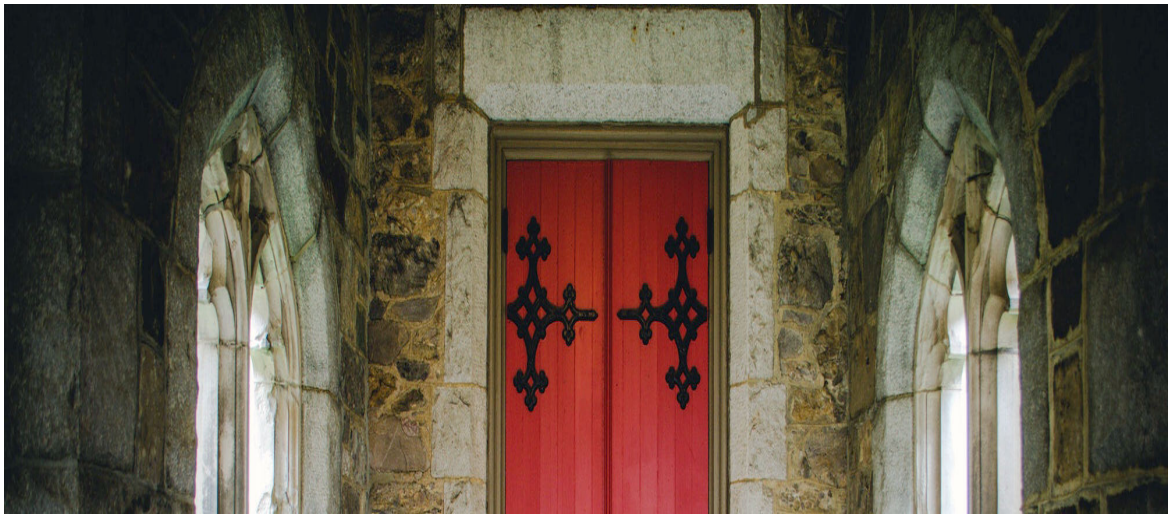
Landscape
Executive Summary

Episcopal Diocese of Chicago

2025



"And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ - to the glory and praise of God." - Philippians 1:9-11

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Organizational Intelligence You Can Use

In February and early March of 2025, the Landscape Assessment was administered in English and Spanish for the Episcopal Diocese of Chicago. The assessment closed in early March 2025. Within the Episcopal Diocese of Chicago, 936 people responded to the assessment. These responses have been benchmarked against other Regional Associations within the Holy Cow! Consulting database to determine what is typical, exceptional, or a growth opportunity for the Episcopal Diocese of Chicago. Out of the 936 responses, the following is the breakdown of those respondents by their role within this Diocesan system:

Role	Percentage of Responders	Number of Responders
Congregation Member	49%	456
Active Clergy	10%	98
Diocesan Lay Leader	3%	25
Diocesan Staff	1%	14
Nonparochial Ministries	1%	13
Retired Clergy	8%	72
Vestry Members (serving in the last three year)	17%	157
Current Vestry Officer	11%	101
Totals	**100%**	**936**

Respondent Profile:

The age of respondents to this assessment is in the higher range when compared to other Regional Associations, with 62% of responders in the age bracket of 65 and older. 19% of responders are in the 55 to 64 age range. 10% in the 45 to 55 age range. 6% in the 35 to 44 years of age range. The remainder of the participants, or 4%, were under 35 years of age. Responders were 82% White, 7% Black/African American, 0% Indigenous/First Nations People, 4% Latino/Hispanic/Spanish Origin, 2% Asian/Pacific Islander, and 3% Multi-racial.

Congregational tenure is comparatively high, indicating that congregations have a high number of tenured congregation members. 40% of responders have been a part of their

congregation for over 20 years and 23% have become involved with their congregation in the last five years.

Vitality Measures:

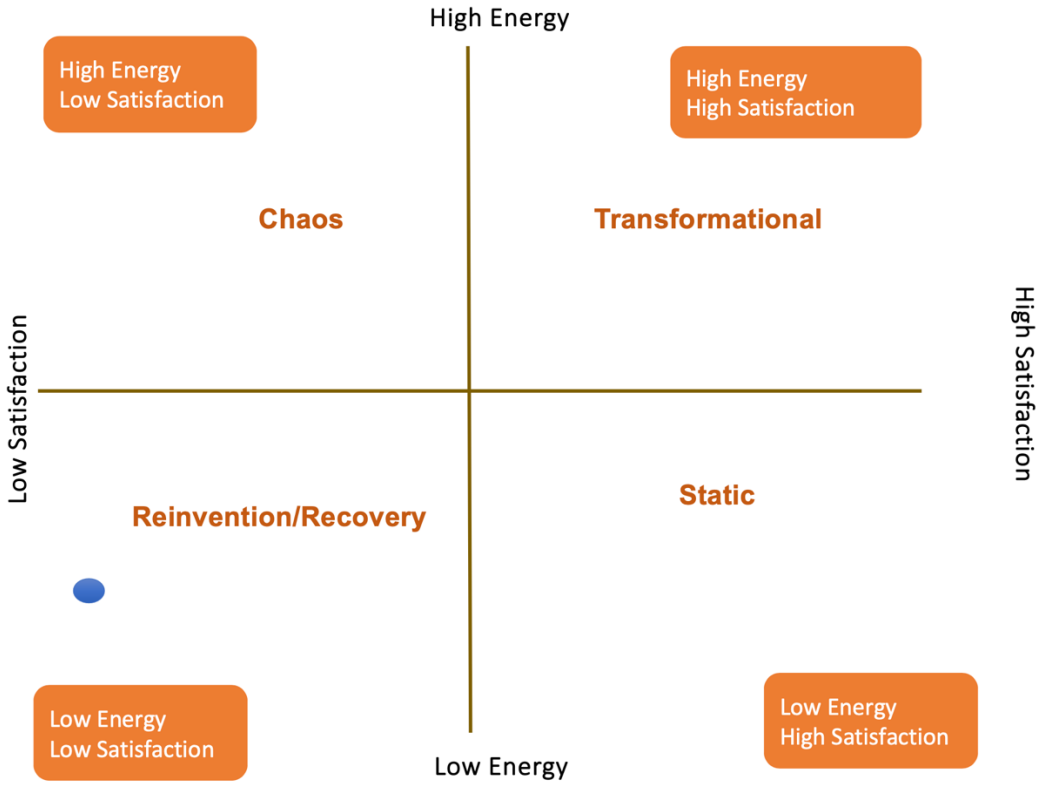


Two things are needed to be a vital Regional Association or Middle Judicatory - high levels of satisfaction and high levels of energy. *Satisfaction* is the sense of peaceful contentment when working with each other within the organization. It is also an *absence* of discord and a building of meaningful relationships in Christ. *Energy* is passion with intention and a compelling sense of purpose within the organization.

Overall, approximately 14% of the responders are clearly satisfied with how things are in the Episcopal Diocese of Chicago. Approximately 19% of responders feel a compelling sense of purpose or energy where people within the Diocese are not just going through the motions in their work. When comparing this data set to other Regional Associations, the level of satisfaction is in the very low range and the energy is in the low range. This indicates that the overall measure of the vitality for this Diocese is in the very low to low range when compared to other regional associations.

When looking at satisfaction trends, 41% of the responders stated that this Diocese is weaker than three years ago, while 18% agreed that it is stronger. 42% of responders stated that the strength of the Episcopal Diocese of Chicago is about the same as it was three years ago. This data suggests that the perceived strength of this Diocesan system is at a very low level compared to the typical Regional Association.

The current levels of satisfaction and energy indicate that the Episcopal Diocese of Chicago is in the *Reinvention/Recovery* quadrant (see below Satisfaction-Energy Chart).

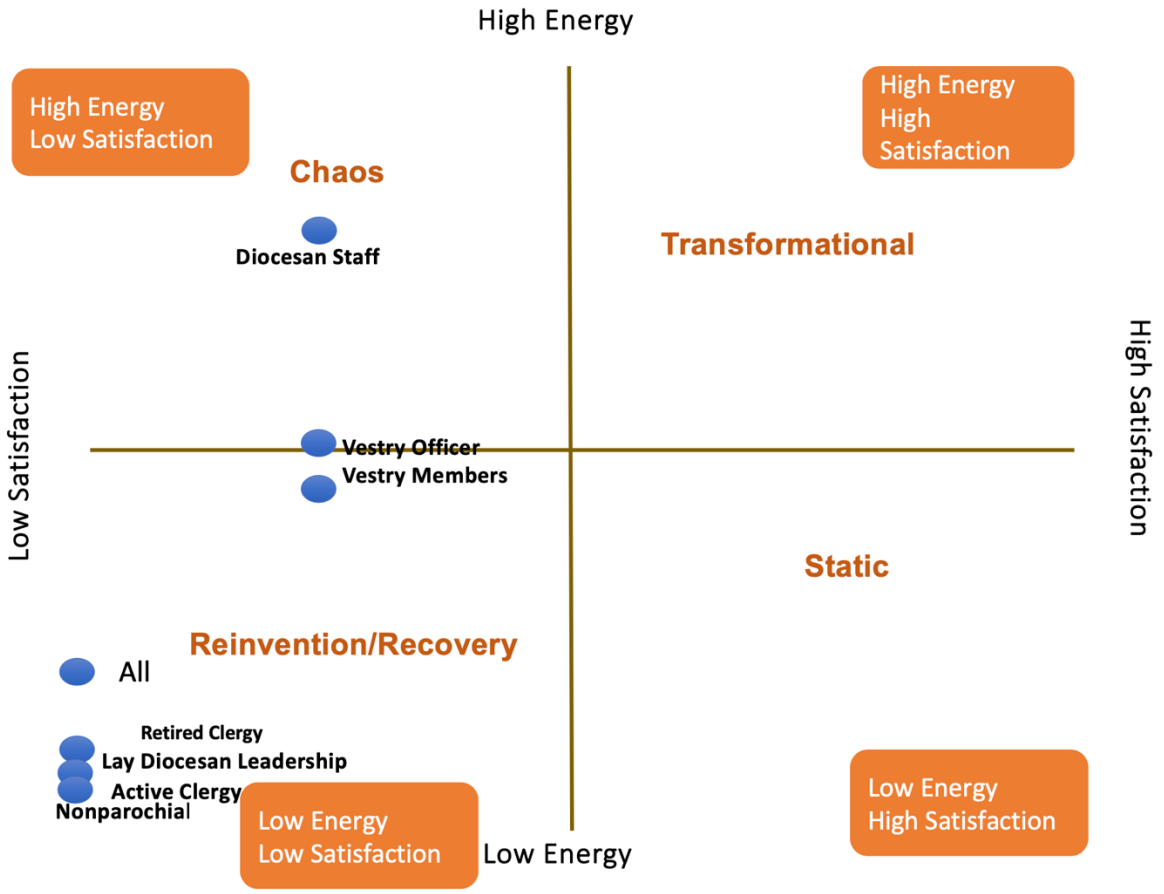


Regional Associations, like the Episcopal Diocese of Chicago, in the *Recovery or Reinvention* quadrant, often find that both the work itself and the people working within the system have experienced an erosion of morale or alignment without a clear mission and vision. This level of vitality suggests that the Diocese will need to make some necessary internal fixes before it can begin to have a significant external impact. The data indicates that the Episcopal Diocese of Chicago would benefit from clarity in a mission and vision of a preferred future so that it can begin to align congregational support, leadership ministries, and engagement at all levels within the Diocese with that preferred future.

Diocesan systems with high levels of vitality, without exception, have quality congregational support systems where focus on helping congregations become vital parts of their communities is high on the priority list. This focus may help move this Diocese from the Recovery quadrant to the *Transformational* quadrant.

Overall, groups within the Episcopal Diocese of Chicago are having different experiences in terms of their energy and satisfaction levels (see below Satisfaction and Energy Chart). These data points indicate that a higher level of energy is experienced by Diocesan Staff, Vestry Members and Vestry Officers. Overall, Active Clergy, Retired Clergy, Nonparochial Ministries, and Lay Diocesan Leaders have lower energy and satisfaction levels. It will be necessary within the strategic planning context to have clarity regarding

the needs and experiences of these members as the next steps are determined. Typically, when Active Clergy have this type of experience in the Diocesan system, it heightens the risk of clergy burnout. As a result, building more substantial supportive services and connection for these roles within the Diocese will be important.



Areas of Focus:

To determine how satisfied people are within the Episcopal Diocese of Chicago, responders are focused on five different areas or drivers. If people perceive the Diocese is performing well in these five areas the data suggests that their satisfaction will likely go up. Likewise, if people perceive that these five areas are not performing well their satisfaction levels will likely go down.

The five areas of focus for satisfaction within the Episcopal Diocese of Chicago are:

- Our Diocesan leadership has done a good job of developing a shared vision that unites us.
- The whole spirit in our Diocese makes people want to get as involved as possible.
- Our Diocese is effective at recognizing trends in the larger society and in helping us adapt in order to deal with those changes.
- Our Diocese provides adequate opportunities for members to engage in work that is meaningful.
- Our Diocese does a good job helping members understand that they have an important role to play.

To determine how energized people are within the Episcopal Diocese of Chicago, they are focused on five different areas. If people perceive the Diocese is performing well in these five areas the data suggests that it is likely that their energy will go up. Likewise, if people perceive that these five areas are not performing well their energy levels will likely go down.

These five areas of focus for energy within the Episcopal Diocese of Chicago are:

- The whole spirit in our Diocese makes people want to get as involved as possible.*
- Our Diocese has been successful in helping congregations like mine becone vital and effective.
- Our Diocese does a good job helping members understand they have an important role to play.*
- Our Diocesan leadership has done a good jobe of developiong a shared vision that unites us.*
- Our Diocese provides adequate opportunities for members to engage in work that is meaningful.*

* *Indicates a driver that is both a driver of energy and satisfaction.*

Future Priorities:

As the responders look at the future, these are the top three areas where they would like additional energy to be placed:

1. **Take a leadership role in working with churches that are struggling.**
2. **Equip Clergy and other leaders in congregations with strategies that enable them to reach new members.**
3. **Make our Diocese more responsive to requests for assistance in dealing with particular needs including pastoral transitions, financial issues, or other pressing concerns.**

The top two priorities are typical of a Regional Associations. The third priority is high, needing more focus than is typical. This will mean that the Diocese needs to strategically assess programs, staffing models, and missional alignment to ensure congregations perceive the Diocese's response as prompt, supportive, and effective, with clear and tangible outcomes.

Performance Areas:

There are seven performance indices reported in the Landscape: Morale, Conflict Management, Engagement, Governance, Collegiality, Leadership, and Support to Congregations. The overall Conflict Management score for the Episcopal Diocese of Chicago is in the average range. Within other performance areas, the Episcopal Diocese of Chicago performs within the very low to low range when compared to other Regional Associations in all these areas. This indicates that the Diocese will need to focus on the internal health of the organization, determining the efficacy of the current work being done, before it can cast a wider vision of what can be achieved in the future.

Responders perceive that the Episcopal Diocese of Chicago is in the average range when determining the adaptability of the system. It is important to note, that with the lower trust in Diocesan leadership, the need to make concrete and intentional change with transparency and communication is heightened. It will be necessary to ensure that any new ideas or next steps be communicated clearly and aligned in a way that help people Diocesan-wide understand the reason for the changes.

When thinking towards the future, 45% of the responders believe that only a moderate amount of change is necessary to make significant progress towards the vision of the Diocese. 11% of the responders believe that there is a need to change nearly everything, and 6% of responders state that only a small amount of change is necessary. 36% of the responders believe there is a need for a large amount of change. Only 1% of responders feel that almost no change is necessary.

Overall, 24% stated that they have some level of clarity in terms of where the Diocese is headed and how they are going to get there. This level of clarity is in the very low range compared to other Regional Associations. 30% of responders clearly agree that Diocese members demonstrate a readiness to follow the lead of the Bishop and the other Diocesan leadership. This level of readiness to follow is in the average range and again speaks to the need for directional clarity as the Diocese moves forward.

When asked how engaged the responder's congregation has been with the work of the Episcopal Diocese of Chicago within the last 12 months, the data indicates an average level of engagement with 19% of responders stating that their congregation is highly engaged and 38% of responders stating their congregation is moderately engaged.

In terms of the work in this Diocese compared to other Diocesan systems, 22% of responders stated that they are more satisfied within the Episcopal Diocese of Chicago than with other Episcopal Diocese or Episcopal congregations they have been a part of, while 40% are less satisfied here. When looking at gift utilization, 42% of the responders indicate that when they think about their gifts, interests, and time, they feel that they have something to give the Episcopal Diocese of Chicago but don't know how to give it. This indicates that the Diocese has an opportunity to help individuals think through where they could best be used within the system, which could include but is not limited to ministries, congregational work, committee work, and other leadership roles.

Strategic Planning and Communication:

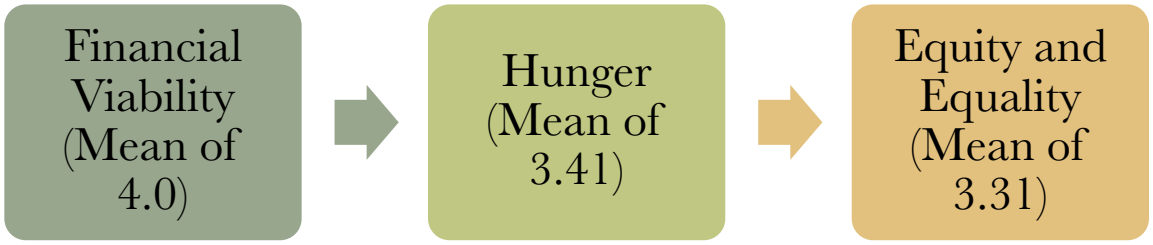
Within the context of strategic planning or thinking, responders were asked a set of questions about mission clarity, role, and the future. When responding to these questions, 16% clearly agree that the Diocese has been effective in fulfilling the missions expressed in our current mission statement. 31% of responders believe the Diocese of Chicago needs to rethink its basic purpose and mission to be effective in the future. Only 6% of responders can clearly agree that members know the role they can play in helping the Diocese achieve its vision.

8% of responders feel that Diocesan communication gives the clarity needed regarding services that are offered for congregations. This indicates a communication gap that will be important to assess as the next steps are made. Most of the responders would like to receive communications from the Diocese monthly and feel that the current frequency of communication is the right amount. Notably, while a portion of the responders use social media, at least 25.5% of responders currently do not. It will be important to think about the means of communication – which should, under best practices, include various means of communication including but not limited to email, the website, social media, recorded videos, etc.

Congregation Make-up, Strengths and Challenges:

Responses to the Landscape Assessment came from a variety of congregation sizes. 38% of responders were in congregations that have under 50 people in their average weekly attendance with 20% averaging 50-75 in their average weekly attendance. Another 20% have an average of 76-140 in their average weekly attendance. The remaining responders did not know their church size or had over 141 people in their average weekly attendance. Over 55% of responders are in suburban congregations, 14% in regional congregations, 9% in rural congregations, and 20% in urban congregations.

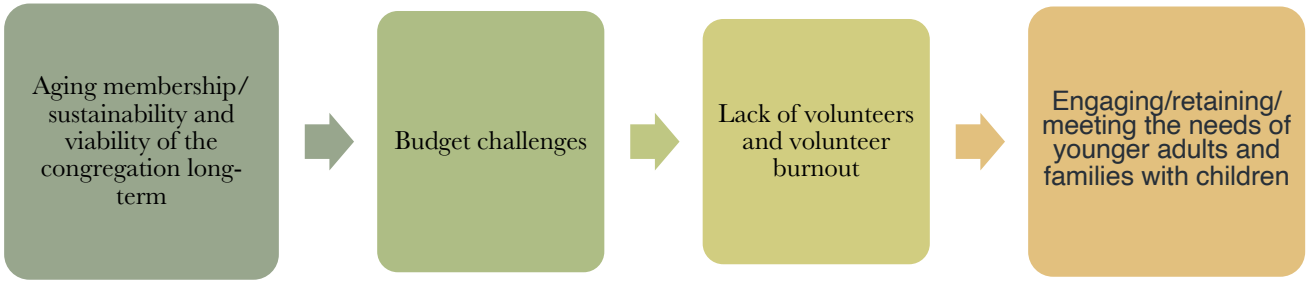
A supplemental question was created by Diocesan leadership, asking responders to pick the top three areas of ministry for their congregation. The top three areas and mean scores for responders for each were:



Responders were asked where their congregation would be in three years. 6.87% stated they will be closing. 25.5% responded they will decline as a congregation. 33.13% felt their congregation would be stable, and 34.5% anticipated growth in three years.

33% of responders stated that their congregation has a strategic plan. 33% stated that their congregation has no strategic plan and 33% do not know if their congregation has a strategic plan.

Another supplemental question asked responders to pick the biggest challenges or stressors for their congregation or worshipping community. The top four areas were:



Recommendations from Critical Success Factors:

The Landscape Assessment can determine what areas of focus would be the most beneficial for the Diocese. These critical success factors are determined by measuring what the responders are focused on to determine satisfaction and, within those areas, what needs attention, so it is moving in the right direction.

When thinking about where to invest energy, the areas that are critical success factors for the Episcopal Diocese of Chicago are:



Strategic clarity and consistent direction with quality communication that helps us feel engaged



Aware of adaptive changes necessary to be effective with current societal trends



Gift discernment and doing meaningful work together



Strengthening of trust in Diocesan Leadership so people feel heard in decision making



Help congregations be vital and effective

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