

Church Program Planning Calendar

Episcopal Relief & Development's work is strategic, evidence-based and rooted in community. We hope this calendar helps your community to also strategize intentionally, by weaving priorities and assets together to achieve your goals and makes planning more manageable for you.

This planning calendar features:

- Monthly at-a-glance calendars available for 2025 and 2026
- "Best Practices" for making the most of your calendar across all ministries and demographics
- Helpful notes and lists to remind you of what's happening now, what's next and what's on the horizon
- Links to the lectionary, Venite Daily Office, Lesser Feasts & Fasts
- Monthly links to Children's Sermons, Lesson Plans and Current Event Responses
- Easily printable and user-friendly pages 8½" x 11" size
- Digital version online at www.episcopalrelief.org/church-in-action/worship-resources
- Links to join us in prayer on our website in times of special needs and across the seasons of the church year
- Observances to help faith communities engage our new free [toolkits](#) created for each of our four interconnected priorities

This great resource is provided at no charge to leaders across the church. The digital version provides links to all the resources mentioned and notes about the current month, the following month and ideas for planning ahead. Across Episcopal Relief & Development's work, we learn and adapt, co-creating programs that achieve sustainable results.

The calendar is a living document that will be updated frequently. We welcome your input so we can keep this planning calendar fresh and relevant for future use. If there are events, holidays or planning ideas that you feel should be added, please let us know. Send an email to engagement@episcopalrelief.org.

Happy Planning!
Episcopal Relief & Development

Best Practices in Building Your Planning Calendar

There is a season and a time for everything - a time for worship, study, service and silence; to work and play; to disagree and dance. God gives us these gifts and we have an opportunity to be good stewards of our time here on earth together.

To help with planning: look at the “Possible Priorities” in the box below. Other priorities might involve transitions in staffing, property issues, newly engaging a specific community or launching a capital campaign. Whatever your priorities for the year ahead might be, you can creatively and intentionally knit together outreach, education, fellowship and worship opportunities to gather your community around meeting your goals. You can take advantage of the community traditions already on your calendar, like picnics, annual meetings and special seasonal worship services, which can be supplemented in new ways or add new events as the opportunity arises.

If your congregation has recently done a self-study or long-range planning, you can use that information to begin setting priorities in your calendar planning.

Now look at the “Your Community” box below. Additional communities might include a newly opened assisted living center in your neighborhood or an influx of new immigrants or an expansion of care extended to a certain demographic in your community.

Possible Priorities:

- Worship
- Christian Formation
- Outreach & Service
- Fellowship
- Peace & Climate Initiatives
- Community Engagement
- The Arts

Your Community:

- Adults/Young Adults
- Families with Children
- Teens/Children
- Your Neighbors/Community
- Staff
- Vestry & Bishop’s Committees
- Ministry Team Leaders
- Teachers
- Volunteers

Calendar Communications

Now is the time to scan across your calendar and commit to providing opportunities for each of your community groups to explicitly engage in your priorities. For example:

- » An outreach project for Senior Adults
- » A special worship service for Young Adults
- » A fellowship event for your Vestry
- » A way to provide learning and theological underpinnings around your Christmas Market, Food Bank Drives and other outreach events

Think outside of your usual boxes of “who does what” or “who we really expect to participate.” Be ready to try new things, and learn from both the unexpected failures and surprising successes.

Almost as important as putting special liturgical, formational, fellowship and outreach feasts and events on the calendar is scheduling your invitations and information about them.

Things to consider:

Conduct a communications audit to determine the number of ways you notify people about what you are planning (e.g., emails, newsletters, social media posts, your website, outward facing calendars, signage, etc.) There are so many communications avenues!

As a result of the audit, ask yourself:

- Which large events merit a direct and thoughtfully designed mailing?
- Which events or services are the subject of press releases to your local media? In addition to the general church communications, which one(s) are also pushed directly to a specific demographic in the church (perhaps middle schoolers, senior adults or families with children)?
- Make sure to include both the information (what, why, when and where) and the invitation (e.g., “This is going to be meaningful and fun...please bring a friend or neighbor!”) on the calendars of your communications and evangelism ministry teams on a timely basis.

Monthly Observances & Ministry Opportunities

Black History, Women's History, Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander Heritage, Pride, Creation Care, Addiction & Recovery, Native American, Hispanic Heritage...

These observances appear across our calendars annually and can sometimes feel like distractions. But the truth is, they remind us to celebrate and expand the diversity that is within The Episcopal Church, and to find our voice of advocacy in commemorations for justice and peace.

Some considerations:

- Use these events to explore our identity as God's people and encourage our faith families to remember who we are.
 - » Be inspired by the stories of Absalom Jones, Jonathan Daniels, Verna Dozier, The Philadelphia 11 and Gene Robinson.
 - » Find creative ways to partner with local Hispanic and Asian American community events.
 - » Learn about the history of Alcoholics Anonymous, including the influence of Episcopal priest the Rev. Dr. Samuel Shoemaker, and its connection to The Episcopal Church.
- Designate a display area in your space to provide information about people and events tied to the various observances.
- Host an author or organizer to speak at a community event in your church.
- Include a special notice in your communications and during worship. You can find prayers and other ideas for observances at [Episcopal Relief & Development](#) and our national [Episcopal Church](#) websites.

Once you have decided what you wish to do with the calendar, you can start planning more intentionally across the large and small parish observances. You can also make a point to weave your goals and resources together. You are not expected to do everything on this calendar. Pray about what makes the most sense for your community, with your resources and proceed in faith.