

IMPACT REPORT

2026 Forma Annual Conference





In January of 2026, nearly two hundred formation leaders from across the Episcopal Church and beyond gathered at St. John's Cathedral in Denver, Colorado for the Forma Annual Conference. The conference was a time intentionally designed for networking, learning, prayer, and renewal in the ministry of Christian formation. After several years in which the community had not gathered in a single physical location, the 2026 conference marked a meaningful return to an embodied, single-site experience—one grounded in relationship, spiritual practice, and shared vocational purpose.

The conference was co-directed by Samantha Clare, Coordinator for Forma Evangelism, and Wallace Benton, Associate Director of Lifelong Learning at Virginia Theological Seminary. The gathering also benefited from the creative leadership of the Forma Leadership Council, the Conference Planning Team, workshop presenters, sponsors, and numerous volunteers. The conference was hosted with generous hospitality by the Episcopal Diocese of Colorado and the community of St. John's Cathedral.

The 2026 conference centered on the theme *Belonging & Becoming*, drawn from 2 Corinthians 3:18: "All of us are looking with unveiled faces at the glory of the Lord as if we were looking in a mirror. We are being transformed into that same image from one degree of glory to the next degree of glory. This comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit." Throughout the week participants explored two guiding questions: "Who do I belong to?" and "Who am I becoming?" Together, formation leaders reflected on how God holds, shapes, and sends them as beloved children of God and ministers within the Church.

Worship, workshops, grounding moments, and affinity groups created a rhythm of prayer, learning, and conversation that invited participants to reflect deeply on their vocation while strengthening relationships across the Forma network.



Forma itself is a dynamic and growing community of Christian formation professionals. Its mission is to celebrate, equip, support, and connect leaders who form followers of Jesus, sharing wisdom across contexts and generations. The annual conference serves as a central gathering point for this community, offering space for participants to exchange ideas, encounter new practices, and encourage one another in the sacred work of formation.

The impact of the 2026 conference reflects the power of gathering formation leaders in intentional community. Evaluation responses indicate a strong sense of connection and renewal among participants. Affinity groups, workshops, worship, and grounding moments emerged as particularly impactful elements of the conference experience. These spaces allowed formation leaders to connect across dioceses, share challenges and ideas, and imagine how the work of Christian formation can continue to grow in congregations, dioceses, and ministries throughout the Church.

This report summarizes the impact of the 2026 Forma Annual Conference by examining evaluation feedback, assessing how the conference met its stated goals, and identifying strategic priorities for future gatherings. The findings demonstrate that the conference continues to serve as a vital space for relational connection, vocational encouragement, and collaborative learning, while also highlighting opportunities to deepen accessibility, representation, and ongoing engagement within the Forma community.

As this report illustrates, the 2026 conference was more than an event. It was a moment in which formation leaders gathered as companions in ministry—reflecting together on their belonging in God's beloved community and their ongoing journey of becoming leaders in the Church..

Total Conference Registrations: 226

Total Conference Attendees: 179*

Total Sponsors: 44

Conference Highlights

2 Worship Engagements

4 Grounding Moments

1 Keynote Address

30 Workshops

20 Affinity Groups

8 Resource Shares

3 Listening Sessions

3 Award Recipients

*Registration/attendee discrepancy due to winter weather travel disruption.

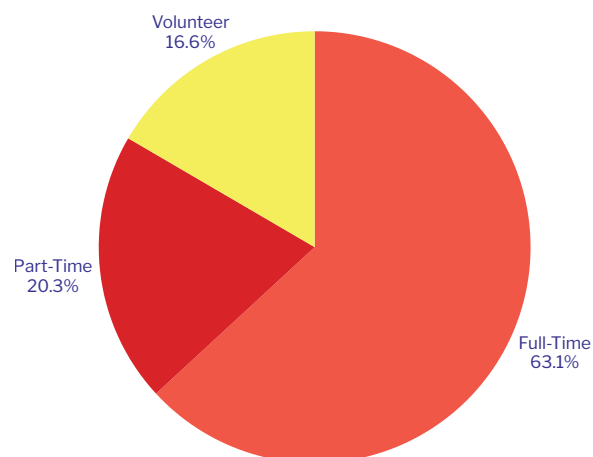


Dioceses Represented in Registration

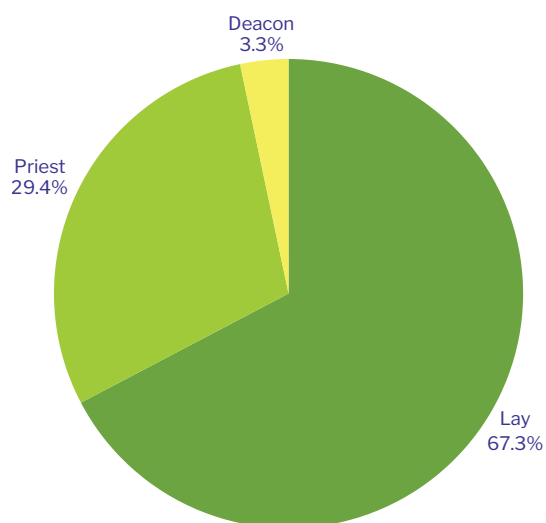
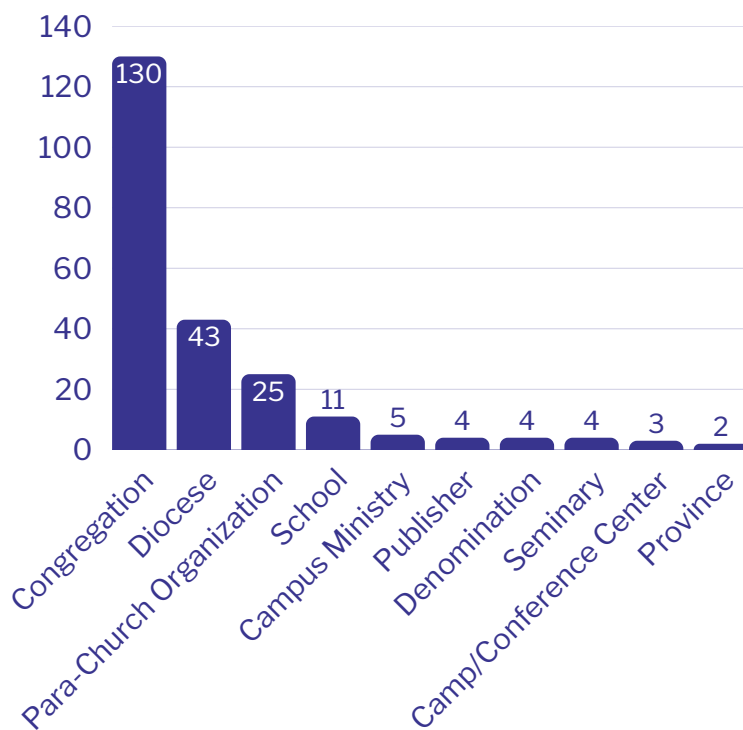
Of the 226 conference registrants, 209 people reported affiliation with a diocese within the Episcopal Church. Participants represented 57 dioceses. This is down from 68 in 2025, reflecting the challenges related to accessibility with a single-site conference.

- Arizona (2)
- Arkansas (5)
- Atlanta (3)
- California (12)
- Central Florida
- Charlotte, NC
- Chicago (7)
- Colorado (27)
- Connecticut (3)
- Dallas
- Delaware (2)
- East Carolina (7)
- East Tennessee (4)
- Easton
- Great Lakes
- Hawai'i (2)
- Indianapolis
- Iowa
- Kansas (2)
- Kentucky
- Lexington
- London
- Los Angeles (8)
- Louisiana (2)
- Maryland
- Massachusetts (6)
- Michigan (7)
- Minnesota (4)
- Mississippi (2)
- Nebraska (4)
- New York (3)
- Newark
- North Carolina (5)
- Northern California
- Ohio
- Olympia (3)
- Oklahoma (4)
- Pittsburgh (2)
- Puerto Rico
- San Diego
- Southeast Florida (2)
- Southern Ohio (8)
- Southern Virginia (6)
- Spokane
- Tennessee (2)
- Texas (3)
- Rio Grande (2)
- Upper South Carolina (5)
- Virginia (8)
- Washington (3)
- West Missouri (7)
- West Texas (6)
- West Virginia
- Western Massachusetts
- Western North Carolina
- Western Oregon
- Wisconsin

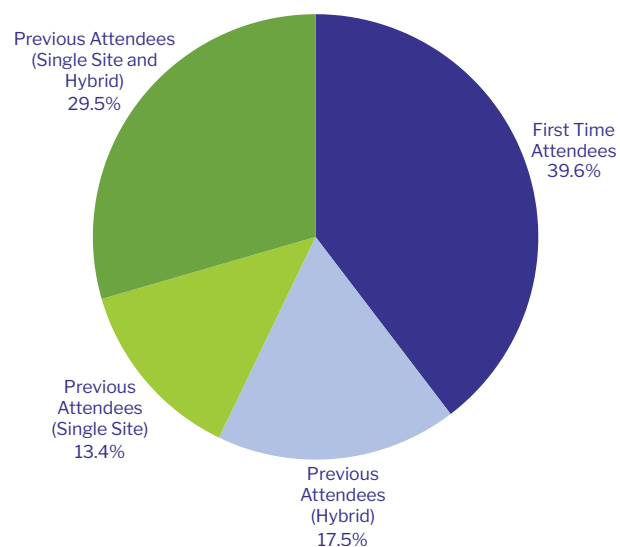
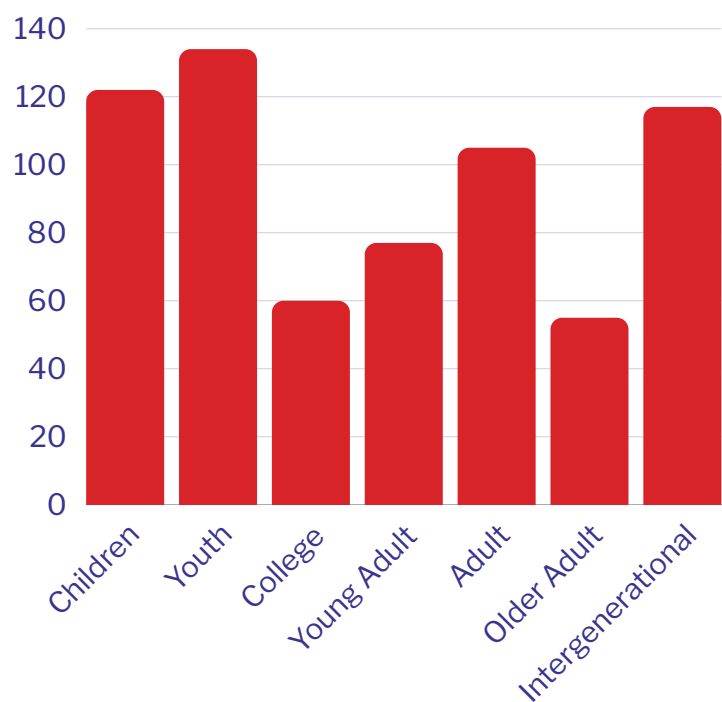
DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION



Ministry Context of Registrant



Ministry Population that Registrants Serve



CONFERENCE GOALS

Forma aimed to design the 2026 Forma Annual Conference to:

- Strengthen relationships within and across the Forma network by:
 - Focusing conference programming on opportunities to interact in one-on-one or small-group settings.
 - Creating clear pathways for continued relational encounters following the conference, such as cohort or affinity groups.
- Operate within a balanced budget or produce revenue from ticket sales and sponsorships.
- Have a strong impact on participants through developing through lines across programming that are both related to the theme and formation ministry.
- Maintain focus on accessibility, in line with previous conference iteration standards as appropriate for the single-site model.



ASSESSMENT OF GOALS

Strengthen relationships within and across the Forma network by:

- **Focusing conference programming on opportunities to interact in one on one or small group settings.**
- **Creating clear pathways for continued relational encounters following the conference such as cohort or affinity groups.**

We believe we successfully focused on one-on-one and small-group interaction based on feedback from participants.

- Affinity groups were the most frequently cited memorable experience.
- Workshops also ranked very highly.
- The average belonging/connection rating was 4.21 out of 5.
- Many comments referenced feeling seen, understood, and less isolated in their ministry context, and reconnected to colleagues.

Participants clearly experienced the small-group containers as meaningful and impactful. Affinity groups, in particular, functioned as the primary relational anchor of the conference. The programming emphasis on small-group engagement directly translated into a strong sense of relational connection. The structure worked as intended.

We believe we partially achieved creating clear pathways for continued relational encounters, but we also recognize opportunities for growth here based on feedback from participants.

- Participants expressed desire for:
 - Continued connection beyond the event.
 - Ongoing affinity group or cohort engagement.
 - Structured follow-up opportunities.
- High recommendation scores (9.2/10) suggest strong relational energy—but not necessarily a formalized continuation strategy.

The conference successfully generated relational momentum, but pathways for sustained engagement were not consistently clear or structured. The desire for follow-up suggests that participants valued the relational experience enough to want it extended.

Strategic Insights

The conference is strong at initiating connection. The next growth edge is institutionalizing continuation. This could include:

- Automatic post-conference affinity group follow-ups.
- Clear “Next Step” communication before participants leave.

ASSESSMENT OF GOALS

Operate within a balanced budget or produce revenue from ticket sales and sponsorship.

We successfully accomplished the goal of producing revenue, with a tentative difference of \$22,846.60.

This is based on the February finance report and remaining anticipated income and expenses which will show on the March finance report.

Total Budget	\$99,150.00
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Sponsorship	\$49,069.47
Ticket Sales	\$53,619.19
Total Income	\$102,668.66

Conference Planner	\$17,978.71
Venue Rental	\$16,000.00
Honorarium	\$2,000.00
Food & Beverage	\$28,025.69
A/V	\$4,690.00
Travel & Accommodations	\$8,092.37
Materials & Printing	\$3,035.29
Total Expenses	\$79,822.06



ASSESSMENT OF GOALS

Have a strong impact on participants through developing through lines across programming that are both related to the theme and formation ministry.

We believe that this goal was largely achieved based on the conference evaluations from participants.

- Plenaries, worship, and grounding moments were repeatedly cited as meaningful.
- Participants referenced the central theme in describing their experience.
- Grounding moments were specifically named as impactful, suggesting intentional framing between sessions was noticed.
- Many responses described the conference as spiritually coherent, not just informational. This indicates that the theme was not isolated to keynote moments but carried into worship and small group spaces.

We believe that the integration of relation to formation ministry was moderately achieved, with room for deepening. Workshops were frequently cited as memorable, which suggests practical relevance to formation ministry. However:

- Some feedback noted variability in workshop quality.
- A few comments expressed desire for more practical tools or clearer application.
- There were isolated mentions of wanting more niche or specialized content.

This suggests that while the thematic through line was present, its integration into every workshop and breakout may not have felt equally strong across sessions.

We believe the depth of conference impact on participants was strong, as suggested by:

- A 9.2/10 likelihood to recommend.
- Emotional language in open responses (reconnection, renewal, affirmation).
- Reports of feeling spiritually grounded and vocationally affirmed.
- Participants were not only informed but encouraged and re-energized—an indicator of impact beyond surface engagement.
- The through line appeared strongest in opening worship and framing, grounding moments between sessions, affinity groups where theme was embodied relationally.

Strategic Insights

The conference successfully created a thematic arc that participants experienced as spiritually and vocationally meaningful. Impact was strongest where theme, worship, and relational engagement intersected. The next opportunity is consistency—ensuring every workshop and breakout explicitly carries and reinforces the same formation-centered through line.

ASSESSMENT OF GOALS

Maintain focus on accessibility, in line with previous conference iteration standards as appropriate for the single-site model.

The need for financial and geographic accessibility was partially met and appears consistent with previous in-person models, but not significantly expanded.

Evidence from Feedback:

- Some participants noted cost concerns (registration, travel, lodging).
 - A few mentioned the travel burden depending on location.
 - There was expressed interest in hybrid or recorded options.
 - There were no widespread complaints suggesting significant regression from prior standards.
- However, cost and travel remain structural barriers for participation in a single-site conference.

The desire for programmatic accessibility was mostly met and seems to have been relationally accessible and welcoming for most participants, though increasing demographic diversity and content clarity could be strengthened to broaden accessibility.

Evidence from Feedback:

- Strong belonging score (4.21/5) suggests relational accessibility.
- Affinity groups were highly valued, indicating people could find spaces where they felt seen.
- Participants felt welcomed and connected

The need for structural and physical accessibility was not heavily mentioned in feedback; this suggests standards were largely maintained. However, limited mention does not necessarily equal full accessibility—it may simply indicate that major issues did not surface.

Strategic Insights

Holding a single-site conference presented challenges around digital accessibility, largely due to technology and financial limitations that prevented streaming and recording for hybrid participation. There was expressed interest in recorded sessions, hybrid participation, and ongoing digital engagement



A NOTE ABOUT DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

We believe the conference's continued focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) is vital to reflect the breadth of experiences, cultures, and spiritual journeys within our faith community. Formation leaders come from diverse backgrounds, and the conference must intentionally create spaces where all voices—across race, ethnicity, gender, age, ability, and socioeconomic status—are welcomed and heard. This includes equitable representation among presenters, small-group facilitators, and panelists, as well as accessible programming that meets varying needs and learning styles. By deepening DEI efforts in planning and implementation, the Forma conference can more authentically embody the Episcopal Church's commitment to inclusion, nurture transformative connections among participants, and equip formation leaders to foster communities where all members experience belonging and spiritual growth.

Areas for Improvement

- Ensure that leadership and presenters reflect the broad range of demographic diversity within the Episcopal Church.
- Integrate diversity, equity, and inclusion intentionally into session content, not just as standalone topics, so that DEI becomes a through line across the conference program.
- Increase outreach to underrepresented dioceses and formation leaders, aiming to grow both the diversity and total number of participants year over year.

Translation and Interpretation

Over the past several years, Forma has worked to develop programming reach through translation and interpretation of offerings in Spanish. This year, offering translation and interpretation for the Forma conference was prohibitively expensive due to the AV needs for interpretation during a single-site event. Forma is exploring the feasibility of offering a dedicated formation gathering that is designed and implemented in Spanish. Forma plans to return to full translation and interpretation for the 2027 Forma Annual Conference, in similar to the radically hybrid 2025 Forma Annual Conference.





PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK

"Connecting me to a network of others doing the same thing, caring about the same thing... Like a vitamin shot in the arm. Contextualizing my work into the larger effort of the Episcopal Church."

"Reminder that we are not alone in this important work!"

"It was wonderful to have an in-person conference and the ability to chat with other children/family ministers face to face."

"Forma's community... continues to be a source of inspiration, connection, and tangible resources for my ministry. When someone asks me, 'Where did you come up with that idea??', my answer is usually 'Forma!'"

"I am a new member and I have appreciated the resources and ability to connect with other leaders working with young adults."

"It always fuels inspiration and I come home with all sorts of things to share in my context."

These quotes reflect three consistent themes: reduced isolation, vocational affirmation, and renewed energy and inspiration.

SPONSORS OF THE 2026 ANNUAL CONFERENCE

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- Diocese of Southern Virginia
- Diocese of Southwestern Virginia
- Diocese of West Texas



KEY INSIGHTS

Relational Connection is the Conference's Greatest Strength

Affinity groups, peer conversations, and shared experiences across ministries were the most valued aspects of the conference.

Vocational Encouragement and Spiritual Renewal Matter

Participants frequently described the gathering as energizing their ministry and reminding them they are not alone in their work.

Practical Application Remains Important

Workshops that offered concrete tools or adaptable models were especially valued.

Participants Want Continued Engagement

Many participants expressed interest in opportunities for continued connection after the conference.

Accessibility and Representation Remain Areas for Growth

Participants voiced interest in broader participation, diverse leadership, and expanded accessibility.



STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

The conference continues to play a vital role in supporting formation leaders across the Episcopal Church, particularly by fostering relational connection, vocational encouragement, and shared learning.

Emerging Priorities for the Forma Conference Include:

- Increased representation
- Enhanced accessibility
- Continued exploration of hybrid sessions
- Deepened relational engagement
- Developing pathways for connection between conference

Together, a continued focus on these insights and priorities will help ensure that the Forma conference remains a place where formation leaders experience belonging, deepen their practice, and grow together in ministry.

In 2027 the Forma Annual Conference will return to the radically hybrid model implemented in 2024 and 2025 with plans to hold the next single-site conference in 2029.





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Christian Formation