



Benchmarks for a New Episcopal Community

What are the benchmarks for a New Episcopal Community? We get asked this question all the time, often by Diocesan leaders who want to know how they can assess the vitality and ultimate sustainability of a new community. We have some ideas on benchmarks to watch for, but first a few reminders:

- Use relational practices to set measurable goals that are agreed upon by the point leader, the core team and diocesan leaders (and other supporters).
- Avoid unspoken expectations; have the dissent conversation when needed.¹
- Remember that goals and benchmarks are contextual, and must be based on the model of church plant and the people who the community is trying to reach.
- While attendance and finances can be indicators, look deeper than these to assess progress towards goals and benchmarks.

Benchmarks

While benchmarks are always contextual, we believe that the following are common to most New Episcopal Communities. Look for their growth (not perfection!) over the first 5-7 years of life:

Core Team benchmarks

Look for the development of a Core Team that understands and has made the commitment needed to build this community together.

Over time, the Core Team grows in its capacity to do the work of neighboring, inviting, and mentoring others.

Community Rhythm benchmarks

The community practices clear and accessible patterns of community, discipleship and worship.

¹ See Peter Block's 6 conversations: <https://www.episcopalchurch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2021/10/Peter-Blocks-Six-Conversations-1.pdf>

They have developed a rhythm of gathering for prayer and spiritual formation that binds it together in vision, purpose and ways of relating to one another and to the world.

New people are invited to participate in these patterns and shown how to adopt them for themselves.

Collaborative Leadership benchmarks

The new community is growing and maturing toward a life together that is not as dependent on the planter's personality and gifts.

An organizational structure emerges that is contextual and effective for the needs of the community.

There is a clear channel of communication between the new community and its supporters in the wider diocese.

Relational benchmarks

The community grows in emotional maturity and grace, and they prioritize these values when dealing with conflict.

Church leaders continually cultivate a culture of "how we will be when we are together." This community covenant is clearly articulated, taught and made available to all members.

Financial benchmarks

The community is coming to clarity about how they define financial sustainability and is making progress toward nurturing stewardship in their committed members and becoming less reliant upon temporary funding sources.

Diocesan benchmarks

The new community participates in the life of the wider judicatory in ways such as:

Sending representatives to diocesan convention

Participating on committees, retreats and programs of the diocese

Raising up candidates for ordination

Contributing financially and/or other resources, space and skills to other diocesan entities

