



ALL SAINTS'
EPISCOPAL + ATLANTA

FUTURE CHURCH TASK FORCE REPORT

Preamble

The Future Church Task Force consisted of a small group of parishioners and staff commissioned by the vestry to offer an assessment of the most viable opportunities for future vitality for the life of the parish and of the All Saints' city block. The objective of the task force was to identify potential aspirations for our church leadership to consider as it looks to the long-term future of the church over the next 50 years. The work presented in this report is intentionally ambitious and hopeful in outlook, trusting that as an Easter people, the future of the church and the future of the world always and evermore belongs to God. It is in that confidence that we present this report.

Reading: The task force studied 40 articles, book chapters, reports, or studies pertaining to the future across the four core areas of our life as a church:

- Life in community
- Children, youth and adult spirituality
- Faith and justice
- Worship and music

The task force also studied future trends within and beyond the Episcopal Church and studied some long-term financial modeling. The summary points of the reading done are presented in this report and a full reading resource list is offered at the end.

Reflections and Recommendations: Task force members offer reflections throughout the report and a series of long-term recommendations for future action are offered. Recommendations are evidence-based drawing on data about All Saints' and the experience of other churches and organizations. A full set of long-term recommendations is offered at the beginning of the report and also per section.

The Future Church Task Force Members: Amelia Baker, Luke Barton, Melanie Hardin, Missi McMorries (Chair), Bill Sullivan, Joshua Smith, Andy Barnett (Staff), Simon Mainwaring (Staff)

- The Season after Pentecost, 2024

Summary

The Future Church Task Force set out to take a long-term view of vitality such that current and future vestries would be equipped to prepare for changes happening around us in terms of fast-rising religious disaffiliation, concomitant financial implications, and the opportunities our downtown location presents us with. A plethora of data suggests that 50 years from now All Saints' will be a smaller parish yet there is ample opportunity for us to plot a course for that parish to be vibrant and for our city block to be a place where the local community is an essential part of that vitality.

Financial modeling suggests that our internal funding capacity as a parish will not be able in the long-term to fund both the care of a whole city block of buildings and our staffing and programming as a parish. While pledged giving at All Saints' is growing at twice the national and diocesan rate, and while we enjoy success in newcomer ministries who as givers are on average 8 to 10 years younger than established members, projections suggest that it simply won't be possible for the influx of new people and the increased giving of existing members to offset the loss of income over time due to mortality and a shrinking parish. This report recommends setting a strategy to limit capital improvement spending on the physical property in the immediate-term, assess how much of our block and our current staffing we can reasonably sustain longer term, and in the meantime pursue a multi-pronged approach to raise and diversify income streams.

This report recommends pursuing a new twin-model of life on the block, one where parish members thrive and where the local community thrives. It recommends engaging with the local community, especially with people who live within walking distance of the block, by creating mutual new ways for people to build belonging here, such as a new community cafe, wellness classes, volunteering with our core ministries, funding partnerships, and so on. While All Saints' faces the same headwinds as other churches in our diocese we also have the opportunity for new types of growth our Midtown location affords us.

To build parish vitality this report recommends growing a stronger culture of newcomer integration where a critical mass of existing members are engaged in welcoming and mentoring newcomers, and recommends seeing sharing space and resources with the local community as normative for our future. Similarly, with the central importance for the future of investing in households with people under 30 years old, this report recommends mentorship and other cross-generational practices with that demographic in mind. New emphases on life stage programming for adults, investing more in young

adults including the possibility of a young adult community in residence on the block, and creating mechanisms for parishioner-led innovation within a culture that is willing to fail and learn are also all recommended.

Numerous churches that the task force studied pursued an economic development model in their faith and justice work that invested in the growth of economic and social capital via work programs, missionally-oriented enterprise (e.g. food service and retail), and micro-financing. Successful programs also invested in relationships with people in need, locally and globally, as a means to mutual transformation and vitality. By encouraging clients to become volunteers and/or employees, churches and other organizations gradually shifted from an economic dependency mindset to one of economic partnership. This report recommends an expansion of the skillset of clergy and other leaders in community organizing and social entrepreneurship and encourages youth ministries to consider longer term global partnerships over one-time pilgrimages.

While many markers of vitality are currently present in All Saints' worship life, case studies from across the Episcopal Church reveal an array of innovation in worship that privileges local understandings of the sacred and norms for gathering. This report recommends continuing to diversify our worship offerings, building on recognized strengths including a more innovative service for families with young children, and a more traditional Saturday or weekday night time service such as sung Compline. The report also recommends continuing to integrate children and youth as full participants and leaders in corporate worship and to provide a similar route for ownership across all age ranges via new forms of lay-led liturgical creativity.

Overall, this task force believes that there are multiple opportunities open to All Saints' that offer viable and evidence-based paths toward vitality. To avail ourselves of those opportunities will require the church as both an organization and as a community to adapt and change. The role of the vestry in that adaptation and change will be cultural as much as it will be structural: we will need to change how we think about All Saints' as much as we will need to change how we do what we do here. To move from what is today a predominant membership mindset of what it means to be church toward a more diversified model that sees our city block as a place of belonging for both a parish and a city surrounding us will require imagination and the courage to ask our current church community to embrace change. The success of that mindset change will depend on the degree to which lay and ordained church leadership is able to build a guiding coalition around that vision. All Saints' can be confident in a vital future and this task force recommends this report to the vestry with enthusiasm and hope.

Long-Term Recommendations to the Vestry

The following is a set of recommendations to the vestry for long-term planning. It is understood that if adopted, some of the recommendations might be practicably taken up in the next 1-5 years while others might be pursued over a longer time period.

- **FUTURE DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS:** Grow a culture that chooses to adapt, confident that we can do so and remain true to our faith tradition
- **FUTURE DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS:** Grow a culture at All Saints' that moves us from the dominance of the membership model of church to a mixed model of All Saints' as a place for community for church members and city residents alike
- **FUTURE DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS:** Build bridges between All Saints' and the community living within walking distance of our block and develop:
 - Local community-focused activities
 - Partnerships with local organizations
 - A local community volunteer base for core ministries and other programs
- **FINANCIAL MODELING:** New sources of income should be examined such as:
 - Additional opportunities to monetize the block via retail establishments, ground leases, and other vehicles
 - A program for existing parishioners to endow their pledge at either 100% of their current levels or a smaller percentage
 - Partnerships with organizations to financially support our core ministries programs and activities
 - Expanded daycare on the block
 - A temporary small increase to the current endowment spending rule
- **FINANCIAL MODELING:** Prioritize expenditure on capital improvements in buildings and grounds achievable within a sustainable annual budgetary limit
- **FINANCIAL MODELING:** In the long-term, assess what can realistically be sustained in terms of use and maintenance of the block and staffing
- **LIFE IN COMMUNITY:** Grow a culture that continually returns people to an abundance and generosity mindset: preach, teach, and otherwise name that aspiration

- **LIFE IN COMMUNITY:** Grow a newcomer-oriented culture to keep on widening the circle of people who come to call All Saints' home and engage a much larger proportion of existing parishioners who see newcomer engagement as part of their ministry at All Saints'
- **LIFE IN COMMUNITY:** Establish a newcomer mentorship program so existing members and newcomers get more quickly and effectively connected
- **LIFE IN COMMUNITY:** Create opportunities for small groups and gatherings, meeting at times, in places and in ways that synch with the rhythms of people's lives rather than asking people to synch with the church's life
- **LIFE IN COMMUNITY:** Recruit wellness class instructors and develop and execute a strategy to draw populations living in walking distance to the block
- **LIFE IN COMMUNITY:** Offer our block's spaces as venues for community-building in the local community
- **CHILDREN, YOUTH, & ADULT SPIRITUALITY:** Invest resources and programming in households with individuals under 30 years of age
- **CHILDREN, YOUTH, & ADULT SPIRITUALITY:** Explore what would be needed to form a young adult/Episcopal Service Corps community that would be resident on the block
- **CHILDREN, YOUTH, & ADULT SPIRITUALITY:** Form a mentorship program between older adults and children, youth and their parents
- **CHILDREN, YOUTH, & ADULT SPIRITUALITY:** Grow more life event based programming (e.g. marriage, divorce, parenting, bereavement, retirement etc.) for all demographics
- **CHILDREN, YOUTH, & ADULT SPIRITUALITY:** Create a 'ministry lab', where parishioners can pioneer new program and activity ideas within a supportive and affirming architecture
- **FAITH AND JUSTICE:** Open an enterprise on the block, such as a community cafe, that can build social and economic capital for workers and clients as well as build relationships
- **FAITH AND JUSTICE:** Establish a micro-finance initiative in partnership with our core ministries with the goal of building both economic capital and mutual transformation via relationship
- **FAITH AND JUSTICE:** Seek to engage staff and clergy in community organizing and social entrepreneur training opportunities and education

- **FAITH AND JUSTICE:** Grow awareness in the parish about our global partnerships and seek ways to build mutual exchange between communities and persons in our different contexts
- **FAITH AND JUSTICE:** Challenge youth ministries to expand pilgrimage to longer term global partnerships
- **WORSHIP AND MUSIC:** Establish a service for families with young children
- **WORSHIP AND MUSIC:** Invite the youth vestry to name the full spectrum of ways they would like youth to engage in our worship life
- **WORSHIP AND MUSIC:** Develop a prayer ministry that could create an avenue for parishioners of all ages to craft prayers for the Prayers of the People, and on other special occasions compose alternative words to the Creeds, the Lord's Prayer and the Eucharistic Prayer
- **WORSHIP AND MUSIC:** Explore the establishment of a night time service on a Saturday or weekday night that draws on All Saints' strengths of music, beauty and tradition
- **WORSHIP AND MUSIC:** Strengthen integration of performing and visual arts in worship

#1 Future Demographic Trends

PATTERNS OF SHRINKING RELIGIOSITY: SUNDAY ATTENDANCE PATTERNS

- Statistical trends point to long-term decline in church-going across denominations, in the Episcopal Church in general and in this diocese and All Saints' in particular.
- **Long-term decline in average Sunday attendance in Episcopal Churches:** from 856,579 total average attendance in 2000, to 518,411 in 2019; projected to be 250,000 in 2040 and 150,000 by 2050. Between 2011 and 2022 national average attendance dropped from 671,571 to 372,924, a drop of 44%.
- **Diocese of Atlanta Sunday attendance shrinks:** between 2011 and 2022 average Sunday attendance in the Diocese of Atlanta shrank by 47%, from 16,426 to 8,695; noting the impact of Covid, between 2011 and 2019 the shrinkage was 18% or a rate of just over 2% per year.
- **All Saints' average Sunday attendance also falls:** between 2011 and 2023 average Sunday attendance at All Saints' fell from 746 to 437, a drop of 41%. In four/three-year increments:
 - 2011-2015: 7% drop (746 to 694)
 - 2016-2019: 10% drop (697 to 622)
 - 2019-2023: 29% drop (622 to 437)

Year to year patterns reveal the sharp decline brought on by Covid and the recovery since then:

- 2019-2020: 24% drop (622 to 472)
- 2020-2021: 43% drop (472 to 267)
- 2021-2022: 39% increase (267 to 371)
- 2022-2023: 18% increase (371 to 437)

Note: If average Sunday attendance at All Saints' rose to 500 and settled there, the impact of Covid on in-person worship would be a net decrease of about 20%.

PATTERNS OF SHRINKING RELIGIOSITY: MEMBERSHIP PATTERNS

- **Declining membership:** During the decade (2011-2022) national Episcopal Church membership declined by 444,897 from 2,029,582 to 1,584,685, a drop of 22%.
- **Diocese of Atlanta less rapid membership decline:** membership in the Diocese of Atlanta shrank from 50,132 in 2011 to 43,349 in 2022, a drop of 13% in a decade.
- **All Saints' also shrinks in membership over last dozen years:** in 2011 All Saints' dropped from 3,182 members to 2573 in 2023, a drop of about 19% although membership decline slowed since 2016 and was flat between 2022 and 2023 (from 2579 to 2573):
 - 2011-2015: 13% drop (3182 to 2782)
 - 2016-2019: 3% drop (2782 to 2695)
 - 2019-2023: 4% drop (2695 to 2573)

Year to year numbers reveal the following membership patterns as it relates to the progression of Covid:

- 2019-2020: 3% drop 2,695 to 2,613)
- 2020-2021: 2.6% increase (2,613 to 2,683)
- 2021-2022: 4% drop (2,683 to 2,579)
- 2022-2023: no change (2,579 to 2,573)

PATTERNS OF SHRINKING RELIGIOSITY: OTHER TRENDS

- **Church closures:** number of congregations in the Episcopal Church dropped from approx. 7000 in 2010 to 6,300 in 2021, a 10% closure rate per decade.
- **Dramatic decline in number of weddings in Episcopal Churches:** from 22,441 in 2000, to 6,148 in 2019; projected to be 1,500 in 2040 and 750 by 2050.
- **Similarly dramatic decline in number of baptisms:** from 46,603 in 2000, to 17,713 in 2019; projected to be 5,000 in 2040 and 750 by 2050.
- **About double number of clergy retiring than are being ordained:** in 2022, 225 new priests were ordained, while 400 clergy retired; many new ordinations are coming from Gen X or older generations.
- **The baby boomer cliff:** half of active clergy in the Episcopal Church will retire in the next 10 years.

- **Clergy shortage:** in 2023, at a spring conference of four provinces in the Episcopal Church (a province is a region of dioceses) 622 congregations were trying to fill vacancies with only 87 clergy identified as actively searching new calls.
- **All Saints': A large church in a denomination of small churches:** As of 2022, 93% of congregations in the Episcopal Church have an ASA (average Sunday attendance) of 150 or fewer. Only about 2% of parishes have an ASA of over 250 people. Median ASA is about 35, meaning that half of congregations have less than 35 in attendance on Sundays and half have more. Similarly, most churches (68%) in the Episcopal Church have 200 or fewer members.

All Saints' Demographics

- **All Saints': A younger church in an older denomination:** The Episcopal Church is an older and aging denomination with 49.5% of member's 65+ years and 12% under 18 in 2022. All Saints' is much younger with 32% 61+ years and 18% under 18. Over the past six years at All Saints' there are slightly more over 60's, but also slightly more young adults (20's and 30's).

2018		2024	
0-18:	20%	0-18:	18%
19-30:	16%	19-30:	15%
31-40:	9%	31-40:	12%
41-50:	13%	41-50:	9%
51-60:	15%	51-60:	14%
61-79:	23%	61-79:	25%
80+:	4%	80+:	7%

PATTERNS OF SHRINKING RELIGIOSITY: BROADER TRENDS

- A 2022 Pew Research Center report *Modeling the Future of Religion in America*, found that 64% of Americans, including children, identify as Christian, while religiously unaffiliated (nones) amount for 30% of the US population.
- At current rates Christianity would become a minority of the US population by 2070, either just below 50% or as low as 35%.
- Pew estimates that 31% of people raised Christian become unaffiliated between ages 15 and 29.
- Trends suggest that the US might be following the path taken over the past 50 years by many countries in western Europe e.g. in the UK, nones became the largest group in 2009.
- Studies have shown that the church is one of many social institutions that have lost public trust. For example, 13% of Americans identify as 'former Catholics' because of a loss of trust in the institution of the church.
- Other trends have been found to exacerbate religious disaffiliation: for instance, divorce and relationship breakdowns lead to greater rates of detachment from congregational belonging over time.

WHAT DO THESE TRENDS TELL US ABOUT ALL SAINTS' FUTURE?

- We should expect that the existing constituency of the metro-Atlanta population who might be inclined to make All Saints' their church home will continue to shrink over the next 50 years.
- Trends in other parts of the world such as England, suggest that the shrinking of the church may plateau and reach a new smaller normal, although because of a different funding model in the Church of England (where clergy are compensated by the national church and housed by the diocese) it is likely that in the Episcopal Church some smaller congregations will not be able to sustain their operations over the next 50 years and will close.
- We might expect All Saints' also to shrink but be able to sustain a new plateaued normative size congregation.
- We should also expect to need to shrink how that congregation is resourced in terms of staffing in particular so as to adapt costs to that new reality over the next 20 or so years.
- We might expect clergy to be drawn from beyond the U.S. in order to fill open positions. Larger congregations who are able to pay clergy more remaining more likely to employ domestic clergy than smaller congregations.
- Pastoral rites of passage like baptism, confirmation and weddings will decreasingly be a feature of our parish life.
- Our path to ongoing vitality is aided by ways we are an outlier within our denomination: we are younger demographically and we are larger.
- All this suggests that our window of time to be able to prepare for a future where Christians are in the minority in metro-Atlanta may be longer than some smaller, older and less well resourced churches.
- That said, while we have some time, we should take steps today to prepare for a future with a smaller religious community on our block.

TASK FORCE REFLECTIONS

- The Pew study found that a lot of switching out of religion is happening during the first 30 years of life. What can we do to guide people through their first three decades of life to prevent switching/prepare for switching that is inevitable?
- People are living more fragmented lives and don't have access to support structures. How might church be a place where people find those support structures and a place of healing in a relationally fractured society?
- It could be that the consequence of the demystifying movement of liberal Christianity has been a detachment from the mystery of God that has made the church's reason for being less compelling.
- What are the questions that people today in Atlanta wrestle with? How can we meet people with those questions on their hearts?
- If people have not had an early anchoring encounter with the church they may never anchor after that.
- People need multiple anchors: e.g. kids that are in choir here stay longer in youth ministries here; they have one more connection.
- Core ministries could serve as anchor opportunities that could give people a way into the life of the church. Are there opportunities for us to offer life event related ways for people to find a way into connection and community here? e.g. divorcees, mental health, parenting, elder care, other affinity groups.
- To have 'a wider door' that lets more people in who are looking for a diversity of things we would need to do things that we don't currently do. What are the opportunities that connect us with the people moving into Midtown?
- How can we leverage our strength as an intellectually curious community, as a place that asks existential questions?
- We are not the first place to try to make the transition from the membership model of church to something more. How do we start to look at ourselves differently to see ourselves as both a religious community and a non-religious community?
- Whatever we do has to be consistent with who we are. We have to adapt, *and* be true to our faith.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Grow a culture that chooses to adapt, confident that we can do so and remain true to our faith tradition**
- **Grow a culture at All Saints' that moves us from the dominance of the membership model of church to a mixed model of All Saints' as a place for community for church members and city residents alike**
- **Build bridges between All Saints' and the community living within walking distance of our block and develop:**
 - **Local community-focused activities**
 - **Partnerships with local organizations**
 - **A local community volunteer base for core ministries and other programs**

#2 Financial Modeling Over the Next 30 Years

BACKGROUND ON DENOMINATION AND ALL SAINTS' GIVING

- **Nationally giving rose:** across the denomination between 2011 and 2022 giving rose from \$1.25 billion to \$1.35 billion, a little under 8% increase.
- **Diocesan giving also rose:** Giving over the same period rose by \$4 million, or just over 10%, between 2011 and 2022.
- **All Saint's giving rose double the national and diocesan rate:** Giving at All Saints' rose from \$2.8 million in 2011 to \$3.4 million in 2023, an increase of 21%.
- **Newcomers and Pledging:** Of the 768 individuals who arrived as newcomers at All Saints' since 2019, 254 of them pledged a total of \$684,085 but gave a total of \$793,027. Like established members, newcomers tend to give a little more as a group than they pledge they will. These figures mean that 33% of newcomers pledge or give to the church.
- **Newcomer Giving vs Long-Term Replacement of Established Givers:** In 2024, existing members aged 80+ gave \$559,416 per year. Over the past five years newcomers pledged and gave a total of \$793,027, an average of \$158,605 per year. This trend suggests that in terms of giving, newcomer giving is not able alone to replace pledges lost as a function of projected mortality.
- **Age Distribution and Pledging:** In 2024, the largest pledging age bracket by numbers of pledgers is 60-64 years old (20% of total pledged income), with 75-79 second (11% of pledged income), 70-74 third (14% of pledged income) and 65-69 fourth (13% of pledged income). Pledgers aged 60+ account for 75% of pledged income, but only 32% of parish membership.
- **Emerging Giving Patterns by Demographics:** Newcomers in the top three largest giving categories are between 8 and 10 years younger on average than established members.
- **Age Distribution and Pledging for Newcomers:**
 - For newcomers since 2019, of the 18 newcomers that gave \$10k+ the average age was 58 years
 - The 14 who gave between \$5k and \$10k had an average age of 55
 - And the 27 newcomers who gave between \$2.5k and \$5k had an average age of 54

- **Age Distribution and Pledging for Established members:**
 - For established members, of the 77 members that gave \$10k+ the average age was 66 years
 - The 114 who gave between \$5k and \$10k had an average age of 66 years
 - The 218 members who gave between \$2.5k and \$5k had average age of 64
- **Newcomer vs Established Givers by Giving Level:** Giving patterns by giving group for the largest three levels of giving trend closely between newcomers and established members:
 - For established members, pledgers giving \$10k+ give 52% of total pledges. Newcomers since 2019 giving \$10k+ give 52% of total newcomer pledges
 - For established members, pledgers giving \$5k-\$10k give 23% of total pledges. Newcomers since 2019 giving \$5k-\$10k give 19% of total newcomer pledges
 - And for established members, pledgers giving \$5k-\$10k give 13% of total pledges. Newcomers since 2019 giving \$5k-\$10k give 16% of total newcomer pledges

INCOME

- **Pledge, Plate and One-Time Gifts:** Assumed 2% growth matching the 1.9% average over the past 10 years
- **Endowment:** Approximately 88% of the endowment distributions go to the All Saints' operating budget. The other 12% goes into specific funds to be used for designated purposes.
 - **Distributions:** Distributions from the endowment are currently at 4.5% of the past 12 quarter balances per All Saints' Endowment guidelines.
 - **Earnings:** Currently, the endowment grows at 7% per year. As of July, 2024, the past 5, 10 and 20 year figures have been 7.1%, 6.9% and 7.9% respectively. The benchmark indexes averages are 8.4%, 7.5% and 8.3% respectively.
 - **Contributions:** Past donations to the endowment have averaged about \$150k for the previous 5 years and \$400k over the past 10 years. The 10 year average includes a \$3.1 million gift. The rolling 5 year average of forecast donations from current Cornerstone members range from \$260k to \$550k. That said, overall the projection of Cornerstone donations is very subjective and difficult.

EXPENSES

- **Inflation:** As expenses are modeled out over the next 25 years, expense line items are inflated using specific indexes.
- **Admin:** Projected to increase at CPI, 2.5% in current modeling.
- **Building Maintenance and Operating Costs:** This line item is projected to increase at the Building Repair and Maintenance index of 3.0%. The national index growth has averaged 2.8% since 2009 and the 5 and 10 year average for all AS has been 5.47% and 6.5% respectively.
- **Personnel:** Personnel cost in 2023 was \$2.44 million. All Saints' personnel line grew at 2.8% over the last 10 years.
- **Other Expenses:** Other expenses are assumed to grow at CPI, 2.5% in current modeling.

WHAT DOES THIS DATA TELL US ABOUT ALL SAINTS' FUTURE?

- Making no change to the current range of income streams will not sustain All Saints' into its long-term future.
- Given that All Saints' growth in pledging is double the rate of diocesan and national levels it is reasonable to assume that All Saints' parishioners will continue to give very generously over the next decade and more.
- Furthermore, when newcomer pledging and giving is compared to established members pledging there is a high degree of similarity which suggests that trends in giving with regards to pledge levels and giving as a proportion of total numbers of members should remain fairly stable over the next decade.
- The good news is that the average age of the highest three levels of newcomer givers is 8 to 10 years younger than the same levels of giving for existing members. While the top of our current giving pyramid is significantly older than the parish as a whole, we are trending younger among newcomers.
- However, in spite of all the success with drawing newcomers to All Saints' and encouraging them to become new givers, noting the age profile of the highest three levels of givers and the projected replacement rate of the oldest top levels of givers by newcomers, it is highly unlikely that new pledging alone will be able to replace that lost income.
- All Saints' could face a significant shortfall in income over expenses over the next 30 years.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- New sources of income should be examined such as:
 - Additional opportunities to monetize the block via retail establishments, ground leases, and other vehicles
 - A program for existing parishioners to endow their pledge at either 100% of their current levels or a smaller percentage
 - Partnerships with organizations to financially support our core ministries programs and activities
 - Expanded daycare on the block
 - A temporary small increase to the current endowment spending rule
- Prioritize expenditure on capital improvements in buildings and grounds achievable within a sustainable annual budgetary limit
- In the long-term, assess what can realistically be sustained in terms of use and maintenance of the block and staffing

#3 Life In Community

QUALITIES OF COMMUNITIES THAT THRIVE

- The church's vocation is to dwell in and share abundant life, and to invite people into the bigger story of God's generosity. Churches should see their buildings as centers of abundant life.
- Abundance is possible when churches reject the scarcity mindset (mammon) and embrace the mindset of God's abundance and provision (manna). That change is possible when churches believe that the church is primarily God's enterprise not their own.
- Generosity is the best investment a church and community can make.
- Church is a place that models social relationships not often found elsewhere, and the goal of forging relationships with people on the margins is to achieve with rather than settle for - to be mutually reinforcing social entrepreneurs rather than donors and receivers of social service. Churches should see people as assets not deficits.
- Church is a place that offers to the world what the world most urgently needs: a community of hope.
- Communities that thrive are generative communities - places that are aspirational, participatory and financially sustainable.
- Within the Episcopal Church, thriving churches tend to have a set of common characteristics. They tend to be:
 - Multi-racial congregations
 - Have 36% or more members aged under 34
 - Have a clear mission and purpose
 - Feel spiritually alive and vital
 - Are willing to change
 - Have limited or no conflict
 - Have four or more worship services a weekend
 - Have two or more non-typical worship services
 - Have bi-lingual or non-English services
 - Have worship services that feel 'vibrant and engaging'

- Have worship that often, sometimes or always uses percussion
- Have children and youth leading worship activities very often
- Have a vibrant or even 'chaotic' coffee hour
- Existing members actively engage in recruiting new members
- Newcomer follow up happens across multiple touch points and people
- Are active across 6 or more communication channels/platforms
- Have special events and fellowship activities at least weekly
- See Sunday school for children and youth as a speciality of the church
- Have multiple full-time clergy
- Have younger clergy
- Have a consistent rotation of lay leadership

COMMUNITY VITALITY BY BUILDING RELATIONAL SOCIAL CAPITAL

- Homeboy Industries in Los Angeles does gang intervention work with people on the margins by privileging relationship-building and opportunities to build social and economic capital as a way of healing wounded people.
- The model is grounded in mutuality: blessings are received in both directions, giver and receiver demarcations are blurred, those in need in time become those who lead (two-thirds of the 100 staff are graduates of the \$28 million organization's programs).
- Another example is St. Stephen's Cafe in Norwich, England, a cafe based on grace where people pay what they can. Their experience was that people who could pay more did which more than covered the cost of those who could not.
- St. Stephen's goal is to 'hold different people together' and create an environment of mutual transformation where former recipients of subsidized food at the cafe over time become volunteers working alongside existing volunteers, and in other cases former recipients of subsidized food are now serving on the church's vestry.
- St. Stephen's also invested in a community worker to engage people who come to the cafe in need of navigating opportunities to build their social and economic capital.

CHURCHES BUILDING VITALITY VIA A MIXED ECONOMY

- Grace Cathedral, San Francisco, formed 'Grace Arts', a paid subscription service for classes, arts events, and access to guided tours for the city population in a rapidly secularizing context (only 35% of San Franciscans identify as religious). Currently, 820 households subscribe to Grace Arts, versus 550 churchgoing households.
- They are discovering that agnostics and otherwise non-religious individuals describe feeling at home at Grace through these new pathways to belonging.
- The average age of a Grace participant across religious and secular activities combined dropped from 63 to 40 in two years.
- St. Isidore in Houston, TX, has pursued a model of 'church beyond walls' with a food truck, 'Warrior Church' for veterans suffering with PTSD, a 'Taco-church' breakfast gathering, and more, building on the principle that church need not be a one-size fits all proposition. When the church can customize its expressions it is more able to fit with the rhythms of people's lives, especially for those for whom Sunday as a sabbath is not a viable option.
- A church with many walls is by nature a diverse church, not merely in its multiple expressions of church, but by the diversity of people it draws.
- Sacred Trinity in Salford, England, also builds vitality via diversity by offering a rotating pattern of worship each week and by offering the church space as an arts venue for various performing arts entities thus casting the church space as a single venue for secular and religious expression (much like Grace Cathedral, San Francisco).

TASK FORCE REFLECTIONS

- We should not be limited by anxiety or scarcity; we should be willing to embrace an abundant mindset that sees enough for everyone - a manna mindset.
- We hear a lot about wanting to be more diverse, through the years at All Saints', and the Welcome Table is a service that allows us to see a diversity of people we might never see on a Sunday morning; it is a smaller gathering - 30-something - and maybe that is the size that allows us to have intimacy and relationship.
- Can All Saints' become a heartsedge? The Edge is the nones, the disadvantaged, and the heart is the church community.
- Volunteerism is a challenge. How can we become an inviting church? Do people come here and see all that is going on and assume that the church does not need their help?

- Buckhead Church offers 'gives to get' ministries like Bible study in people's homes where the church provides food and childcare and then that creates longitudinal buy-in.
- Will we minimize the religious component by diversifying what a church does?
- The church that decided to focus in on the arts wasn't just an event space; it was a space where community happens.
- Would be great to have a mentorship program for newcomers, people who would be willing to mentor people with existing members who share an affinity.
- Mentorship: power of this in the life of other people's lives as they are being formed; saying you've got to go on the journey for yourself but I will go with you.
- Choosing to introduce ourselves to people and get to know the different age groups here; easy to get in a rhythm of speaking to people we know ('circles of friends create walls' - Geoffrey Hoare)
- What would that it look like for us to be a church where a stranger crosses the courtyard to build a relationship?
- There is a clear pattern here that shows how church vitality grows via diversity: of programming, of people, of ways to be part of a church campus, both religiously and non-religiously. As a downtown church, All Saints' has huge potential to diversify activity in the pursuit of a vital city block.
- There is an opportunity for us to diversify what it means to belong or be a member at All Saints'. People already have a sense of belonging in our church beyond religiously oriented programming and activity. While not losing our religious life, new avenues of belonging are open to us, including but not limited to our core ministries.
- There is also a clear pattern that shows how effective partnerships are in the examples above. Our core ministries partners MAC and Covenant Community are long-standing non-profit partners on the block who we could consider developing new partnership ventures with, and we could also pursue new partners for such ventures.
- On one hand there is a lot of conversation at All Saints' about a dearth of volunteers in some areas, yet our database shows us that in other areas like refugee ministries and last year's Habitat for Humanity build we had an abundance of volunteers. How might what we do together as a church better reflect what people want to do with their discretionary time?

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Grow a culture that continually returns people to an abundance and generosity mindset: preach, teach, and otherwise name that aspiration**
- **Grow a newcomer-oriented culture to keep on widening the circle of people who come to call All Saints' home and engage a much larger proportion of existing parishioners who see newcomer engagement as part of their ministry at All Saints'**
- **Establish a newcomer mentorship program so existing members and newcomers get more quickly and effectively connected**
- **Create opportunities for small groups and gatherings, meeting at times, in places and in ways that synch with the rhythms of people's lives rather than asking people to synch with the church's life**
- **Recruit wellness class instructors and develop and execute a strategy to draw populations living in walking distance to the block**
- **Offer our block's spaces as venues for community-building in the local community**

#4 Children, Youth and Adult Spirituality

SUPPORTING FAMILIES TO NURTURE THEIR CHILDREN'S SPIRITUAL GROWTH

- Studies show that parents are the biggest influence on the spiritual growth of their children, which is the opposite to the culture of dropping kids off at the experts.
- One of the strongest factors associated with older teens keeping their faith as young adults is parents who talked about religion and spirituality at home and who attended church regularly as a family.
- Other studies found that faith formation that keeps direct conversation about faith, Jesus and God at the core of curricula is much more effective at grounding children and youth in faith than curricula and conversation that is avoidant of more religious language and is limited to Christian ethics and social justice.
- Teens especially are looking for how faith can have direct relevance to their daily lives rather than lessons about how to be a better person - lessons they already have in abundance in school, in sports teams, and in other places.
- According to LifeWay Research, 'teens who had five or more adults from the church invest in them during the ages of 15 to 18 were less likely to leave the church after high school.'
- Research shows how essential intergenerational worship, relationship-building, and other such program and activities are to the spiritual formation of teenagers.
- All Saints', Northampton, UK, offered access to high quality music education via a church choir that was able to meet a need that was not being met in the local school system.
- It developed three educational choirs, integrated them fully into the life of the church and also offered them the chance to sing nationally and overseas thus putting the program on the map in the city of Northampton

ADULT SPIRITUALITY ORIENTED TO THE WORLD

- Barbara Brown Taylor encourages us to order our belonging first to the human family and then to the Christian family that teaches us how to be human.
- She sees the primary mission the church therefore not to grow religion but heal the planet with any partners willing to join in that endeavor

- In a time of loose connections where people are less institutionally oriented and fixed in one place, how might churches see themselves less as places people come to in order to attend to their spiritual lives, and more as life centers or 'base camps' such that people can be equipped to navigate the spiritual lives they are attending to out in the world?
- Episcopal bishop, Greg Rickel argues that churches have been getting the purpose of church back to front, treating what should be a base camp as 'permanent residences'. Rickel states that in order to operate as 'base camps' churches will need to offer challenging 'rules of life' so the church can be a distinctive spiritual presence.
- Rickel also names that churches will need to recognize that they may get only one opportunity to connect with a person so need to be prepared to make the most of it and so put more emphasis on touching people's lives than gaining new members.

YOUNG ADULTS, INNOVATION AND FAILURE

- Sociologist Robert Wuthnow argues that congregations will have to engage young adults much more robustly if they are to survive the century.
- Young adults are marrying later and the model of leaving young adults alone until they have children is no longer a sound strategy because too many uncouple from religion by then for good, or never attach in the first place.
- As urban America becomes more diverse, urban churches have the potential to become spaces where young adults can immerse in that diversity in non-competitive settings that present a different prospect to them for building social capital than the gym, the bar or club, or the workplace.
- Brian McLaren argues that churches put disproportionately meager resources into young adults compared to the resources poured into children, youth and family ministries.
- McLaren also argues that churches should grow stronger relationships with campus ministers who will help them better understand a mostly misunderstood constituency.
- Part of the inclination churches will need to have is to be willing to fail, and fail fast. Mike Yaconelli - a seasoned youth ministry leader - tells the story of working hard to establish a college campus worship ministry that failed to draw in any students over a nine month period - none - but ultimately ended up as a form of worship that appealed to mostly women over 60 years old, and now sustains a small congregation on campus for that age group. Failure turned to unexpected success.

- St. Mark's, Philadelphia has a small community of young adults (Episcopal Service Corps) who for a year each share a home on church property, follow a common rule of life, eat together, lead worship, and serve the church and local community. They act as an essential source of vitality not only for other young adults in the Philadelphia area who might connect with St. Mark's, but for the vitality people of all backgrounds might experience on the church campus.

TASK FORCE REFLECTIONS

- If we invest in the next generation then we become a generative source - like Jesus where power flows through him.
- We need to support parents, grandparents, or whoever cares for children to help them find ways to draw their families into this community.
- Is there a culture in the Episcopal church that makes it hard for people to talk about God around our dinner tables?
- How will people look for a church community who have not been shaped at all by a church faith tradition?
- We need to be a church that is willing to fail early and often, to learn the shape of the future by innovating our way there.
- We live in a society where we are digitally connected but socially isolated. Our messaging should be: come and taste the real thing, this is community not just people like you/us but all sorts of human conditions and expressions.
- As adults we have to have a sense of hope; church can be a refuge from a world that can be too much to bear; a refuge that can reinforce a sense of hope.
- To be a community where we genuinely care for people; sometimes it is one person at a time, like Covenant Community.
- How does a young adult come away from All Saints' feeling that this is a community that cares for them?
- The block could be a place for people to come and grow in relationship because there are low barriers to being here.
- Create an environment where people will want to dwell. A welcome with no strings attached. A place where what we value most is the power of non-competitive, mutually transformational authentic encounter and relationship.
- Be a community where we choose to orient ourselves for other's good.

- Place Jesus at the center of how we form faith in children.
- We want children to know that we love them, that they are valued. How can we do things with one another across generations and pursue an integrative approach?
- When life throws you a curve ball, the care and honesty you might find here could be transformational.
- In a society that has so much scarcity, 'we've got to be the manna'.
- Frank Ross would preach, 'do not be afraid'. That is the word that people receive from one another here when the wheels do come off in their lives and they need to be met. This is a community where we can find one another in the crucible of loss and discover love and new hope.
- There is an opportunity for us to more fully equip parents and grandparents as spiritual guides for their children.
- We also have an opportunity to build a culture of mentorship across older generations such that families are supported by a community of older adults who invest in their spiritual formation so that they can then pass on that investment in the lives of the children of the parish and their parents.
- How could All Saints' be a 'base camp' church rather than a religious/spiritual filling station? What would we change about our adult formation offerings as well as our culture around learning as a parish to become that base camp?
- With such a concentration of young adults living in walking distance from All Saints' how could our block become a destination for that demographic to make it their own?
- A resident young adult community could provide an anchor for the kind of social fabric we might want to develop on the block offering us a better understanding of that stage of life than most people on staff and in lay leadership at All Saints' typically have due to our own age profile.
- We have been slower to innovate (e.g. The Welcome Table service) than a culture of fail fast and innovate our way into an unknown future calls for. We would be well-served by creating space for more innovation and be a church that supports that failure so we can learn from it both in terms of culture and institutional investment.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Invest resources and programming in households with individuals under 30 years of age
- Explore what would be needed to form a young adult/Episcopal Service Corps community that would be resident on the block
- Form a mentorship program between older adults and children, youth and their parents
- Grow more life event based programming (e.g. marriage, divorce, parenting, bereavement, retirement etc.) for all demographics
- Create a 'ministry lab', where parishioners can pioneer new program and activity ideas within a supportive and affirming architecture

#5 Faith and Justice

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT JUSTICE WORK

- Bob Lupton argues for a move away from what he calls 'toxic charity', a form of 'service to' that is fundamentally transactional, limits giving to a one-way relationship, does for people living in poverty what they could do for themselves, and tends to subordinate the self-interests of the giver over the receiver.
- Instead he advocates for:
 - Individual and community development work and the building of economic capital by making money with those lacking economic power.
 - Listening to indigenous knowledge and leadership; becoming present in the local community noting that the best investments are not the programs volunteers initiate but the capacity and network of a local partner.
 - Following an asset-based community development model that looks for assets in the community rather than deficits.
 - Investing in order to build capital in the community such as micro-financing, skill and leadership development, employment creation and networking, all established with a transition plan that will name the goal date for transitioning ownership to indigenous leadership.
- Aaron Stauffer argues that for clergy to be equipped to lead this kind of community development work, they will need a different kind of theological education in community organizing. They will need to build alliances with community-based organizations and individuals in communities.

FAITH AND JUSTICE WORK AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIPS

- Akin to Lupton's community development model, a number of church and other faith-based organizations have pursued justice by engaging economic development partnerships.
- The Greyfriars Church and the Grassmarket Community Project formed a partnership in Edinburgh:
 - Grassmarket Furniture is a self-sufficient enterprise that recovers, restores, and sells on bespoke furniture that at the same time builds workplace skills.

- The Grassmarket cafe pursued the goal that a 'hand up rather than a handout could succeed commercially' and launched a catering business offering service industry skill development to formerly homeless individuals.
- Jericho, a job club that meets in a small Baptist church in Balsall Heath in Birmingham, England, has over 30 years built a range of social enterprises - a wood reclamation yard, a construction company, a reuse and recycle project - to offer job training that today supports hundreds of people into work every year and over 30 years has helped over 8,000 build their own economic capital.
- Jericho became literate in the social and economic barriers people faced in building their own economic capital: credit rating, prison time, lack of job experience, low skill levels, a lack of workplace habits, mental illness, a learning disability, those who have endured modern slavery, people who are undereducated, people lacking adequate literacy and numeracy.
- Inverness Foodstuff and Ness Bank Church formed a partnership to tackle food insecurity not only by providing food but by tackling poverty at a systemic level, and encourages clients to become volunteers, thus inviting them to gradually shift from an economic dependency mindset to an economic partnership one.
- The partnership also gathers for meals to build community around the table, seeking to break the social isolation that often makes economic hardship so challenging to find the motivation and encouragement to break out of.
- The partnership also helps the church be part of 'a bigger story' of local structural issues of poverty that has allowed the church to be put on the map for local community members in a time of shrinking interest in religion.
- Westray and Papay Kirks, Orkney Islands, developed a mutual model of global partnership with Malawian congregations, working together on renewable energy projects in both places and learning from one another about faith lived out in their respective contexts

A POLITICALLY INCLUSIVE AND COMMERCIAL APPROACH TO JUSTICE WORK

- Sam Wells writes about an accompaniment mindset - a theology of being with people. He applies that to people on the margins but also as a way to think about political diversity and justice work.
- Privileging relationship over being right (or righteous) allows people to be in community when they disagree.
- Wells writes that there are three ways to seek justice: legislation, protest, and by modeling the kind of community the first two seek to build.

- Wells also writes about the need for churches to adopt commerce as not only a sustainable way of doing gospel work but as gospel work itself. Successful commercial ventures in one area of a church's life can support other areas of a church's life, and they can in and of themselves be some of the most effective examples of the church being a vehicle for changing lives.

TASK FORCE REFLECTIONS

- Know your neighborhood: what would our neighborhood be?
- What's our relationship to our 'neighborhood' - the folks who use our block with core ministries? It is mostly invisible. Happens mostly unknown to the parish as a whole.
- We don't often ask what people need outside of emergencies; we should do that.
- All of the case studies had an entry point which gave them a way into life of community; each of them had a hook.
- Noticed a great deal of coordination with government and grant awarding bodies.
- Would we want to focus on a particular population?
- We might think about the block as a notion not only a place; how might we take the work of the block on the road?
- The key for a lot of these case studies was having proximity, building relationship and community.
- Our relationship to core ministries is mostly transactional.
- Strengths of the parish are underutilized: law and finance.
- Our core ministries are not about dependency but are about re-building individual and family vitality.
- I feel that All Saints' is seen as an outreach church.
- Some of the Midtown location drives that feeling of serving others.
- We're a church that lives its values.
- What if we had enterprise on this block/as the block: Microfinance that emphasized character over cash flow and credit scores; what if we knew people who received micro-finance and accompanied them on their journey to self-sufficiency?

- Have to have a constellation of ways by which we accompany people, not just money.
- If the goal is transformation, then the most effective method of transformation is proximity and food.
- We need to build up awareness of the partnership with Tanzania; how could we develop there being a real partnership: prayer, pictures, tell our stories? We need to communicate with the parish.
- I like the idea of engaging the youth in global partnerships; shifting from pilgrimage to global partnership.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Open an enterprise on the block, such as a community cafe, that can build social and economic capital for workers and clients as well as build relationships**
- **Establish a micro-finance initiative in partnership with our core ministries with the goal of building both economic capital and mutual transformation via relationship**
- **Seek to engage staff and clergy in community organizing and social entrepreneur training opportunities and education**
- **Grow awareness in the parish about our global partnerships and seek ways to build mutual exchange between communities and persons in our different contexts**
- **Challenge youth ministries to expand pilgrimage to longer term global partnerships**

#6 Worship and Music

CONTEXTUALLY INTELLIGENT WORSHIP INNOVATION

- Bushwick Abbey (Episcopal) in Brooklyn advertises as 'church that doesn't suck'. Its culture is welcoming and community-oriented, meeting in the Radio Bushwick space equipped with bar and mood lighting. Music is accessible and prayers and lyrics are grounded in local issues.
- Another abbey, Fremont Abbey (Episcopal) in Seattle, WA, transitioned from being a shop front mission called 'The Living Room' merging church with a coffee shop to become a 'third place' co-op that houses a community arts center, a community cafe and a church community (Church of the Apostles).

DIVERSIFYING WORSHIP BY BUILDING ON TRADITIONAL STRENGTHS

- St. Mark's Episcopal Cathedral, Seattle, established Compline with a robed professional choir in the 1950's and has been going strong ever since.
- The cathedral permits people to sit, stand, or lie down, there are pillows on the floor and low lighting.
- The service is often filled with young people from across Seattle, one of the nation's most post-religious metropolitan areas. The congregation does not participate in any of the service other than by listening.
- Recently, the cathedral has added 'Questioning Together' at 7:30pm ahead of Compline at 9:15pm with facilitated group discussion with guest speakers on topics ranging from 'Poetry and Spirituality', 'How much is enough?', 'Mysticism, Food and Faith' and so on.

UTILIZING SECULAR MUSIC IN CHURCH WORSHIP

- Paige Blair describes the evolution of the U2charist service in her Rhode Island Episcopal Church and beyond using the music of U2 as architecture for a liturgy that drew people beyond church members both to U2's music and to the pursuit of the Millennium Development Goals.
- Similar models have been explored at Grace Cathedral in San Francisco with the 'Beyonce Mass' which used her music and drew over 1,000 people to the cathedral. The Beyonce Mass is the creation of Rev. Yolanda M. Norton, Executive Director of the Global Arts and Theology Experience, and draws on Beyonce's womanism asking 'how black women find their voice, represent the image of God, and create spaces for liberation'.

INTERGENERATIONAL WORSHIP

- Worship that seeks to build community across generations asks how accessible worship is across different generations.
- It seeks to emphasize the full participation of all worshippers and extend leadership opportunities to as great a diversity of generations as possible.
- A multigenerational community builds a culture that is at home with sounds from people of all ages, including babies and children.
- Churches that pursue intergenerational worship are willing to commit the additional time in worship that it will often result in and will claim flexibility in worship as a core characteristic.
- Such churches will also seek to involve youth in worship in particular as they begin their first years of seeing church as an option rather than a family activity. Youth-oriented churches will seek to:
 - Honor all graduations
 - Host community events and organizations honoring youth as much as possible
 - Invite youth to preach more often than once a year
 - Invite youth to membership in traditionally adult-only ministries such as altar guild and flower guild
 - Invite youth to become Eucharistic ministers and claim a ministry at the heart of worship's most sacred moment
 - Invite youth to write their own prayers, a creed, or even a Eucharistic prayer for special services

TASK FORCE REFLECTIONS

- On recent travels the churches that had vitality had visible signs of life from the street - balloons, coffee, people connecting with one another.
- We must allow for mistakes, have room for people to be around the altar as they are.
- If we want to be more inclusive of youth then we might need to add prayers about the pressures in their lives, e.g. SAT's, exams, or young adults e.g. debt, work, finding life partners. Indeed, how could we mark the occasions of life whatever stage we are in?

- Could we take more advantage of the liberties we have to be more expansive with our prayers, and other parts of our liturgy?
- What if we had music that is more engaging, accessible?
- We have to do a lot of and's before we do too many or's. We need to go by the book, *and* we need to move beyond it. If you have too little that is the same you can lose the thrust, the power of the tradition.
- So what is our charism?
- Thinking about St. Mark's, Seattle, and the Compline service: who could we imagine coming to a service at night, on a Saturday, a Monday?
- We have got to make a fundamental turn from a membership model and not be too focused on our numbers.
- A lot of the case studies wanted a more relaxed, informal service that feel less staid. Church more like an AA meeting, opening a space for people to find their way in.
- Good to add on a more young family-friendly service, need to have an offering that meets the needs of that age group.
- Would love to combine to one service at 10.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Establish a service for families with young children**
- **Invite the youth vestry to name the full spectrum of ways they would like youth to engage in our worship life**
- **Develop a prayer ministry that could create an avenue for parishioners of all ages to craft prayers for the Prayers of the People, and on other special occasions compose alternative words to the Creeds, the Lord's Prayer and the Eucharistic Prayer**
- **Explore the establishment of a night time service on a Saturday or weekday night that draws on All Saints' strengths of music, beauty and tradition**
- **Strengthen integration of performing and visual arts in worship**

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- Jericho, Birmingham, *Heart Edge*, 2021
- Ness Bank Church, Inverness, *Heart Edge*, 2021
- 'The theologically trained organizer', *The Christian Century*, Aaron Stauffer, 2024
- *Toxic Charity*, Robert Lupton, 2011
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- 'What does it mean to be an inclusive church?', *The Christian Century*, Sam Wells, 2024

#6 Worship and Music

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- *A Story of Anglimergence, Karen Ward, 2009*
- *Compline at St. Mark's Cathedral, 2024*
- *‘A New Vision of Discipleship’ in Transforming Disciples: The Episcopal Church of
the 21st Century, Linda Grenz, 2008*
- *U2charist, Blair Paige*
- *‘What Congregations Practicing Intergenerational Worship Have In Common’,
Building Faith*
- *‘When To Do Youth Sunday? EVERY Sunday’, Building Faith*



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