

New Episcopal Communities Grants

The Next Faithful Step • Application Guide – 2026

The Advisory Group on Church Planting and Revitalization is honored to partner with dioceses and community leaders across The Episcopal Church who are developing new Episcopal communities (NECs).

NECs emerge in many forms—traditional worshipping communities, faith-based neighborhood ministries, cultural fellowships, and other innovative communities that bring people together to encounter Jesus and grow in faith.

These grants are designed to support the communities that dioceses are nurturing as they seek to reach new people, respond to their local contexts, and share the good news of Jesus Christ in meaningful ways.

This grant process reflects what we have heard through an extensive assessment in the last year that included conversations with diocesan leaders, church planters, and ministry innovators across the church. Again and again, leaders emphasized the importance of a simplified process that offers flexible support that recognizes the unique mission context of each community.

Rather than fitting ministries into predetermined categories, this process invites dioceses and community leaders to share:

- Who they are serving
- What they are learning in their context
- What resources will help them take the next faithful step in their growth journey

Our goal is to support new Episcopal communities that are rooted in their local communities, attentive to the movement of the Holy Spirit, dedicated to sharing Jesus' love in the world, and aligned with the mission of The Episcopal Church.

Important Dates

- June 15, 2026: Applications Open
- July 1, 2026: Informational Webinars with Q&A
- July 15, 2026: Applications Close
- July-August 2026: Application Review Process
- October 2026: Executive Council Approval
- October 2026: Notification of Awards
- December 2026: Grant Funds Distributed

About New Episcopal Communities

New Episcopal communities form new expressions of community and seek to reach people who are not currently part of an Episcopal congregation.

These communities may take many forms, including:

- Traditional worshipping communities
- Faith-based neighborhood communities
- Cultural or language-specific faith communities
- Networks organized around shared interests or identities

What unites these communities is their commitment to:

- Gathering people around the good news of Jesus Christ
- Building relationships of mutual care and discipleship
- Engaging their local community in meaningful ways
- Growing toward sustainable and long-term patterns of ministry

New Episcopal communities operate under the oversight of a bishop and in partnership with their diocese.

Grant Structure

Beginning in 2026, the new Episcopal communities grant program will use a simplified structure with a single grant category. This approach incorporates feedback from the most recent assessment: new communities develop in different ways depending on context, culture, and the communities they serve.

Rather than placing communities into predetermined stages, this grant program is designed to support groups as they discern and take their next faithful step in growth. For some communities, this may involve deepening relationships and expanding outreach. For others, it may include strengthening leadership, developing sustainable ministry practices, or building the foundations of a new worshipping community.

The goal of this grant program is to provide flexible support that helps communities grow toward greater vitality and sustainability in ways that are faithful to their local context and mission.

Grant Amounts

- Up to \$20,000 per grant.
- Applicants may request any amount up to the maximum.
- A maximum of \$200,000 in total NEC grant funding may be received by a single community within a six-year period.

Purpose of Grants

Grants are intended to support communities as they take their next faithful step in developing a new community of faith and may be used for operational and program-related expenses, such as salaries and benefits, insurance, rent, educational materials, and other community needs. If funds are intended for capital expenses, these will only be funded if crucial to achieving the next faithful step of growth and sustainability for the community.

Reporting Requirements

Grant recipients are asked to submit a brief report one year after receiving their grant. The report should include a simple accounting of how the grant funds were used, along with a short narrative summary describing how the grant supported the community and the next faithful step in the development of the NEC.

Eligibility & Requirements

Applicants must meet the following criteria:

Episcopal Identity

The community must be an Episcopal community connected to a diocese of The Episcopal Church and operate with the support of the bishop diocesan. Ecumenical relationships and partnerships with other denominations are welcomed and encouraged when they support the community's mission and local context, provided that the community maintains a clear relationship with its sponsoring Episcopal diocese.

Mission Alignment

The community should contribute to the mission of The Episcopal Church by reaching new people; sharing the good news of Jesus Christ; and forming a new Episcopal community rooted in prayer, relationship, and service. Communities should demonstrate how their work reflects the mission priorities of both the local diocese and the wider church.

New Community Development

Grants are intended to support the development of new or emerging communities. Funding is not intended for the ongoing operating budgets of established congregations or for programs or ministries that primarily serve an existing parish membership.

Age of Community

NECs applying for funding are generally expected to be less than 10 years old. At the same time, we recognize that communities develop at different rates and that a community's developmental stage may not always correspond neatly to the number of years since its founding. If your community is older than 10 years or if its developmental age is different from its chronological age, please explain the circumstances and your reasoning in the application. The advisory group welcomes this context as part of its review.

Discernment and Readiness

This grant program is intended to support NECs that are already in development. Local discernment about the potential for a new community should take place within the diocese prior to applying. This includes conversations between the community leader, diocesan leadership, and other appropriate local partners to determine the viability and direction of the proposed community.

The Episcopal Church recognizes that thoughtful discernment is an important part of beginning any new community. While this grant program no longer provides funding for discernment phases, churchwide staff are available to offer guidance and support for local discernment processes at the invitation of the bishop. Communities applying for funding should already be actively developing the NEC and seeking support for their next faithful step toward growth and long-term presence.

Bishop Endorsement

Each application must include a letter of endorsement from the bishop diocesan. This endorsement should affirm the bishop's commitment to the community, express support for the application, and recognize the proposed work as part of the diocese's mission strategy for evangelism and discipleship. The endorsement should also reflect the diocese's commitment to supporting the NEC as it develops.

Diocesan Financial Support

These grants are designed to complement—not replace—diocesan investment. A dollar-for-dollar match from your diocese is preferred. Where this is not feasible, we expect evidence of diocesan commitment through in-kind resources or other forms of support.

Operating Budget

Applicants must submit a one-year operating budget for the NEC. The budget should include line items for both anticipated income and expenses and clearly indicate how the requested grant funds will be used. A sample budget template is provided to assist applicants in preparing this document.

NEC Participation and Support

Clergy and lay leaders of the NEC, as well as support staff at the diocese, are expected to participate actively in the churchwide planting network, both online and in person. Details about upcoming opportunities and resources will be shared on The Episcopal Church's website and in other communications.

Coaching and Leadership Support

The leaders of NECs are expected to engage in a coaching relationship that supports the development and leadership of the community. Coaching is considered a core component of healthy leadership and long-term sustainability, offering space for reflection, discernment, accountability, and practical guidance as leaders navigate the opportunities and challenges of building a new community of faith.

Grant funds may be used to support coaching, or communities may draw on diocesan or other funding sources. Staff from The Episcopal Church can provide a vetted list of experienced and qualified coaches who are familiar with church planting and new community development.

Eligibility may be affected if the sponsoring diocese is not in good standing with its assessment obligations, unless approved by Executive Council.

Priorities for Funding

In alignment with the mission priorities of The Episcopal Church as expressed in Resolutions [2024-A045](#) and [2024 A046](#), the advisory group seeks to support communities that fulfill one or more of the following:

- **Engage people who are not currently connected to an Episcopal church**, forming new relationships and pathways into Christian community.
- **Reach communities historically underrepresented in The Episcopal Church**, which may include communities defined by ethnicity, culture, age, or socioeconomic background, as well as young adults, people from working-class backgrounds, or individuals with little or no prior connection to church life.
- **Develop culturally rooted expressions of Christian community**, honoring the traditions, languages, and leadership of the communities being served.
- **Foster new leadership for mission and ministry**, including lay and ordained leaders emerging from within the communities being served.
- **Respond creatively to the needs of their local context**, recognizing that new Episcopal communities may take many forms depending on their setting and the opportunities for ministry present there.

- **Demonstrate a vision for long-term presence**, with a trajectory toward becoming an enduring community of faith in their context. While communities may develop different models of sustainability, applicants should articulate how the community is being built for the long term rather than as a short-term or seasonal initiative.

These priorities reflect the church's commitment to church planting and the development of new communities across diverse contexts.

Desirable Qualities in Applications

The advisory group recognizes that new communities grow in different ways depending on context. Applications are evaluated with attention to each community's unique circumstances with attention to several key questions.

- **Discipleship and Gospel Witness:** How does the community invite people into relationship with Jesus Christ and support the growth of discipleship within the community?
- **Worship and Spiritual Life:** Does the community gather for prayer and worship in ways that nurture faith and spiritual growth?
- **Clarity of Vision:** Does the community have a clear sense of purpose and direction?
- **Community Engagement:** How is the community building relationships with people in its surrounding community?
- **Local Context:** Is the community rooted in the needs, culture, and opportunities of the context it serves?
- **Leadership and Support:** Is there leadership capacity and diocesan partnership to support the community?
- **Stewardship of Resources:** Will the requested funds help the community make meaningful progress in its mission?

The official grant review form for this year's applications is available for your review.

Glossary of Terms

For the purpose of these grants, the following terms are being used in these ways:

Advisory Group on Church Planting and Revitalization

A group of leaders appointed by The Episcopal Church to advise on church planting and redevelopment initiatives, including the review and recommendation of New Episcopal Communities grant applications.

Identity-Focused or Niche Community

A new Episcopal community centered around a particular cultural identity, shared experience, or common interest. These communities do not follow a traditional parish model of church. Rather than being geographically defined or centered on a single weekly worship gathering, they organize around relationships, shared identity, and context, forming Christian community in ways that are locally meaningful and rooted in the Episcopal tradition.

New Episcopal Community (NEC)

A developing Episcopal community that seeks to reach new people and form a new expression of

Christian community. NECs may take many forms, including worshiping communities, neighborhood ministries, culturally rooted communities, or networks organized around shared interests or identities.

Next Faithful Step

The next significant stage of development that a new Episcopal community hopes to pursue. NEC grants are designed to support ministries as they take this next step toward growth, vitality, and long-term sustainability.

Point Leader

The primary leader responsible for guiding the development of a new Episcopal community. The point leader may be clergy or lay and serves as the main contact for the NEC grant application.

Sustainability

The long-term capacity of a new Episcopal community to continue its ministry and mission. Sustainability may take many forms, including congregational giving, diocesan support, partnerships, or other creative financial and leadership models.

Traditional Church Plant

A new Episcopal community that is developing toward a gathered worshiping congregation with regular patterns of prayer, sacramental life, and community formation. These communities often follow a more familiar model of church, while remaining responsive to their local context and the people they are seeking to reach.

Underrepresented Communities

Groups that have not been widely represented within The Episcopal Church. This may include communities defined by culture, ethnicity, age, socioeconomic background, life stage, or limited prior connection to church life.

Post-Grant Support and Ongoing Partnership

The NEC grant program is designed to support the development of new communities across The Episcopal Church. While financial grants are one form of support, The Episcopal Church is committed to encouraging and strengthening these communities in a variety of ways.

Churchwide staff and partners will continue to offer guidance, connection, and resources to dioceses and NEC leaders who are developing new Episcopal communities. Communities that apply and are not funded are welcome to take advantage of this support, as are communities still discerning whether and when to apply.

Our hope is to foster a growing network of leaders and dioceses who are learning from one another as they develop new expressions of Episcopal community.

A Word of Encouragement

Across The Episcopal Church, leaders are exploring new ways of gathering people, forming Christian community, and sharing the good news of Jesus Christ.

This work often begins with small steps—listening to neighbors, building relationships, and responding faithfully to the opportunities God places before us.

Thank you for your willingness to engage in this work and for the communities you are forming. May God bless and guide you as you continue this ministry.

Questions

For questions about eligibility or the application process, please contact:

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Frequently Asked Questions

What kinds of communities are eligible for this grant?

New Episcopal communities take many forms. Applicants do not need to be a traditional worshipping congregation. Communities may include neighborhood-based ministries, culturally specific communities, networks, or other innovative expressions of church, as long as they are forming Christian community and sharing the good news of Jesus Christ.

Can more than one community apply from a diocese?

Yes, the advisory group will consider multiple applications coming from the same diocese. Each application is reviewed on its own merits and must include a bishop endorsement.

What does “next faithful step” mean?

The “next faithful step” refers to the most important area of growth or development for your community in the coming season. This may include deepening relationships, expanding outreach, strengthening leadership, or building sustainable practices. There is no single model; this step should reflect your context and stage of development.

How are applications evaluated?

Applications are reviewed by the Advisory Group on Church Planting and Revitalization. Reviewers consider the clarity of vision, engagement with the local community, leadership and diocesan partnership, stewardship of resources, and the extent to which the proposed next step supports long-term growth and sustainability.

What if our community is older than 10 years?

Communities are generally expected to be less than 10 years old, but developmental stage matters more than age alone. If your community is older, you are welcome to apply and explain your current stage of development.

How should we structure the 12-month budget?

The budget should reflect a 12-month period relevant to your ministry (it does not need to follow a calendar year). It should include projected income and expenses and clearly show how grant funds will support your next faithful step.

What about grants for redeveloping congregations?

This grant cycle is focused specifically on the development of new Episcopal communities. Funding in this cycle is not available for the redevelopment of existing congregations. We recognize the importance of redevelopment work across the church and are studying opportunities and funding pathways to support these ministries. Dioceses and leaders engaged in redevelopment are encouraged to remain connected to churchwide conversations and resources as this work continues to develop.