conventions are leading us away from the important issues of faith and discipleship and into more political conflicts and self-righteous judgments,”* observed a senior leader in one congregation who had participated in diocesan and national conventions. *“Who plans those agendas, and what in the world are they thinking? I wish we could find a way to just stop all the resolutions and debates and voting. Can’t we spend time on what we really care about in congregations? We are searching for good ideas about developing missions and*

carrying out ministries, about engaging newcomers and teaching our children, about leading and serving and growing. I hope we can find ways to learn practical things from each other and grow together in faith, instead of debating right versus left political issues and voting things up or down. That certainly has nothing to do with us.”

In the eyes of many respondents, Zacchaeus Project interviewers were viewed as representatives of the Church’s hierarchy, and it was clear that some people had long awaited an opportunity to express their pent-up feelings.

Tensions in Linkages

For a number of Episcopalians, beating the game means seeking the resources they require wherever they can find them while quietly making informal links among congregations. An amazing variety of special-interest networks now exist across the Church. These serve the important functions of lateral communication and offer forums for ideas and innovations. Such specialized networks include the NeXt Generation of young clergy, Faith Alive, Cornerstone, the National Organization of Episcopalians for Life (N.O.E.L.), the Union of Black Episcopalians, the Listening Hearts Ministries, and the Order of St. Luke for healing ministries, and many others. Many of these groups represent historic forms of ministry, and others embody the new perceptions that are accompanying the sense of generational change which we discovered throughout the Church.

Some of these linkages are along ideological lines. One segment has concerns over what it views as untenably liberal positions on basic questions of belief and morality and over what it sees as a loss of the Church’s commitment to the Bible and to mission. This traditionalist perspective has inspired the formation of such groups as First Promise, the Episcopal Synod, and the American Anglican Council. Seminarians and clergy who adhere to this position state that they often feel excluded by the rest of the Church. They sense political barriers and at the same time fear the Church is failing not only them but its divine mandate.

Traditionalists are not the only Episcopalians to organize along ideological lines. A variety of “progressive” groups are more committed to inclusion of gay and lesbian persons and to other issues they perceive as matters of social justice.

In the middle, between traditionalists and progressives, are a wide range of groups that unite rectors of large churches, church musicians, and Christian educators. There are numerous instances where local churches have linked with one another for shared ministries including education, outreach, and evangelism. Such relationships offer valuable opportunities for the

expression of these interests. **But those who participate in them also see their informal linkages as replacing functions they had hoped would be served by the Church's formal structures.** There is a widespread sense that the Church needs to reconsider its expectations and presumptions and reformulate our ways of being a Church. In one way or another almost every respondent shared a deep longing that we could find ways to draw our many parts together into a more effective whole.

Such tensions are not new, and many congregations have come through equally severe challenges. For a generation the Episcopal Church seems to have gone from one life-threatening crisis to the next. Tensions over social issues and activist stances by Church leaders in the 1960s gave way to battles over liturgical revision and ordination of women to the priesthood and episcopate in the 1970s and 1980s. In the 1990s, conservative revulsion at liberal advocacy of including and even ordaining gay persons further charged the Church's atmosphere. Such widely heralded initiatives as Venture in Mission and the Decade of Evangelism seemed overwhelmed by these conflicts. To many, the Church appeared to resemble a series of ideological enclaves, and the initiative seemingly swung to groups who voiced outrage at the instigators of change. Nor could it be presumed that such energies were confined to a few, highly vocal laity and clergy. The impression that many grassroots members of Episcopal churches were offended has pervaded these decades. A claim that Episcopalians work well together would seem to deny these ideological differences. Yet despite these recurring themes that call for our attention, there are many instances of success on a local level at addressing them.

Questions for Discussion

1. After having read what participants in this interview process said about the tensions they saw facing the Church, would you agree with their assessment? What would identify as the tensions you and your congregation face? What issues have our respondents missed? How do the issues they noted take different forms in your experience? How is your congregation addressing these tensions?
2. Which of the issues our Church is facing seem most crucial to its future? What do you see as realistic means for addressing this issue?
3. What are realistic expectations, in your opinion, for what the Church's hierarchy must be and do in order to strengthen our sense of being linked to one another?
4. In what ways might telling and hearing stories of personal and group experiences in your congregation and beyond contribute to mutual understanding?

D. Embracing Diversity and Change

For the majority of Episcopalians whom we interviewed, the sense of congregational ministry begins with a firm commitment to be inclusive and to affirm different cultures rather than ignoring them, and to embrace diversity. Church members refer to the cultural breadth of the Anglican Communion as their model. The seismic shifts in congregational culture can occur “*successfully but not without stress*” arising from “*having to live into new behaviors.*”

That it is difficult to encompass diversity is a common refrain. Yet successes in Episcopal congregations also include developing a capacity to address internal complexities and changes in church life, some of which have been complex.

Women in Leadership

Zacchaeus Project researchers were intrigued to find that the role of women as ordained and lay leaders does not appear to be an issue in most places. Since the first women were ordained in 1979, their numbers have risen to over 20 percent of all Episcopal clergy. This dramatic growth illustrates the increasing role of women in the professional leadership of the church.

At every stop we met women in leadership roles, and only once did a respondent describe tensions or questions arising over whether they should or should not be occupying those roles. This is not to say that there are no Episcopalians who retain hesitations about women in positions of leadership and that no glass ceiling on women’s advancement exists. This is simply to state on the basis of our data that equality of place for women appears to be presumed by the vast majority of Episcopalians.

- “*Remember all that stuff twenty-five years ago? Remember those events that happened at the same time – changing the Prayer Book and the ordination of women. At that time many older members here left. It was even rumored that the diocese was talking about closing this church. Then we got a good rector who instituted good worship and good preaching. It was an old style Anglican Sunday morning. Then the parish grew again. Not all at once, but we grew steadily. Now we have a young woman as our rector and we are attracting young people.*”

“*That’s right,*” another woman nods. “*It’s hard to believe that we were in such a difficult situation once, because things now are going so well. And the future looks rosy here. We really are in positive movement.*”

Wide Acceptance of *The Book of Common Prayer, Worship and Practices*

For those who participated in our focus groups, the fact of Prayer Book revision in 1979 is presumed. This also is not to say that there are no lingering feelings. It is simply to state that we encountered no one who viewed that battle two decades ago as unfinished. In fact, given the number of newer Episcopalians, it is now possible to see that large numbers of people have reached our Church unaware of the changes in worship and ministry that once rocked the Church. Simply put, the changes through which we have gone now appear accepted by the overwhelming majority of Episcopalians.

- At one congregation, a sense of separation had not been fully overcome. *“Our worship services are different, and they appeal differently. So the awkwardness of our Christmas services was apparent. They were not of a piece, but were three different services.”*
- At an urban congregation the reality of diversity required different forms of music. *“Some want traditional Anglican music and some want contemporary music. Others want an emphasis on music for kids. There are different kinds of audiences here.”*

While coming together in sacramental worship, most Episcopalians are accepting of a very wide range of theological views. The historic Anglican emphasis on the congregation as a geographic region of responsibility is seen in this perspective. Anyone in the region is welcome, regardless of views. Many respondents said they had come to this church from other denominations where demands were strong that one accept a specific list of beliefs in order to belong. Their unanswered question and unresolved doubts were treated quite differently in the Episcopal Church. Here, their questions are accepted and treated as the doorways to growth.

- *“The Episcopal Church focuses on nurturing your spiritual growth and formation, rather than upon insistence on certain answers,”* said one typical respondent. *“I was never before encouraged to raise any questions or doubts, and it was only when I came here that anyone suggested they were the very things I needed to struggle with. That process has been my source of deepening faith.”*
- At a congregation in a southern state, the Church’s openness to different points of view was affirmed with great conviction. *“I find so many other churches are not nearly as open as is the Episcopal Church in all facets.”* Another communicant agreed. *“That’s exactly why I am here. I was raised Baptist – you don’t do this, you don’t do that. I don’t want anyone to tell me what to do or what I can’t do, and they don’t tell me what to do here. But they inspire me to think about what I should do and give me the way to do the right thing and guidelines to live by, and that’s what I like*

about this Church. I can come here on Sunday, and I have guidelines to live by and principles to think about and thought stimulation rather than 'don't do this,' and that's why I like it here."

Diversity in Congregations

Historically the Episcopal Church has sought to embrace social as well as theological diversity. The ideal that a congregation's mission begins with its geographic vicinity, not simply its membership, as the Church of England's parochial system taught us, is a widely held ideal. Our view of mission requires that we understand and affirm the social patterns and groupings of our localities and then work to incorporate them into congregational life. Today, as this study reveals, our historic ideal is challenged by elaborate patterns of social diversity – from age differences to differences in feeling about social justice and involvement. Yet in many instances, our congregations continue to find purpose and success in dealing with these challenges.

Episcopal churches are challenged constantly by a wide array of forms of social diversity – from age differences to differences in feeling about social justice and involvement. Yet in many instances, their success in dealing with these challenges continues

- *"Over one-third of our members are new and young; but we also have a solid core of elders. We have 117 people over the age of 70. There was an underlying feeling of being separate. The younger group has had a strong sense of social justice and involvement, while the older group was suspicious of what the newer ones wanted. So our success has been getting more people involved and pulling together. There is now a broad base of support. We're increasing the sense of 'we-ness.'" Such a feeling is often cited.*
- *On the West Coast one congregation trumpeted the extensive diversity of its membership, including age, race and ethnicity, and sexual orientation. Yet a powerful sense of shared experience and purpose was apparent. "We take parish camping trips and people look at us and say 'now just what brought that group together?' It's our love and enjoyment of one another."*
- *"Diversity is the main identity here," a focus group in another location announced. "When it works, it's wonderful; but when it doesn't, it's painful."*
- *At times the extent of a congregation's diversity makes the fact of its success astounding. "We have over twenty zip codes represented among our members. Yet our worship has never been more vital, and this parish, which had been a sleeping giant, has come to life." That sense of worthwhile struggle was widely echoed. "We*

are stronger than we thought. We're not fragile, we're not going to fall apart. If we have a situation, we know we can handle it."

Affirmations of diversity echo across the country.

- One congregation adjoining a large university recognized that diversity is both an ideal and a challenge. *"We are very accepting of a wide range of beliefs. There's no litmus test for acceptability – everyone is acceptable,"* observed one member. *"But,"* countered another, *"that very diversity is sometimes a mixed blessing. It can stimulate conflicts in the short run. You have to hang in there to find the common ground. And most of the time that is far better than what those in initial agreement could have done alone."*
- *"Everyone is acceptable, loved here. We have a wide range of beliefs. Sometimes that becomes a challenge, but we hang in there and work on finding common ground. Most of the time, the decisions we reach are far richer than we could have done if we all thought alike."*

While most Episcopalians are idealistic about bridging cultural differences, they are under no illusions about the extent of this challenge. Thus, finding the balance between being broadly inclusive, especially of the cultural diversity in the congregation's vicinity, and finding unity and coherent identity can be difficult.

- One congregation, whose members are mostly African-American, resisted calling itself a "Black church." *"If we are going to be Episcopalians, we are going to be one of the family of Episcopalians, regardless of our color or race."*

"You know the hypocrisy in Christianity," complained another member. *"We are going to bring you in, but we are going to keep you separate. You know you are not truly under the umbrella of brotherhood and sisterhood."*

But another participant in the discussion then added, *"don't you see that we have a chance to live out something that not many churches do? Not many churches are as integrated as we are. I don't mean just racially, but socially and economically. The leadership of our parish is truly integrated. And the one thing we do have in common is that we are all Episcopalians."*

Another woman recounted an amazing experience. *"I remember being in a women's aerobics class at the Y. It was a racially mixed class, and I don't know how it happened, but we realized that we were all Episcopalians. And I remember this group being so excited about it. We are all Episcopalians. This is the common thread!"*

- On the West Coast, for instance, reconciling cultural differences was commonly cited as a significant challenge. *“The core of our sense of call is to integrate the cultures of this area into our main worship services,”* one urban congregation reported. Their sense of challenge reflected the staggering variety of cultures in their vicinity and their previous efforts to design culture-specific worship for as many as possible. *“We are seeing demographic changes in our community. There has been an increase in the Korean population, and they are not used to liturgical churches. How to invite the changing community into our church is a challenge.”*
- *“Our bilingual services sometimes feel artificial. Why are we all here together? Just for show? It seems formulaic. The music is often hard for our Hispanics, and only two songs get sung in Spanish.”*
- In the urban Northeast one focus group representing several congregations readily named cultural divides as a significant challenge for the Church. *“We are at a new era with more people of color and being involved with community issues. Seeing such a groundswell is grace. But there have been differences around race and sexuality and class. We are recognizing these issues and the need for reconciliation and mediation.”*

Surely there are many communities and congregations where such a realization would bring a much-needed healing.

Even more painful than program and building issues, some Episcopalians feel intractable differences within their congregations acutely.

- *“We’re closing out our food pantry because we cannot reconcile the people who run it with the needs of congregation. They want to run it as they see fit,”* an urban church reports. *“We’ve gone through controversial stuff,”* another church member acknowledges. *“You have to have views, and you have to be Christian. But it can be upsetting when the views are rigid. It is hard to see how people can exclude one another in a church, but that sometimes happens.”* *“I echo that completely,”* said a third person. *“We shouldn’t be so hypersensitive in the church; you can’t act rationally if you are.”*
- At a rural, mission site in the Midwest a similar sentiment emerged. *“It’s the failure to get consensus on the small, rather insignificant things in church life that make or break churches. Someone donated a picture, and the priest hung it in the worship area. Some people immediately disagreed with what she had done.”*

Clearly churches are places where differing personal priorities are not easily merged into a collective sense of faith and purpose.

With some frequency Episcopalians list differences among generations as among their most significant challenges and most frequent sources of congregational failure.

- In the Southwest one congregation described the difficulty of proceeding with a desperately needed building renovation. *“There were great differences in that group. It encompassed people with a long history here and people who were newer.”*
- One large congregation in the Midwest had done considerable work to attract new members and to minister in their immediate neighborhood. They had experienced impressive success, but noticeable tensions lingered. *“A few years ago we started a baseball program for neighborhood kids, most of whom had nothing to do with the church. But when a baseball went through one of our stained glass windows, there was a feeling in the congregation that the kids’ program was wrong,”* one woman explained. Then an older man became energized. *“So I don’t see why we have to have a ball diamond. And if we’re going to have kids come here, they ought to come decently dressed. Just saying, ‘well, at least they’re here,’ isn’t enough. I sense there’s a real breakdown with these youth in our society.”* A young woman was eager to reply. *“Wait, it’s tough to have youth programs today. There are ups and downs. The kids have outside pressures. They need guidance and training.”*

In a number of our interviews there were frequent instances of praise for local bishops and dioceses. Yet many of our respondents gave only nominal attention to this formal linkage, while others were quite distrustful of these offices.

- When asked to describe the resources, many congregations responded as this southern one did: *“We occasionally go to training classes at the cathedral. And we get letters and reports from the Bishop, but that’s about it.”*
- *“The national Church, the Hispanic offices, the diocese, and several local congregations,”* were named approvingly by one Hispanic congregation as vital resources.
- When a midwestern mission congregation faced conflict in their midst *“the bishop came and he did wonderfully.”*
- *“When we needed help”* one congregation didn’t hesitate to look broadly. In their typical search for practical answers, *“we consulted the Leadership Network and Serendipity and the national Episcopal Stewardship office.”*

Questions for Discussion

1. Is the role of women in positions of lay and clergy leadership an accepted concept in your congregation? Diocese? How has your congregation effectively utilized the skills of women in leadership positions?
2. Among many Episcopalians there is a new feeling of embracing diversity. In this section of our report we describe some of the stories we heard. What are your congregation's stories about dealing with the challenges of diversity? In what ways are these new forms of cooperation life-giving to you and to others?
3. Have there been occasions of stress in your congregation in dealing with issues of diversity? How were these occasions handled?
4. The Prayer Book revisions leading to the creation of the 1979 Prayer Book created a much stronger emphasis on the Eucharist and the ministry of all baptized people. How has your congregation assimilated these changes over the years?
5. Describe the ways in which your congregation deals with intergenerational issues. What opportunities are there for younger and older communicants to work together on projects? What programs in your congregation are designed to appeal to various age groups?

Section Three: Sharing Our Episcopal Journey

When Zacchaeus came down from the tree to welcome Jesus into his home, he found his life transformed. His heart was touched and his priorities reordered. God's call as people gather in Episcopal churches likewise invites them to a new way of life. God speaks through the stories of Scripture, the traditions of heritage and liturgy, and individual experiences, prayers, and reflections. Like Zacchaeus, many participants in Episcopal churches report that their lives have been transformed. Countless people have found a life-giving perspective of the Christian experience. But their spiritual seeking and finding occur within broad contexts of change.

The ground of American life and the form of the Episcopal Church have changed dramatically. Yet much about the Church has remained constant. How do Episcopalians distinguish between what has changed and what has remained constant? What about this Church is distinct, and what is reflective of broad religious and social currents? How might people responding to a Zacchaeus Project in other years have responded? These questions must be considered seriously in order to grasp Episcopal identity.

Structures in a Changing Context

At the end of World War II it could be assumed that a limited number of denominations, including the Episcopal Church, held the allegiance of a large majority of Americans. These denominations shared a similar theological and social vision and cooperated with one another in such formalized ways as the National Council of Churches.

By the 1950s the face of mainline religion was not very different from that of corporate America. The mainline churches had developed a highly centralized style of organization. During the same period the Episcopal General Convention began to rely more heavily on a variety of committees and commissions that would enact various aspects of Church program between Conventions. The Episcopal Church, like the other mainline denominations, began to consider itself a service provider. The national and diocesan bureaucracies offered the sorts of specialized programs and expertise that local churches surely would require. The national Church, like the central offices of other denominations, also became something of a licensing agency, and national-level standards were set for church life.

In the 1950s it was common to experience one's local congregation as an extension of a larger national institution. Centralized authority and local loyalty were not in conflict. The fact of membership in a national Church that united its members in a specific religious identity received great emphasis. Large ecumenical organizations structures were similarly patterned after corporate forms. The extent of loyalty to mainline denominations was ample justification for this sort of alignment. While many clergy felt the Church should take a more prophetic stance, it did so on the basis of its affinity with society. Within the Church the dominant issues concerned making it function better and extending the reach of its social influence

That this past reality has changed should be obvious. Membership numbers have fallen since the late 1960s as our own statistics demonstrate. Membership reached an all-time high of approximately 3.5 million in the mid 60s and by 1997, decreased to approximately 2.3 million. The reasons for this decline could be pondered at great length. But, religion was not dying. As mainline denominations lost adherents, new and fringe groups began to proliferate. Fears of outright secularization became insistent for a time and have not entirely receded. Religion's social role is different at the end of the twentieth century, and that difference requires new forms.

Yet the capacity of mainline institutions for appropriate kinds of adaptation remains an open question. The criticisms of our respondents centered on the capacity of Church structures to respond adequately to local needs. This question of form and response may be an instance where the Episcopal Church and others would do well to look at corporate America anew where

hierarchies are being inverted and teamwork stressed. Unfortunately, wider denominational structures have lagged far behind this cultural trend and are seen by many at the local level as clinging to outdated assumptions and irrelevant practices. As a result, local congregations are increasingly rejecting of central offices, whatever their intentions. Instead, they are investing heavily in lateral linkages and networks for support, ideas, and resources. **Episcopalians today, like all religious groups, understand their identity through local affiliations and reject older assumptions about wider institutional loyalties and authorities.**

Shifts in Spirituality

The sociologist and Episcopal lay person Robert Wuthnow argues that the focus of our religious lives has moved from a spirituality of “dwelling” to a spirituality of “seeking.” That is, people are less loyal to a fixed place and fixed traditions, and more apt to invest in spiritual journeys. While the spirit of this age is highly individualistic, Wuthnow finds a proliferation of small groups most typical of the times. Small groups offer immediate, intense, and ephemeral forms of religious community, often with the capacity to address specific issues and accomplish particular personal and shared tasks rather than becoming fixed structures or standing committees. According to Wuthnow, **it is this basic shift from a fixed sense of religious loyalty to a dynamic sense of spiritual journey and community that is the most important shift of the past half century.**

We repeatedly found signs of this shift among respondents to Zacchaeus Project interviews.

- At a new congregation that is worshipping in temporary quarters, one person said that *“we deeply value the spiritual journey of each individual and recognize that we’re all in this together, regardless of how we express it.”*

In other words, it is the experience of moving together in a process of spiritual exploration that matters. The form of that process, or the fact of being Episcopalians, becomes incidental to the process itself.

- On the other coast, a congregation whose membership has grown rapidly clearly understood the source of their success. They were certain their achievements were outgrowths of a Spirit-led vision of what a church should be. The arrival of their new rector and the assembling of a new clergy team conveyed a powerful new image of clergy and laity in collaboration. *“It was so compelling for us. It was a manifestation of the Spirit.”*

- *“If you’re on a spiritual journey, you’re welcome here,”* the members of an urban congregation said simply.

That understanding is widely, perhaps pervasively, shared. It is understood to be independent of old hierarchical church structures.

Fortuitously, though perhaps not entirely intentionally, the Episcopal Church is well positioned to respond to this spiritually attuned age. Beginning in the early 1950s, a few theologians and other Church leaders began to plan for a revision of the 1928 version of the Book of Common Prayer. It was an ironic process and time in the life of the Church, for it purported to emphasize the entire Church’s involvement and to lift up lay ministries. Yet many at the grassroots at the time perceived it as the product of an insensitive hierarchy, much like similar criticisms we heard in some places.

Yet now our research confirms that Prayer Book revision, like the ordination of women, has become part of the Church’s fabric for most Episcopalians. Evidence that this acceptance is more than tacit becomes clear when one considers the impact of the two premises of the move to revise. **The process that resulted in the *Prayer Book of 1979* emphasized liturgical renewal with the Eucharist as its center, and the ministry of all baptized persons as its ideals. When we look closely at our Church today, we see that these have become central reference points for us.** At every stop that Zacchaeus researchers made, they saw and heard about the dual emphasis on vital worship which emphasizes the Eucharist, and the shared ministry of laity and clergy. Likewise, the independent survey of congregational leaders found resounding agreement on the centrality of these practices.

Hopes and Challenges for the Future

The data this Project has gathered on dealing with tensions and failures is among its most important contributions. We have discovered that Episcopalians often possess a substantive ability to address significant differences, changes, and crises. Among the many places we visited and people we interviewed, we rarely found situations where there had been no experience of stress. Yet a significant ability to overcome difficult situations was often described. Evidence of this capacity came in the form of a variety of abilities and outlooks. The basis for successfully addressing difficulties in congregational life includes a willingness to discuss issues openly.

- *“There is a healthy dialogue, you feel listened to here. There is diversity, but we haven’t alienated the traditionalists,”* the members of an older, urban congregation reported.
- Another congregation, trying to decide if additional worship services were necessary, expressed the same opinion. *“We try to talk the issues through. Largely we are trying*

to maintain an open mind about it and discuss the issues with the doubters, and I think more and more are coming on board.” “The issue of communication is an important one,” another communicant affirmed.

In a similar vein, many local church members use such phrases as “hang together,” and “wrestle with it,” and concurred that it is “OK to disagree.” The common perception is that successfully dealing with any difficult issue requires a group process for which communication is central.

It is clear that some of the tensions we face have become sharply defined and occasionally polarized. Energetic advocates of a variety of positions on divisive issues have emerged and eagerly stump for a range of solutions. However a number of Episcopalians, especially at the local level, see that pushing one’s preferred solution tends to generate more resistance than persuasion. Instead of organizational or legislative approaches, local congregations frequently develop expertise at hearing one another’s stories of faith. **Keeping explosive issues in the context of a shared faith journey offers a possible direction for reconciliation and renewed vigor.** Rather than depicting God’s Kingdom in terms of rules or resolutions, our respondents frequently noted that Jesus dealt with questions about faith and practice by telling parables. These stories reached beneath divisive abstractions to touch the hearts of His listeners. This example suggests a useful approach for dealing with our tensions.

This Project followed just such an approach. As our participants told their stories of faith, many realized anew the depth of their faith commitment and the perspective it affords. Differences in views often turned to shared conclusions that were richer than any one person could have anticipated. In many cases, unarticulated convictions and strengths surfaced. **Groups were able to reflect creatively on the power of the interview experience.** By telling and hearing their stories, some grasped that they could extend this process into the lives of their congregations and with those outside of their communities. As they told their stories, a clearer sense of being on a shared journey of affirmation and of discovery became clear. This process suggested a source of hope that many were eager to grasp.

If the Church can be said to have a fabric that holds it together, it is the power of the story – of mutual commitment and shared faith. The Zacchaeus Project’s data resound with the clear sense among Episcopalians that differences are inevitable. But they can address differences fruitfully when joining qualities of a shared process and patient listening with one another to their mutual experience of worship. Truly, Episcopalians remain a people whose center is common prayer and worship. But the source of commitment to one another is this sense of sharing a spiritual process in which there are abundant resources to address tensions and accommodate differences.

In conclusion, being an Episcopalian today means grounding one's spiritual journey in the stories of Scripture, growing as Christ's disciples and being transformed through sacramental worship. There is a strong, shared calling to welcome and nurture all people and to serve those in need. The Church today offers an invitation to follow Christ in dealing with its diverse as well as the diversity in communities. The ministry of all baptized believers is widely assumed as central to the Episcopal identity. Strengthening lay leadership and building lateral partnerships with other churches provide valued resources to enhance and expand ministries. The inherited forms of wider denominational structures are seen as irrelevant by most and harmful by some. But there is a widespread sense of possibility and impressive local capacity for addressing complex religious and moral issues. Having absorbed the resources and forms of spiritual renewal, many members of Episcopal churches have a clear understanding of the movement from personal growth to shared growth, from shared growth to local religious community, and local religious community to mission. All levels of the Church must affirm this God-given movement. The Episcopal Church has been given the opportunity to draw closer together in proclaiming the love of God if its members can risk changing their beloved structures and processes and listening to their life-giving stories with understanding, passion, and hope for the future.

Questions for Discussion

1. After hearing what Episcopalians in this study said about who they are, what hopes do you have for your own identity and that of your congregation?
2. In what ways has your experience in the Church been life-giving? Are there programs and people that have influenced your journey? How have they contributed to your sense of identity and direction?
3. What resources, relationships, or practices do you and your congregation want to draw on for growth in the future? What steps should you take to have this happen?
4. How do you determine what is God calling you to be? How is your congregation called? In what ways is that, or has that, been determined?
5. If you have worked on congregational vocation, what steps would you suggest others use in their process of discernment? If you have not, what practical steps should you take for discernment?

Appendix

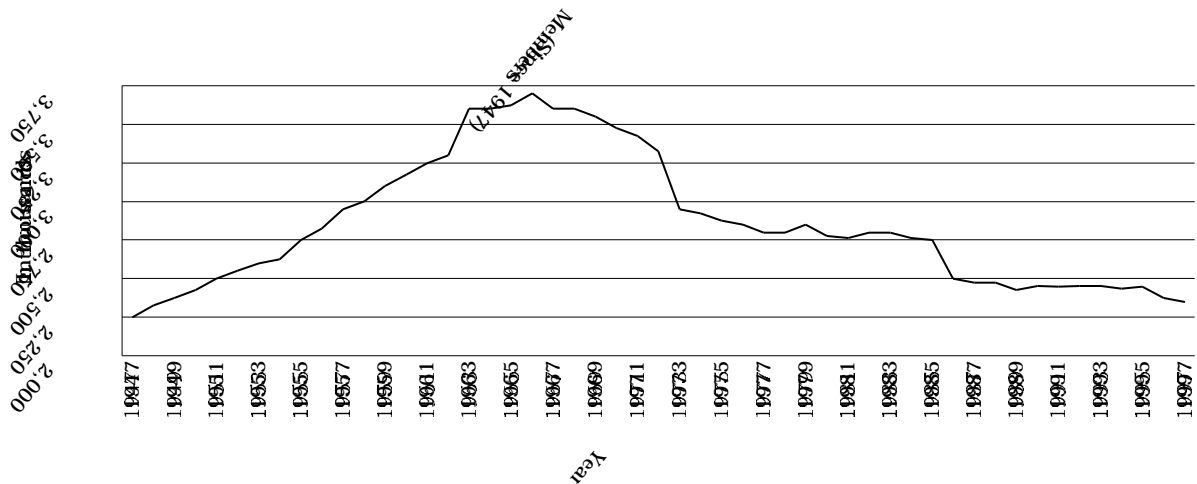
National Data on the Episcopal Church

In seeking to address vital questions on patterns and trends in the Episcopal Church, The Zacchaeus Project has collected and analyzed a variety of empirical data. This information has covered such key areas as membership, attendance, finances, patterns of giving, and other indicators of organizational performance. Sources have included the Episcopal Church Center, the Church Pension Fund, The Church Report Company, and an independent survey of senior wardens across the country, conducted by Dr. Susanne C. Monahan, Assistant Professor of Sociology and Anthropology at Montana State University.

Regrettably, the information is lacking in some areas because it is currently not in a retrievable format, non-existent, or has been lost. A large amount of the national church's database prior to the early 1990s has yet to be converted to a newer, more accessible system. However, it is still possible to learn from the data that is available.

Membership and Attendance

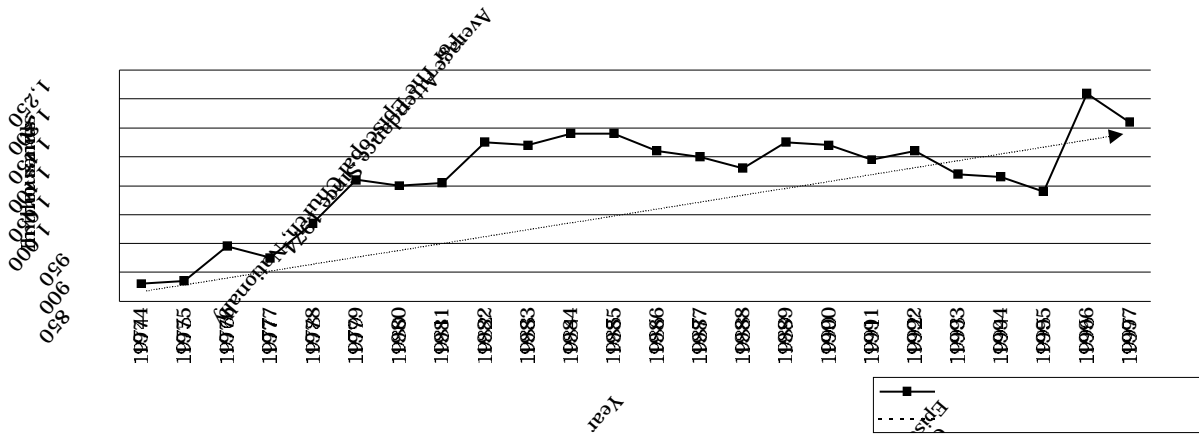
Popular assumptions about the Episcopal Church as well as other mainline denominations are that they are slowly sinking in membership and eventually will disappear altogether. However, the facts are otherwise. The following graph illustrates that between 1947 and 1967, the Episcopal Church grew in membership from 2.2 million to its all-time peak of 3.6 million members – a growth rate of 64 percent. However, over the next 30 years, there was a decline of 36 percent, bringing the numbers back to about where they were in 1947.



The Church Report Company

Despite this decline in membership, average attendance has continued to rise as the next graph indicates, with a 31 percent increase in attendance between 1974 and 1997 as measured by

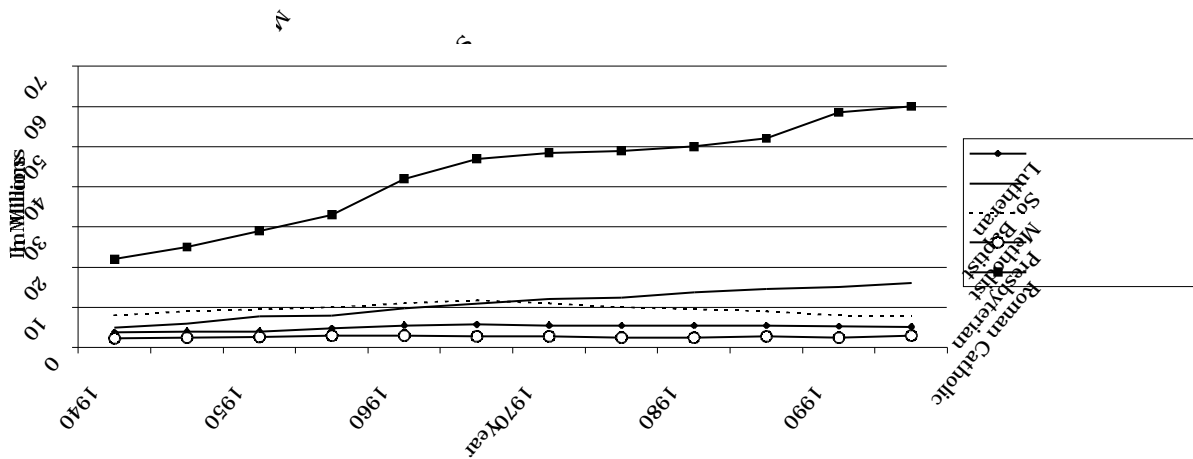
averaging the attendance at the “Four Key Sundays” during the year. This increase is in contrast with a 25 percent increase in the general population during this same period. The number of confirmed adults has grown by 12 percent during this period.



The Church Report Company

Other Denominations

While the Roman Catholic Church and some non-mainline Protestant churches have shown much more rapid rates of growth, the growth rates experienced by the Episcopal Church are comparable to other mainline denominations. It is interesting to note that despite the rapid growth in the non-mainline churches, their total numbers still are far below the mainline denominations.

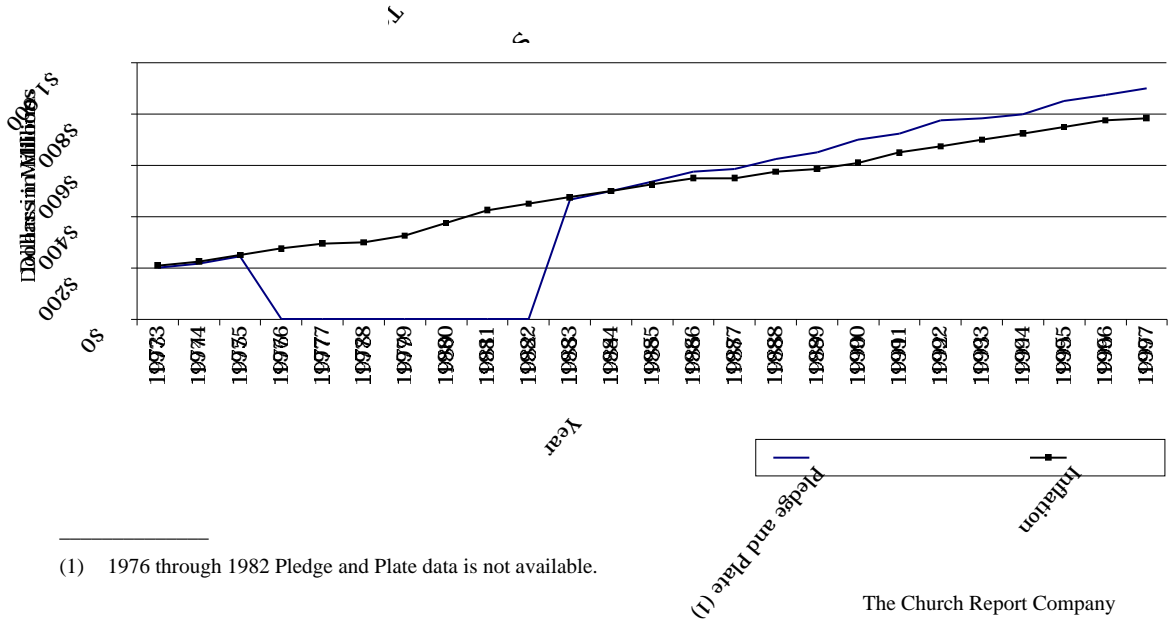


The Church Report Company

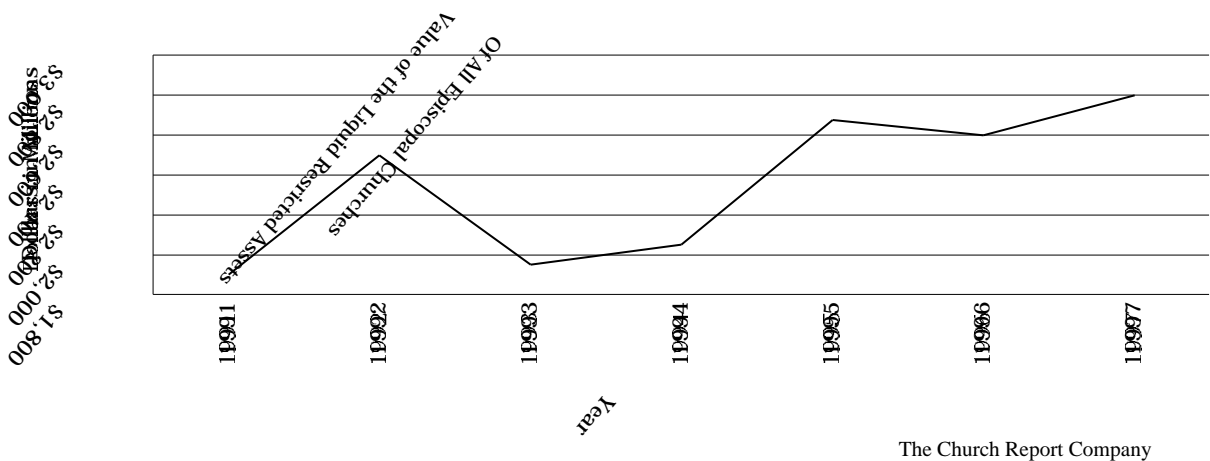
Finances

There is little data currently available to determine the relative financial health of the Episcopal Church over time. However, what is available indicates that the financial health of the

Church is strong and has outpaced inflation since 1973. When pledged and plate receipts since 1973 is divided by the number of members, it is evident that the average amount given has increased at an even more rapid rate.



Another indicator of the financial health of the Church is the total of all the restricted liquid assets of all Episcopal Churches. These assets have increased from a reported \$1.8 billion in 1991 to \$2.8 billion in 1997. This increase of a billion dollars in the last six years has resulted in an average annual compounded rate of growth of 6.8 percent.



Growth Patterns in Targeted Dioceses

As indicated in the introduction of this report, The Zacchaeus Project selected nine diverse dioceses as sites for intensive interviews. The growth patterns in those dioceses is indicative that the growth in the Episcopal Church has not been even across our country. The data shows that attendance and membership in the congregations of dioceses in the Sunbelt states increased markedly in the past 50 years, while those in the northern and mid-western states remained about even or declined slightly.

The dioceses included in The Zacchaeus Project showed the following patterns during the period of time from 1947 to 1996:

	<u>1947</u>	<u>1996</u>	<u>% of Change</u>
• Central Florida	34,000	40,000	+ 17.6%
• Kansas	13,000	14,000	+ 7.7%
• Los Angeles	97,000	86,000	- 11.3%
(This is due in part to the creation of the Diocese of San Diego out of part of the Diocese of Los Angeles.)			
• Massachusetts	119,000	80,000	- 32.8%
• Minnesota	34,000	31,000	- 8.8%
• Nevada	4,000	6,000	+ 50.0%
• North Carolina	20,000	45,000	+ 125.0%
• Texas	26,000	80,000	+ 208.0%
• Western Missouri	12,000	13,000	+ 8.3%

The Church Report Company

Bishops and Priests

The following chart provides information on clergy who are in active ministries since 1960 according to Church Pension Fund records (1998 figures are subject to change).

Additionally, there are 2,000 clergy who are inactive and others who are non-stipendiary and are therefore not included in this information.

	<u>1960</u>	<u>1970</u>	<u>1980</u>	<u>1990</u>	<u>1998</u>
Number Active Clergy	7,721	8,026	8,115	8,445	8,170
Male Clergy	7,950	8,868	7,959	7,555	6,497
Female Clergy	N/A	N/A	156	890	1,673
Average Compensation	6,207	10,174	18,832	34,292	46,109
Number Active Bishops	133	143	139	151	141
Number Retired Bishops	63	58	110	156	179

Church Pension Fund

The following chart provides information on newly ordained clergy since 1960.

<u>Year Ordained</u>	<u>Number of Clergy</u>	<u>Average Age</u>
1998	264	46.35
1995	354	45.54
1990	400	43.06
1985	434	41.24
1980	304	34.87
1975	261	33.19
1970	274	29.78
1965	251	28.69
1960	126	27.53

Church Pension Fund

Random Survey Findings

To assess the degree to which churches in the nine targeted dioceses are representative of all churches in the United States, the project interview churches and a random sample of other churches in the country were surveyed. The random sample was drawn in two steps:

1. Dioceses where interviews were conducted were matched to other dioceses of similar size (geographic diversity was a deciding factor where more than one diocese matched on size)
2. 30 churches were randomly sampled from each of the selected dioceses.

A two-page survey was sent to the interview and random sample churches. Overall, approximately 45 percent of the surveys were returned. The response rate did not differ significantly between the interview and random sample churches.

The following chart indicates the percentages of positive responses we received to the questions we asked in the survey.

<u>Item</u>	<u>% agreeing or strongly agreeing</u>
<u>Episcopal Identity</u>	
Christian education is central to life of congregation	84%
Congregation sees itself as part of the Anglican community	75%
Episcopalians more likely to ask questions than answer them	78%
Members bring a wide variety of perspectives to congregational life	93%
Episcopal Church more similar to other mainline denominations than different	72%
Outreach to the community is central to life of congregation	71%
Congregation has strong connections to other diocesan Episcopal Churches	48%

Congregation actively seeks new members 72%

Church Structures

Congregation knows about diocesan events before they occur 65%

Diocese communicates well with local congregations 62%

Structure of the Episcopal Church supports congregational growth and vitality 51%

Diocesan resources are helpful for the congregation 60%

Congregation uses resources provided by diocesan office 40%

Congregation uses resources provided by national church office 14%

National church office communicates well with the congregation 11%

Issues of congregational concern are discussed at diocesan meetings 50%

Leadership

Congregational lay leaders receive adequate training for their ministries 73%

Stewardship campaigns raise enough money to support ministries 71%

Lay volunteers have discerned a call to their ministries 87%

Congregation has enough lay leaders and volunteers to staff ministries 57%

Lay people in congregation take the initiative for developing new ministries 69%

Worship and Tradition

Episcopal traditions clearly define right and wrong 54%

Prayer is central to the life of the congregation 95%

The Bible is central to the life of the congregation 80%

The Eucharist is central to the life of the congregation 99%

The Book of Common Prayer is central to the life of the congregation 95%

Many people regularly attend services without joining the Church 38%

Congregation tries new things without worry about Episcopal traditions 28%

Small groups and specialized ministries are central to the life of the congregation 67%

Acknowledgements

The Episcopal Church Foundation wishes to acknowledge the efforts of all those who have contributed of their time and talents on behalf of The Zacchaeus Project and to thank them for their efforts. Special thanks are offered to all the lay and clergy in the targeted dioceses where interviews took place and to all the other respondents who willingly gave of their time to share their stories.

Co-Directors

Dr. Thomas P. Holland, Professor and Director of the Center for Social Services Research and Development, University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia

The Rev. Dr. William L. Sachs, Rector, St. Matthew's Episcopal Church, Wilton, Connecticut

Zacchaeus Advisory Committee

Mr. William G. Andersen, Executive Director, The Episcopal Church Foundation, New York, New York

Dr. Diana Butler Bass, Associate Professor of Religious Studies, Rhodes College, Memphis, Tennessee

The Rev. Dr. Frederick Burnham, Director, Trinity Institute, New York, New York

Mr. Thomas K. Chu, Director, Ministries with Young People Cluster, The Episcopal Church Center, New York, New York

Mr. William S. Craddock, Jr., Director, Cornerstone, Memphis, Tennessee

Mr. Vincent Currie, Jr., Diocesan Administrator, Episcopal Diocese of the Central Gulf Coast, Pensacola, Florida

Mrs. Linda Curtiss, Executive Vice-President, The Church Pension Fund, New York, New York

Dr. R. William Franklin, Dean, Berkeley Divinity School at Yale, New Haven, Connecticut

The Rev. Canon David A. Galloway, Rector, Christ Church, Tyler, Texas

The Rev. Canon Carlson Gerdau, Assistant to the Presiding Bishop, The Episcopal Church Center, New York, New York

The Rev. Carmen Guerrero, Officer for Jubilee Ministry, The Episcopal Church Center, New York, New York

The Rev. Ben E. Helmer, Interim Officer for Rural and Small Community Ministries, The Episcopal Church Center, New York, New York

Dr. Thomas P. Holland, Professor and Director of the Center for Social Services Research and Development, University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia

The Rev. Sandra A. Holmberg, Rector, St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, Fargo, North Dakota

The Rt. Rev. John B. Lipscomb, Bishop, Diocese of Southwest Florida, Ellenton, Florida

The Rt. Rev. F. Clayton Matthews, Bishop, Office of Pastoral Development, The Episcopal Church Center, Richmond, Virginia

The Rev. Dr. Wendel W. Meyer, The Memorial Church, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts

Mrs. Virginia Paul, Executive Council, The National Episcopal Church, Shreveport, Louisiana

The Rev. Dr. William L. Sachs, Rector, St. Matthew's Episcopal Church, Wilton, Connecticut

Ms. Stephanie Turnbull, Associate Director, Cornerstone, Memphis, Tennessee

Zacchaeus Research Associates

Dr. Diana Butler Bass, Associate Professor of Religious Studies, Rhodes College, Memphis, Tennessee

The Rev. Sarah Buxton-Smith, Listening Hearts Ministries, Buffalo, New York

The Rev. Canon Anne M. Clevenger, Canon, The Cathedral Church of St. Mark, Minneapolis, Minnesota

The Rev. Shannon P. Leach, Associate Rector, Trinity Episcopal Church, Princeton, New Jersey

Dr. Susanne C. Monahan, Assistant Professor of Sociology and Anthropology, Montana State University Bozeman, Bozeman, Montana

Ecumenical Advisory Committee

Dr. Nancy T. Ammerman, Professor of Sociology of Religion, Center for Social and Religious Research, Hartford Seminary, Hartford, Connecticut

Dr. Ian S. Evison, Director of Research, The Alban Institute, Bethesda, Maryland

The Rev. Alvin Jackson, Pastor, National City Christian Church, Washington, DC

Dr. Russell Richey, Professor of Church History, Duke University Divinity School, Durham, North Carolina

Dr. Wade Clark Roof, Professor and Sociologist, University of California at Santa Barbara, Santa Barbara, California

Dr. James P. Wind, President, The Alban Institute, Bethesda, Maryland

The Rev. Erica B. Wood, Warden, The College of Preachers, Washington, DC

Editors

Mr. William S. Craddock, Jr., Director, Cornerstone, Memphis, Tennessee

Ms. Stephanie Turnbull, Associate Director, Cornerstone, Memphis, Tennessee

Quantitative Consultants

Mr. Charles P. Clark, The Church Report Company, Montclair, New Jersey

Mrs. Linda Curtiss, Executive Vice-President, The Church Pension Fund, New York, New York

Dr. Susanne C. Monahan, Assistant Professor of Sociology and Anthropology, Montana State University Bozeman, Bozeman, Montana

Videographer

Dr. James M. Ault, Jr., James Ault Productions, Northampton, Massachusetts

Administrative Staff

Mr. William G. Andersen, Jr., Executive Director, The Episcopal Church Foundation, New York, New York

Mrs. Deborah P. Burnette, Executive Assistant, Cornerstone, Memphis, Tennessee

Mr. William S. Craddock, Jr., Director, Cornerstone, Memphis, Tennessee

Ms. Stephanie Turnbull, Associate Director, Cornerstone, Memphis, Tennessee