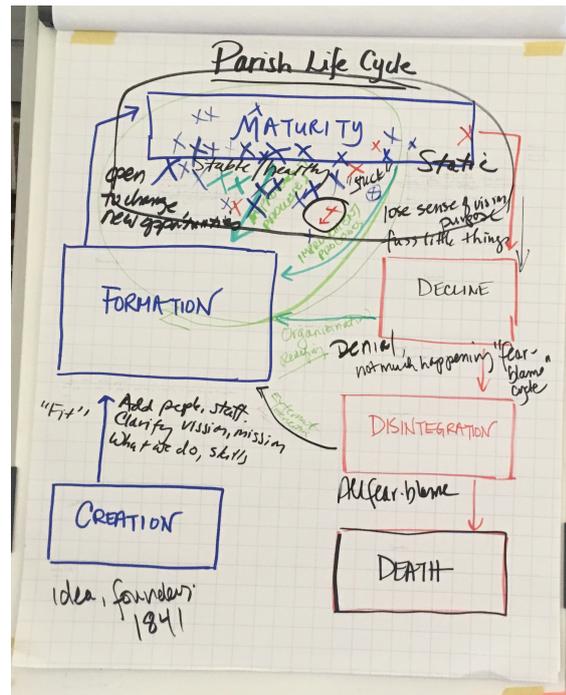


Saint Paul's, Fayetteville July 2017



1. One of the questions that is “given” in the form of transition you are engaging is: Are there a few things the rector might focus on before leaving? Here are some things that occur to us.

First, allow space and reserve the six months just prior to the retirement date for saying goodbye and all the normal things we do when a 20-year rector is leaving. No significant new rector-driven projects or initiatives in that last period of time.

Second, that leaves us with a focus on the coming six months. We heard three things Lowell might help the parish address in the near-term:

- 1) Daily Office – Train and coach more people in how to say the Office on their own. At the same time, increase the number of people serving on teams in the saying of the parish’s public Offices.
- 2) Bring this group back together - to explore issues of maintaining and strengthening parish life, perhaps touching on some areas identified during our weekend together. The search process will be well underway and there will be people working at that. This group is more about the “we continue” aspect of this year.
- 3) Green Lines – Maybe a couple of focused, open parish gatherings around issues such as how we welcome new people, etc. Introduce a few methods – testing process, etc.

2. About the notion of the “priest on a pedestal,” we think a more complex narrative is needed as you move into the future. As we noted, the parish has Lowell on a pedestal and there’s nothing inherently wrong with that.

We see a need for a form of engagement that has more complexity, that accepts the reality of priest-as-symbol and priest-as-person, and understands that powerful human relationships have the potential for both holiness and degradation (and everything in between). We saw you work with this reality during the weekend; you’re really a rather emotionally sophisticated group. One part of allowing the complexity to be the primary way of seeing is to recognize and set aside “bumper sticker” understandings. Examples of this are assuming that calling the priest Father or Mother versus using only the first name has anything to do with the issue, or that celebrating facing the altar versus facing the congregation is relevant.

Some of the most humble clergy in the church today are commonly called Father or Mother in the parish. The tradition of facing the altar is, in many ways, much more egalitarian than looking across the altar standing at the center of attention. When you are facing the altar, back to the people, you're standing with the congregation, facing in the same direction, engaged in the act of adoration of a transcendent God.

3. Facing into difficult issues – The group did amazing work as it reflected upon a difficult issue. The stories of how the gifts of the parish emerged even as it struggled with a very painful experience were wonderful.

It's rather common in the church to avoid difficult issues. The Psalms in the BCP have spaces around the hard passages (usually something violent). There are biblical stories that are avoided. The depth of our tradition is, of course, to face into the difficult matters.

Maybe a few sermons that in an appropriate manner reflect on some of the things of this weekend. In sharing with everybody maybe include something about the role of a priest in breaking open a new future for the parish at great personal cost to himself; even if he was ham-fisted, tight, and unskilled in how he did it. The "Paraclete" is "one who is called to stand alongside us." As Evelyn Underhill wrote, "We are given the marvelous vision of the infinite Divine Charity, Giver of all life, ever standing alongside our small derived spirits in their efforts and struggles."

4. Financial issues

We understand the deficit is in the \$15K range. If that's accurate, our sense is that it's insignificant given the parish's overall budget, size, its wealth, and the ability of the current Rector to help the parish address the concern.

It might be something to pay attention to when the new rector arrives. Find a way to address such things in a manner that fits the temperament and skills of the new rector.

In regard to the question of requesting special funding in between pledging commitments, we suggest that you get the data on that. The primary data, of course, come from those who give in response to those requests. You might confidentially communicate with that group. Develop a list of those who have given in the last couple of years. Use a testing type question along these lines –

The additional requests led me to give more than I would have otherwise	I was perfectly happy to give	I was happy to give but I wish there had been more pre-thought to the financial needs of the parish	It was slightly annoying to be asked even though I did give	It has had a negative impact on my willingness to give more generally.
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