

# LANDSCAPE™ EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*Episcopal Diocese of Western North Carolina*

*September 2026*



*"And this is my prayer, that your love may overflow more and more with knowledge and full insight, to help you determine what is best, so that in the day of Christ you may be pure and blameless, having produced the harvest of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God."*

*— Philippians 1:9-11*



# 1. Introduction & Respondent Demographics

This Landscape Assessment report synthesizes feedback from across the Episcopal Diocese of Western North Carolina as the Diocese prepares for a Bishop transition. The assessment was administered in the late summer of 2026 and was offered in English and Spanish. A total of 1,221 respondents participated in the survey, representing a comprehensive cross-section of clergy, lay leaders, staff, and parish members across the region.

| Role / Representation | Number of Respondents | Percentage of Total System |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|
| Congregation Member   | 835                   | 68.4%                      |
| Vestry Member         | 175                   | 14.3%                      |
| Active Clergy         | 59                    | 4.8%                       |
| Parish Lay Staff      | 49                    | 4.0%                       |
| Diocesan Leadership   | 45                    | 3.7%                       |
| Retired Clergy        | 44                    | 3.6%                       |
| Diocesan Staff Member | 14                    | 1.1%                       |

Demographic insights show that respondents in this assessment are older than those in other Regional Associations, with 72% aged 65 and older. 13% of responders are in the 55 to 64 age range. 6% were in the 45 to 55 age range. 5% were in the 35 to 44 years of age range. The remaining participants, or 3%, were under 35 years of age. Respondents were 97% White, 2% Black/African American, 0% Indigenous/First Nations People, 1% Latino/Hispanic/Spanish Origin, 0% Asian/Pacific Islander, and 0% Multi-ethnic.

Congregational tenure is comparatively low, indicating that congregations have a lower number of tenured congregation members. 30% of respondents have been a part of their congregation for over 20 years, and 34% have become involved with their congregation in the last five years. Additionally, congregational sizes represent a balanced mix across Small, Family, Pastoral, Transitional, and Program-size churches.

## 2. Vitality Measures & Quadrant Analysis

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.

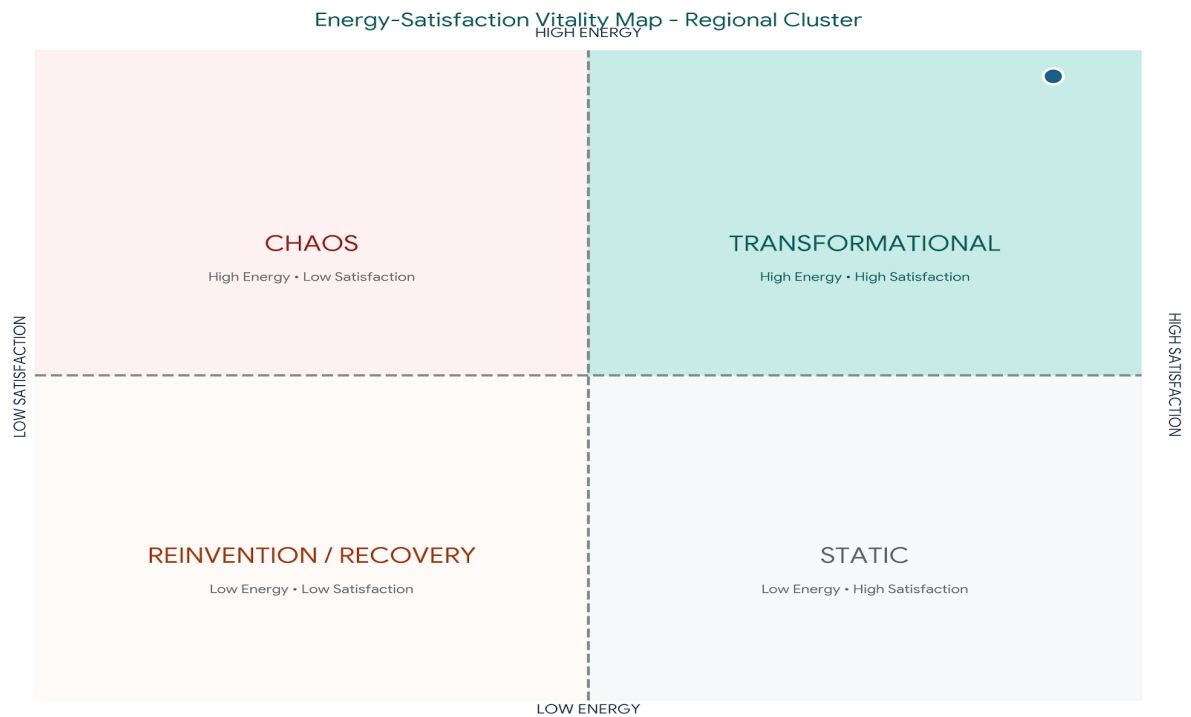


Overall, approximately 46% of the respondents are clearly satisfied with how things are in the Episcopal Diocese of Western North Carolina. Approximately 38% of respondents feel there is a compelling sense of purpose or energy, and that people within the Diocese are not just going through the motions at work. Compared with other Regional Associations, satisfaction is in the high range, and energy is in the very high range. This indicates that the overall measure of vitality for this Diocese is in the high to very high range compared with other regional associations. Looking at satisfaction trends, 9% of respondents said this Diocese is weaker than three years ago, 46% agreed it is stronger, and 45% said the strength is the same. This data suggests that the perceived strength of this Diocese is higher than that of the typical Regional Association.

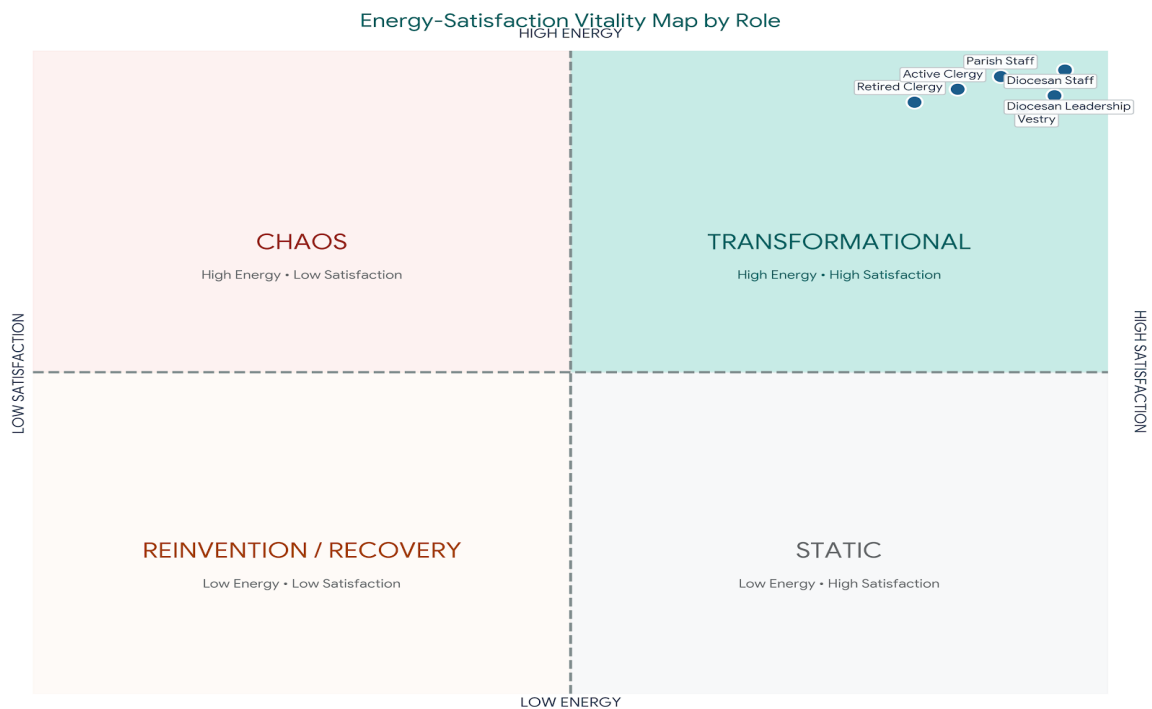
### Diocesan Health Quadrant: Transformation Quadrant

Current satisfaction and energy levels indicate that the Episcopal Diocese of Western North Carolina is in the upper-right section of the *Transformational* quadrant (see the Satisfaction-Energy Chart below).

- **Strategic Implications:** Organizations in the Transformation Quadrant have high vitality and morale. Strategic options focus on building greater resources for congregations, expanding programmatic offerings, and deepening regional ministry impact.
- **Leadership Readiness:** Members demonstrate an extraordinarily high readiness to follow leadership (Ready to Follow Members Index rated Very High at 92), indicating an open-minded, receptive environment for a new Bishop.



Groups within the Diocese are having similar experiences in terms of their energy and satisfaction levels (see below Satisfaction and Energy Chart). These data points indicate that all participants in this diocese experience higher energy and satisfaction. Longitudinal data from 2015 further indicates that this Diocese is stronger and in a healthier position at this point in time.



### 3. Systemic Drivers of Satisfaction and Energy

Drivers are critical leverage points that strongly color how respondents evaluate their overall diocesan experience. To determine how satisfied and energized people are within the Episcopal Diocese of Western North Carolina, 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 and energy will likely go up. Likewise, if people perceive that these five areas are not performing well, their vitality levels will likely go down.

| Key Driver Description                                                                                   | Satisfaction Impact | Energy Impact |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|---------------|
| The whole spirit in our Diocese makes people want to get as involved as possible.                        | High                | High          |
| Our Diocese helps members become engaged by finding roles for people that fit their gifts.               | High                | High          |
| Our Diocese has been successful in helping congregations like mine become more vital and effective.      | High                | Moderate      |
| As a Diocese we do a good job communicating with one another in a way that keeps us aware and engaged.   | High                | Moderate      |
| Our Diocese does a good job helping each member understand that he or she has an important role to play. | High                | High          |

## 4. Critical Success Factors (Appreciative Systemic Needs)

Reframing critical success factors through an Appreciative Inquiry lens highlights key systemic opportunities this Diocese will want to continue to focus on the following:

- **Transparent Decision-making:** Ensuring that, in decision-making, we are open and transparent about how those decisions are made and good at listening to each other.
- **Connection & Collegiality:** A culture where we experience a high level of collegiality and connection across the Diocese.
- **Strategic Alignment & Clarity:** Strategically communicating in a way that keeps us informed and connected.

## 5. Top Future Priorities & Comparative Benchmarks

Respondents across all roles identified where additional energy and resources should be directed:

- **Priority #1:** Take a leadership role in working with churches that are struggling (Mean Score: 3.71 - Top priority across lay, vestry, active clergy, and diocesan leadership).
- **Priority #2:** Equip Clergy and other leaders in congregations with strategies that enable them to reach new members (Mean Score: 3.52).
- **Priority #3:** Equip congregations to be more effective in addressing problems affecting their surrounding communities (Mean Score: 3.44).

**Benchmarking Note:** Unusually High Regional Benchmarks:

- **Mission Awareness:** Working with local congregations to increase awareness of the Diocese's mission scored unusually HIGH compared to national regional benchmarks.
- **Spiritual Depth:** Deepen our spiritual capacity as congregations to respond to life with serenity, confidence, and hope.

## 6. Systemic Performance Area Indices

The Landscape Assessment evaluates seven key organizational performance areas against comparative benchmark data:

| Performance Area Index         | Percentile Rank | Comparative Assessment |
|--------------------------------|-----------------|------------------------|
| Morale Index                   | 93rd Percentile | Exceptionally High     |
| Conflict Management Index      | 91st Percentile | Exceptionally High     |
| Engagement Index               | 88th Percentile | High                   |
| Leadership Index               | 88th Percentile | High                   |
| Collegiality Index             | 83rd Percentile | High                   |
| Governance Index               | 71st Percentile | High                   |
| Support to Congregations Index | 90th Percentile | Exceptionally High     |

## 7. Leadership Profile & Strategic Preferred Future

The Landscape asked respondents to share the characteristics they would like to see in the next Bishop for the Episcopal Diocese of Western North Carolina. The following are the top abilities and qualities from those responses:

### Critical Abilities Desired in Next Bishop

- **1st:**Ability to be pastoral and approachable
- **2nd:**Ability to articulate a clear vision for the future
- **3rd:**Ability to administer and ensure fiscal responsibility
- **4th:**Ability to create unity of purpose among diverse groups

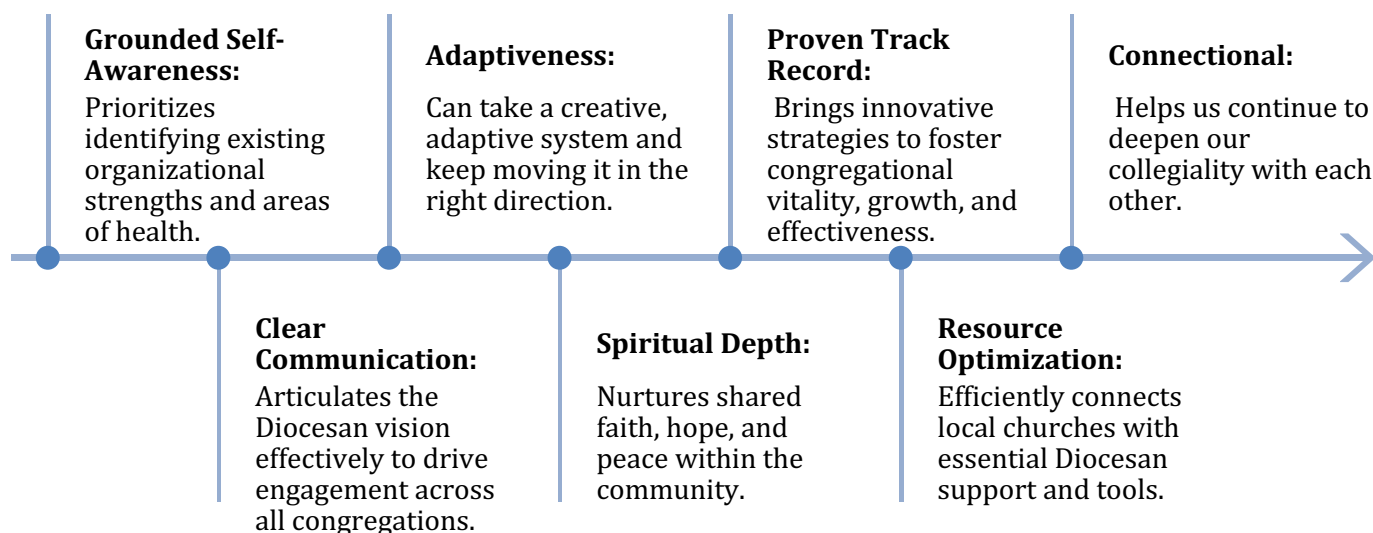
### Personal Qualities Desired in Next Bishop

- **1st:**Sound judgment and wisdom
- **2nd:**Personal integrity
- **3rd:**Deeply spiritual and prayerful
- **4th:**Compassionate

The data indicates that, apart from what responders wish to see in the characteristics of the next Bishop, the following skills will be important within this Diocesan system:

- **Rooted in Self-Awareness & Spiritual Depth:** The next Bishop must bring a grounded self-awareness that begins by listening—identifying existing organizational strengths and celebrating current areas of health across the system. This foundational self-awareness is anchored by a deep spiritual depth, allowing the leader to cultivate shared faith, hope, and peace within the entire diocesan community.
- **Clear Communication & Connectional Leadership:** Directional clarity is essential for driving engagement across every congregation. The ideal leader will excel at clear communication, effectively articulating the diocesan vision so that every parish understands its role in the larger mission. Beyond communicating vision, the Bishop must be deeply connectional, actively working to deepen collegiality, mutual trust, and relational warmth among clergy, lay leaders, and regional bodies.
- **Adaptive Innovation & Proven Vitality :** The Diocese is looking for a leader with adaptiveness—someone capable of taking a creative, dynamic system and steadily steering it in the right direction without disrupting its core values. Coupled with this agility, the next Bishop needs a proven track record of implementing innovative strategies that foster congregational vitality, growth, and overall effectiveness.
- **Resource Optimization:** Leadership must be practical and supportive. The next Bishop must excel at resource optimization, ensuring that local churches—especially small, rural, or struggling parishes—are efficiently connected with essential diocesan support, operational tools, and ministry guidance.

### Key Leadership Pillars:



## Strategic Preferred Future

While 32% of members feel clear on the directional vision, 50% indicate that a moderate amount of change is needed to fulfill future mission goals. The preferred future for the Episcopal Diocese of Western North Carolina involves a collaborative episcopacy that bridges geographic distances (especially outlying/rural parishes), fosters generational outreach to young families and young adults, and grounds systemic growth in authentic gospel ministry.

## *Holy Cow! Consulting Information*

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Holy Cow! Consulting is an L.L.C. and has been in Central Ohio since its creation over 25 years ago. Since that time, HC!C has worked with thousands of churches and regional associations. This robust database allows our consultants to leverage both benchmarking and longitudinal data to support organizational leadership in decision-making, from clergy transitions to strategic planning.

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