

Trinity Church, Wilmington Annual Leadership Retreat 2017

Overall Purposes	2
Schedule	3
Connecting activity: What do you bring to the table?	4
Parish Survey: Reflecting on our parish life	9
Parish Life Cycle	16
Key Factors	17
FIVE CORE FRAMEWORKS	18
The Benedictine Promise	p 18
The Shape of the Parish	p 19
The Renewal – Apostolate Cycle	p 20
The Christian Life	p 21
In Your Holy Spirit	p 22
Relationship Cycle in Organizations	23
Organizational Change Strategies	24
The Church: Analogies and Images	25
Parish Theology -- Images	26

Note: We are not assuming that all the material in this packet will be used. It is here so we have it available if our conversation moves in a related direction. It may also be used by the parish at a later time.

Overall Purposes of Leadership and Vestry Retreats

A yearly leadership conference that is a mix of:

1. Developing strategies and plans for the improvement of parish life & ministry. This would be based on a process of reflecting on and learning about, the whole, or some area of parish life
2. Community building among parish leaders
3. Spiritual development
4. Increasing the common competencies of parish leaders for the above. Part of our purpose is for the vestry and other leaders to increase their skills and knowledge for congregational development and leadership.

Specific area of interest for this year:

We were hoping to use the retreat to re-define our vision for the next season of our life and create next steps to help us get there. Would also provide a backdrop for the calling of a new associate priest.

Wishing to work on our sense of what we want to be doing. How leadership can help with that.

A variety of associated elements have been mentioned: the parish's standing in the city, new associate priest, momentum, overall staffing pattern, inviting people to join Patty re. social justice, helping people know how to participate, working groups not yet in our DNA, helping people to connect with one another, involving broader groups in all this - role of All Swede's & Latino congregations

A beginning

What we're doing during this year's retreat is laying the base for work that will be completed, in part, over several months and, in part, over several years. The task is in many ways larger than what the vestry undertook in sorting out how to approach the reality of the parish being four rather distinct congregations, each with its own integrity and identity or later in seeking a way for how the work of the parish would be structured.

At the heart of what we do will be the saying of the Daily office and the celebration of the Holy Eucharist. There will be an opportunity to continue building the community life of the vestry in the social times, meals, and structured conversations. We will spend time on the survey, parish direction and vision, next steps, the question of calling an assistant priest, and retreat issues (weekend retreat, location, use of consultants, etc.). We'll engage exercises to help us reflect on the task and nature of the parish church.

Assessments and surveys we make use of are not for the purpose of defining reality or making judgments. They may help us see some of the dynamics and issues of parish life. They may help us focus our work. They are best used to begin structured and disciplined forms of parish conversations. The assessments we use offer a particular perspective grounded in the field of organization development and systems theory and incorporating a theological view of the parish church.

Schedule

Friday Evening

- 6:00 Social Time
- 7:00 Supper
- 7:45 Work Session: 1) Overview 2) Connecting 3) Getting started –
- 9:00 Compline – beginning with intro to doing the Office in a group (Michelle); then Compline Hymn 24
- 9:30 Social time

Saturday

- 8:00 Breakfast
- 9:00 Morning Prayer -- Ps 20 & 21 Matthew 11:7-15 Hymn 1
- 9:20 Work Session
- 10:30 Break
- 10:45 Work Session
- 12:00 Lunch
- 12:45 Work Session
- 2:30 Rest – Recreation
- 6:00 Supper
- 7:00 Work Session
- 9:00 Compline Hymn 24
- 9:20 Social Time

Sunday 20th Sunday after Pentecost Proper 24

- 8:00 Breakfast
- 8:45 Holy Eucharist
- 9:30 Work Session – 1) Wrap up as needed – next steps, 2) Evaluation 3) Routine vestry work beginning around 11:00 Michelle and Bon will leave before the vestry begins to meet
- 12:00 Lunch

Connecting activity: What do you bring to the table?

There are certain core abilities needed for a vestry to be most effective: proficiency in Episcopal spiritual practices, ability to work as part of a team, understanding and acceptance of Episcopal Church polity regarding the parish church, skill in areas of work that are routine for the vestry of this parish.

Assess yourself and the vestry as a whole in each area

1. Proficiency in Episcopal spiritual practices – This is central because it has to do with those responsible for aspects of parish oversight “getting the business we are in.” It doesn’t mean that vestry members should be experts in pastoral and ascetical theology but that the vestry will work most effectively if members live the Christian life -- have a stated spiritual discipline, are at the Sunday Eucharist weekly, pray the Daily Prayers of the Church in some form, have ways of being reflective about their life and responsibilities, participate in some aspects of parish community life (e.g., coffee hour), and can articulate the relationship between faith and their daily life (in workplace, family and friends, civic life)

a. My proficiency in Episcopal Spiritual Practices

Needs attention	1	2	3	4	5	Is adequate or strong
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Notes:

b. My impression of the proficiency of the vestry as a whole

Needs attention	1	2	3	4	5	Is adequate or strong
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Notes:

2. Ability to work as part of a team – All groups have three interdependent elements to manage; there’s a task to work on, relationships to manage, and individuals come into a group with their own needs and wants. Each element has associate behaviors and skills that help effectiveness. The three elements that may work together in harmony or may come into tension. A group that is excessively task-oriented may be get the job done but may build up resentments among its members because relationship and individual needs are not adequately addressed. A group that is overly relationship-oriented may enjoy being together, but let its task drift. The most effective groups are those that learn how to attend to all three aspects of the group’s life.

a. My skills for helping a team accomplish its task, manage its relationships and attend to individual needs and wants.

Low skill	1	2	3	4	5	High skill
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Notes:

- b. My impression of the skill of the vestry as a whole

Low skill	1	2	3	4	5	High skill
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Notes:

3. Understanding and acceptance of the Episcopal Church's polity regarding the parish church – For example, the role of the diocesan bishop in relationship to the parish and the rector/vicar, national and diocesan canon law in regard to the parish, the authority of the Book of Common Prayer, the parish in relationship to the diocese and diocesan convention, that a vestry is not a board of directors, etc.

- a. My understanding and acceptance

Low	1	2	3	4	5	High
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Notes:

- b. My impression of the understanding and acceptance of the vestry as a whole

Low	1	2	3	4	5	High
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Notes:

4. Clarity regarding the role of the vestry in this parish - Is the role the basic work of overseeing property and finances (as required in the canons)? To what extent is the vestry going to be involved in setting and monitoring the overall direction of the parish or participate in the strategic management task of navigating the parish toward its goals and through its politics? Is this vestry willing/able to give the time needed given the extent of involvement desired? How much centralization do we want? – is everything to come through the vestry? Is there acceptance of legitimate independent action by the rector/vicar? What degree of self-management do we want from working groups and committees?

a. My clarity

Low	1	2	3	4	5	High
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Notes:

b. My impression of the clarity of the vestry as a whole

Low	1	2	3	4	5	High
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Notes:

5. Competence in areas of work that are routine for the vestry of this parish

- The specifics of this will depend on how this vestry approaches the issues of role and centralization noted in #4 above.

a. My competence – the extent to which I bring skills that fit the work of the vestry in this parish

Low	1	2	3	4	5	High
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Notes:

b. My impression of the vestry as a whole - the extent to which we collectively bring skills that fit the work of the vestry in this parish

Low	1	2	3	4	5	High
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Notes:

6. **Overflowing into the parish's life** - Being effective at doing its work and managing its own internal life are the most obvious things for a vestry to engage. Beyond all that the vestry has another significant impact on parish life – it is the spirit that overflows from the vestry's life and manifests, or not, the Holy Unity of the church. In an October 2006 "Dearly Beloved" letter to the parish, Father Richard Downing, of Saint James Parish, Capital Hill, DC, wrote this (Note: I have slightly edited his words for this document.) *Leadership and sharing of gifts and talents, however, is not the sole task for our vestry. The whole is much greater than the sum of its parts as each carries within us a piece of a solution to a problem, a perspective that someone else doesn't know, unique experiences that inform our creativity and our compassion. The challenges in working together lie in shaping our actions and our words in consonance with our faith and belief in this communal strength, for it requires great personal discipline, an awareness of our own failings, and time and energy that we may often feel we do not have to give because of other very real demands at home and on our jobs. ...This act can set our hearts free in new ways that could be quite surprising individually and corporately. It extends well beyond just keeping St. James alive but makes it a place where as soon as a person enters our door, they will know Christ is alive, God is worshipped, and human beings are valued.*

My impression of the degree to which this happens in regard to this vestry and parish

Not much	1	2	3	4	5	Very much so
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Notes:

7. **The Purpose of the Parish Church** – There are three generally understood purposes of the parish church 1) the worship of God, 2) the formation of the People of God, and 3) a sanctifying relationship with the external “public” the parish is most connected with (usually the neighborhood around the parish, sometimes an entire town or city, other times a particular community, e.g., the performing arts. In practice each has its own integrity and also overlaps with the others.

- a. My understanding of, and proficiency in, the ways of liturgy and common prayer

Rather poor	1	2	3	4	5	Rather strong
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Notes:

- b. My understanding of, and proficiency in, the ways in which adults are formed into mature Christians in the Anglican tradition

Rather poor	1	2	3	4	5	Rather strong
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Notes:

- c. My understanding of, and proficiency in, the ways in which parish churches live in relationship with their external “public” (usually the neighborhood)

Rather poor	1	2	3	4	5	Rather strong
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Notes:

Robert A. Gallagher & Michelle Heyne, 2015, 2017

Reflecting on our parish life

Consultant Notes:

1. There were 45 responses. About 23 came at the parish meeting. Others in the weeks following. In very broad terms that means that you have a read on those most invested in the institutional life of the parish (those who go to a parish meeting and those willing to complete surveys). That may prove useful in shaping the parish in two ways: 1) approaches to deepening the spiritual life of those at the institutional center and 2) developing a direction that will have ownership among that group.
 2. The Latino congregation is not included in the above. The rector will report on that.
 3. A general rule of thumb – 1) do more to strengthen the grounding of the parish in spiritual life and Anglican ethos and 2) build upon the parish's gifts and strengths.
 4. It is important to report back to the various congregations. Face-to-face is always best – generates more energy, increases ownership, often results in people being willing to sign up for a next step.
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Reflecting on our parish life: Trinity Church 2017

There are three sections to this.

1. We are asking you to reflect on your own spiritual practice. This may help the rector and/or the vestry to create ways that better address your spiritual life. (pages 1 – 3)
2. There are four questions about our overall parish life (page 4)
3. There is a sheet that you can use to indicate your interest in resources that could be offered. You'll need to put your name on that so we can follow up with you as appropriate. (page 5)

The rector and vestry will make use of your responses during the Vestry Retreat in October.

Assessing Your Spiritual Practices

Much of this section draws on: *In Your Holy Spirit: Traditional Spiritual Practices in Today's Christian Life*, Michelle Heyne, Ascension Press, 2008

SUNDAY EUCHARIST

1. My attendance (circle one)

Almost Never	About ¼ of the Time	Half the Time	¾ of the Time	Almost every Sunday
		2	10	32

2. My ability to participate (Circle the number that is closest to your experience)

I am frequently confused and uncertain about how to participate				I can "flow" with it. I mostly don't need a Prayer Book or leaflet.
1	2	3	4	5
		10	14	22

PARTICIPATING IN THE DAILY PRAYERS OF THE CHURCH

3. Saying the Office. I say the Office (a form of Morning Prayer, Evening Prayer, Compline) in some form on my own or with others.

Never 6	Only when offered at a meeting or retreat 15	Sporadically or during some season(s) of the church year 14	Most days 8
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4. Knowing how to do the Daily Office.

I have no idea.			I understand how to use it in the Prayer Book and ways to innovate the use	
1 4	2 4	3 8	4 17	5 11

DISCIPLINED WAYS OF REFLECTING [“Listen to your life”]

Grounding/centering yourself so you can reflect. The spiritual practice of “pondering” and seeking God’s presence in the people, circumstances and things of life. Practices that connect daily life to God.

5. Ways that work for me

I don’t have ways that work for me				I have ways that are effective for me
1 1	2 4	3 10	4 11	5 16

6. Resources related to reflection

I am familiar with how to do *Lectio Divina*, centering prayer, spiritual reading,

Not at all				Very much so
1 19	2 7	3 7	4 3	5 6

PARTICIPATING IN THE PARISH COMMUNITY

7. The community I seek is one in which people are free to be themselves; to speak and listen fully and authentically. In which differences are accepted (we can fight with those we love). In which we can make decisions and solve the problems we face.

I don’t want church to be that way				It is what I seek and more
1 19	2 7	3 4	4 9	5 32

8. Connection with people

I don’t know anyone well				I know a number of people and have a few friends in the parish
1 3	2 5	3 6	4 30	5 30

9. Participation in parish social life – coffee hour, informal meals, etc.

Not at all				I participate regularly and frequently
1 2	2	3 7	4 15	5 20

SERVICE

10. In Daily Life—with family & friends, at work, in civic life, and at church.

I don't have a clear understanding of how I serve in my daily life				I am very clear about serving in daily life
1	2 1	3 11	4 19	5 13

11. In Wilmington civic life

My civic life ministry isn't in Wilmington				I am very much involved in Wilmington civic life
1 12	2 5	3 13	4 5	5 4

12. Engaging civic life in and through the parish

I don't see my engagement in civic life as being in and through the parish		I'd like to do more in and through the parish but lack the confidence and/or skill to become engaged.		I understand how the parish can be my vehicle for social engagement and would like to do more of that.
1	2 7	3 12	4 12	5 10

THE PROCESS OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH

13. Foundations

I have a poor foundation in the spiritual practices of the church				I have a strong foundation in the spiritual practices of the church
1	2 1	3 10	4 15	5 18

14. Experiment

I don't know how or feel confident enough to experiment with spiritual practices				I have a sense of how to innovate and experiment with spiritual practices.
1 1	2 4	3 11	4 14	5 11

15. Anglican ethos – the internal logic of the Anglican tradition

I'm totally unfamiliar with our ethos				I get it.	
1	2	3	4	5	
3	7	8	11	15	

16. Your participation in adult educational and equipping for ministry programs

I rarely participate and see little need to do so		I don't participate as much as I should. I'm willing to do more.		I frequently participate and see them as serving me well
1	2	3	4	5
	5	23	4	9

Our life as a parish

1. Where are we in our life cycle? (place an X in the blank next to the description you think comes closest to your view)

The parish is:

- 31** In stable, healthy maturity – we are able to change as needed, effectively deal with challenges; there is a workable balance between change and stability; we have effective ways of listening to our members and others
- 11** Mature but static – we seem to be stuck on a plateau, too much fussing over small things, not responding to new opportunities, losing a sense of purpose, identity and direction
- 1** In decline – we are in denial, are avoiding facing issues, there is low or fragmented energy, too much fear or blaming.
- Disintegration – Lots of rigidity, defensiveness; more fear and blaming; seem to lack the leadership to get out of this situation

2. Your level of satisfaction

What is your overall satisfaction with the life and work of the parish? (circle the number that comes closest to your view)

VERY LOW SATISFACTION

VERY HIGH SATISFACTION

1	2	3	4	5	6
		2	5	16	19

3. Gifts

What do you see as the primary gifts of Trinity Church – our strengths; what we do well and could expand and build upon. *If you list more than three please place an X next to the three you see as being most important for the years immediately ahead of us.*

17 Civic/community engagement/involvement 1 Social engagement to further social change 16 Music/choir 13 Liturgy/worship 13 Rector/leadership/stable clergy 13 Welcoming/loving community 7 inclusive 1 acceptance & supportive of minorities, LGBT	4 Variety of ministries/opportunity for involvement 3 Church building/beauty 2 supporting people in crisis 2 Strong core of attendees 2 Continuity of OS/Trinity/Latino congregations 1 adult education 1 inward spiritual growth
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4. Challenges

What are the challenges we face as a parish? They may rise out of long term blind spots (things we tend to not see or ignore), or they may be due to pressures or forces outside the parish, or they may simply be the flip side of a parish strength. *If you list more than three please place an X next to the three you see as being most important for the years immediately ahead of us.*

8 Not enough growth 4 adding new parishioners 4 bringing youth/young families in 5 attendance at services 8 not enough money 1 funding for future 1 parish stewardship as part of all 2 keeping endowment draw at or/ below 5% 4 building maintenance 4 multiple congregations in 2 locations 1 more Anglo/Latino information 1 frequent number of services at OS with small number of servers	3 aging congregation/population 3 new associate rector 2 Sunday morning not valued culturally (broader society) for worship 2 strongly welcome & incorporation of new members to participate actively 2 parking 2 distance people travel 1 each – more opportunities for outreach (service ministry); outreach commitment left to clergy vs whole parish; support of parishioners in the community; efficient use of resources; succession planning.
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This sheet should be separated from the other pages.

You are being asked to provide your name on this so we know whom to follow up with.

Your Name:

E-mail:

1. If the parish offered it I'd probably attend a session (1 ½ hours) to increase your ability to **more deeply participate in the Eucharist** (circle one)

Yes	Maybe	No
17	12	5

2. I'd like to participate in a two-part workshop that would help me learn **how to say the Daily Office** (Morning Prayer, Evening Prayer, Compline) in a form that fit my temperament and circumstances.

Yes	Maybe	No
11	14	9

3. **If** the parish organized **teams to say Evening Prayer in the church on most days of the week** I'd consider being part of a team. We would explore with those interested to determine the time (most likely 4:30 or 5:00 or 5:30 or 6:00)

Yes	Maybe	No
5	12	16

The best day for me would be: **(circle one or more)**

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
6	5	3	4	3

4. I'd like to learn ways in which I might **become more reflective**. Learn some methods for centering prayer, meditation, *Lectio Divina*

Yes	Maybe	No
17	10	7

5. I'd like to participate in a session **on parish community life** – a time in which we looked at how to improve the parish community so people are free to be themselves; to speak and listen fully and authentically. In which differences are accepted (we can fight with those we love). In which we can make decisions and solve the problems we face.

Yes	Maybe	No
21	10	3

6. I'd be interested in a program that helps understand and focus **my baptismal ministry in daily life** – work, family and friends, civic life (both social activism and other forms such as volunteering through community agencies, being involved in my neighborhood association, running for political office, etc.)

Yes	Maybe	No
11	16	6

7. I'd like to be part of a program in which I experiment with and develop a spiritual discipline (Rule of Life) that fits my circumstances and temperament.

Yes	Maybe	No
10	17	7

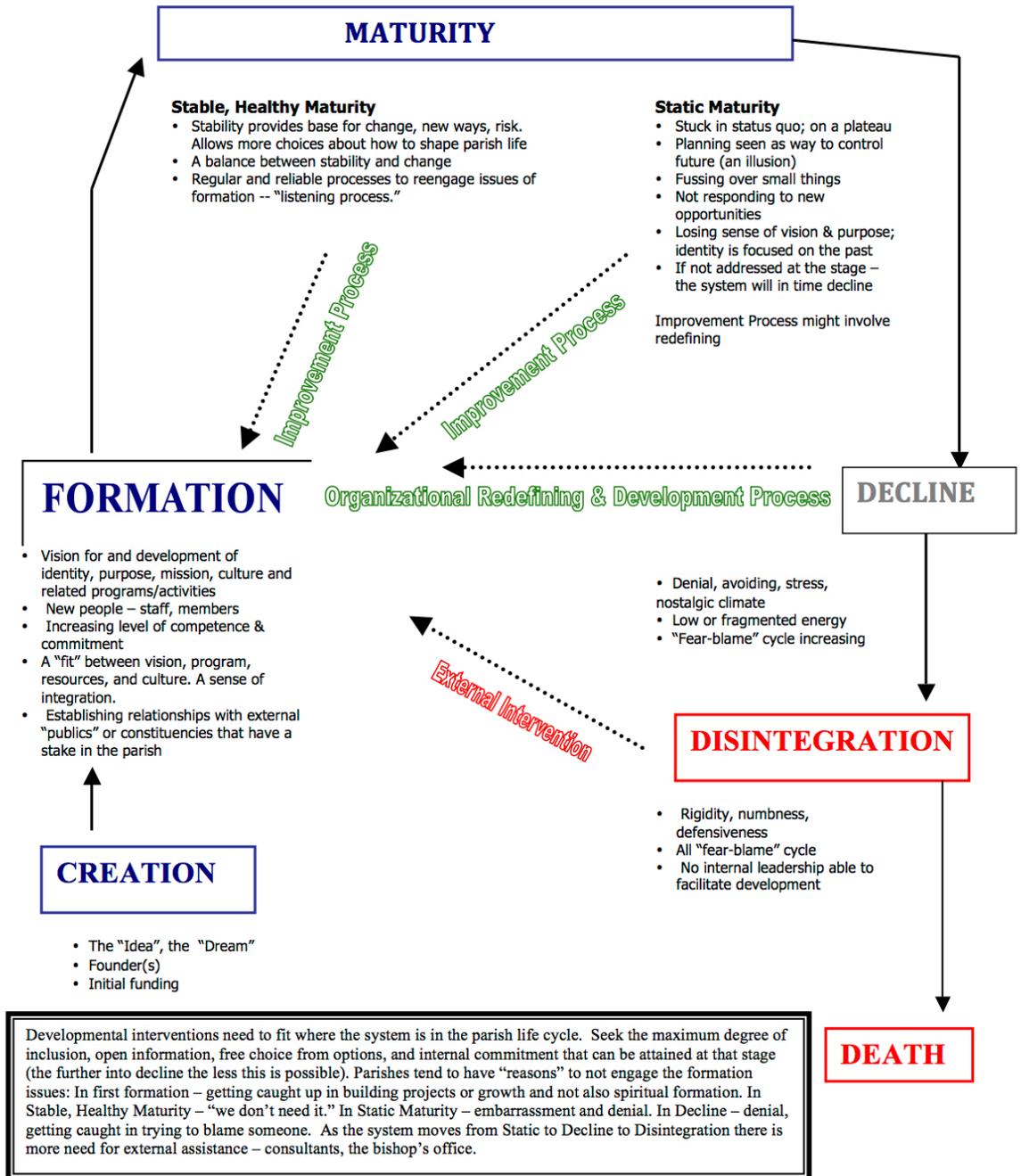
8. I'd like to be part of a program in which I engage learning about levels and methods of individual or group actions on topics such as immigration, gun control, gang violence, equality in educational opportunity, or other.

Yes	Maybe	No
14	11	6

9. Other adult formation programs I'd be interested in --

3 Bible study
 1 each - parishioner dinners; equipping parishioners for ministries (pastoral needs, application of baptismal covenant); church history, book discussions; life of Luther; theology and philosophy of "the Mysteries"

PARISH LIFE CYCLE



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Key factors we see in healthy and faithful churches are those characterized by generally high ratings in six areas:

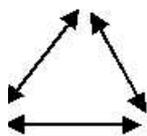
	Low				High
1. Overall satisfaction with parish life & ministry (Hard to get at other important elements if there is broad dissatisfaction or a generally flat emotional climate that lasts for a long period.)	1	2	3	4	5
2. Formation of adult members as Christians in the tradition of the Episcopal Church; resulting in Christians better able to live as responsible persons in society - the total impact of Liturgy, spiritual guidance, overall parish climate, programs. At least 1/4 of those present on Sunday are very competent in Anglican spiritual practice.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Vibrant - The extent to which parish life is vibrant, creates a "buzz" that excites the congregation and spills over to the wider community; an attractive energy. (Note: this isn't a matter of personality styles. A parish can be generally introverted or extroverted and be vibrant.)	1	2	3	4	5
4. Alignment - The elements of parish life are mostly in alignment: income-expenses, the energy and funds to carry out the vision we have; liturgical space or number of services to match the number of attendees, and so on	1	2	3	4	5
5. Sunday - Great Liturgy and social time together	1	2	3	4	5
6. An expression of the Divine Charity - The parish in its life as a community and in the work of its leaders is an effective instrument of God's love.	1	2	3	4	5

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The Benedictine Promise: Overview

The three elements of the Benedictine Promise, and the whole of Benedictine spirituality, can help us see some of the hidden dynamics of parish life.

CONVERSION OF LIFE As a parish we find God on our journey together and in the new places we will go as a parish; in losing life to find life; in our openness to transformation.



OBEDIENCE As a parish we find God as we listen deeply to the world; to Scriptures; to the church, now and through the ages; to each other; to the creation; and to the deepest longings and prayer of our heart.

STABILITY As a parish we find God here and now in the relationships and pattern of our life together.

Benedictine spirituality is part of our Anglican DNA. It's the way of the Prayer Book and is embedded in much of the way we function as parish communities. We can make use of it in the work of congregational development: 1) as a way to see and enter into the depth of our own culture as Episcopalians and 2) because it is the spirituality of particular communities that have developed a capacity, over time, to maintain their integrity while renewing themselves in adaptation to the environment.

Look at the dynamics of parish life

You might think in terms of the whole parish or of a specific event or experience.

- What is the predisposition you see in the parish's behavior toward stability, change, or listening processes? Which direction do we generally tilt towards? Which is our anxiety often focused upon?
- In the parish's expression of stability, conversion of life, and obedience what seems healthy to you, what unhealthy? Is the stability simply being static? Is the conversion simply being driven by an impulse to change? Is the obedience endless listening and process or too little listening?

Develop a parish culture that is marked by:

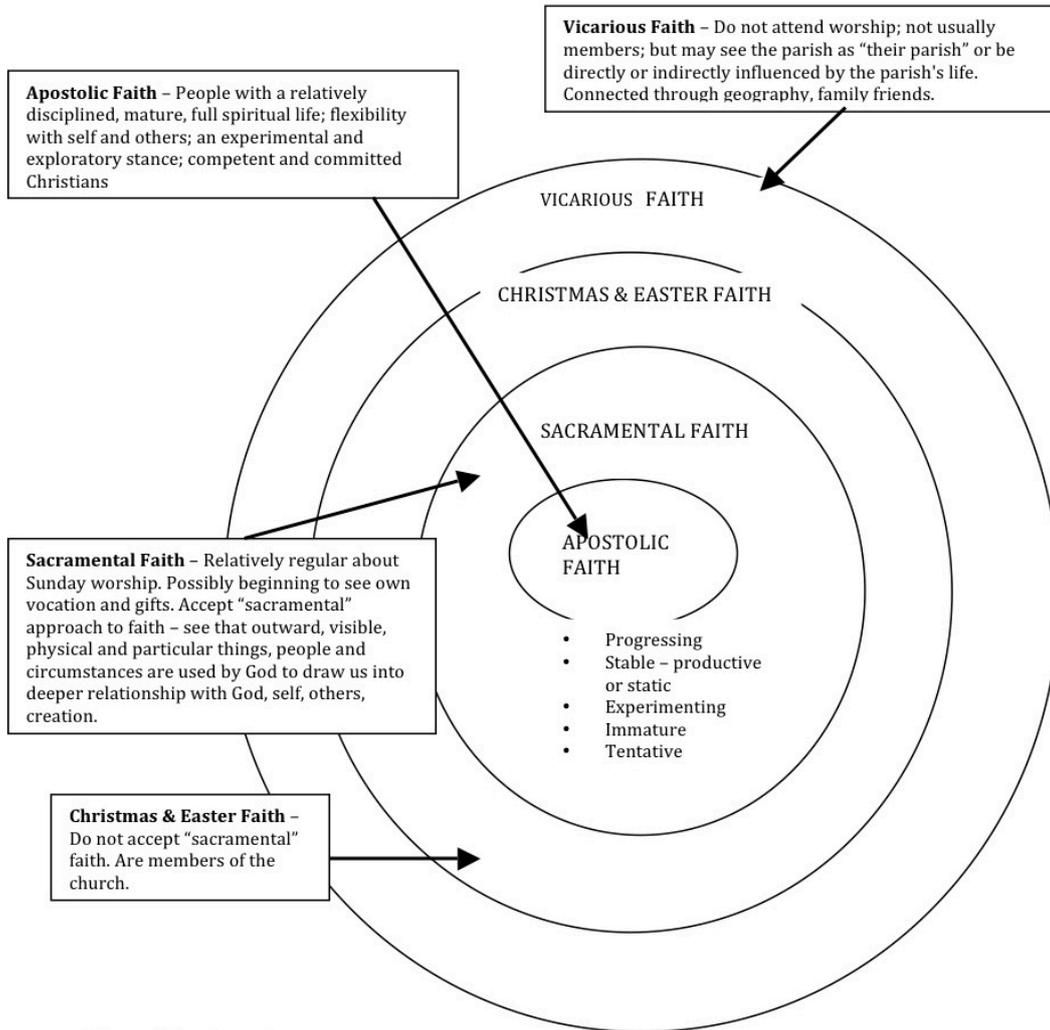
Stability – Especially seen in Liturgy, prayer and relationships.

Obedience – Seen in our openness to listen to, and respond to, one another, our bishop and the larger church.

Conversion of Life – Out of our life of stability or obedience we see and act on new challenges and opportunities for mission and building up the Body of Christ.

Copyright Robert A. Gallagher, 1987, 1997, 2002, 2003 For more on the model see Robert Gallagher's *Fill All Things: The Dynamics of Spirituality in the Parish Church*, Ascension Press, 2008

The Shape of the Parish



The model can be used:

- To assess the health of a parish, and
- In developing a strategy that deepens the parish’s spiritual life, while staying open the various places people are in their faith journey.

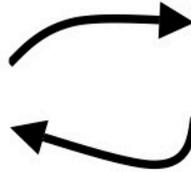
From *Fill All Things: The Spiritual Dynamics of the Parish Church*, Robert A Gallagher Copyright 2008
 “Shape of the Parish” Diagram -- Robert A. Gallagher/Mary Anne Mann, 1983; Revised RAG 1999, 2003

The Renewal – Apostolate Cycle

The Renewal - Apostolate Cycle is a way of describing a central dynamic of Christian life. The Cycle focuses our attention on the Christian's movement between being renewed in baptismal identity and purpose and living as instruments of God's love and grace in daily life. The Cycle is interested in both the individual's movement and in the ways in which the parish church supports and facilitates that movement. This is the primary task of any parish church.

RENEWAL

Renewal in baptismal identity and purpose in worship, study, the parish's social life, and being equipped for Christian action



APOSTOLATE

Participation in the work of Christ in service, evangelization and stewardship

In areas of:

- Workplace
- Family & Friends
- Civic Life
- Church

A Cycle

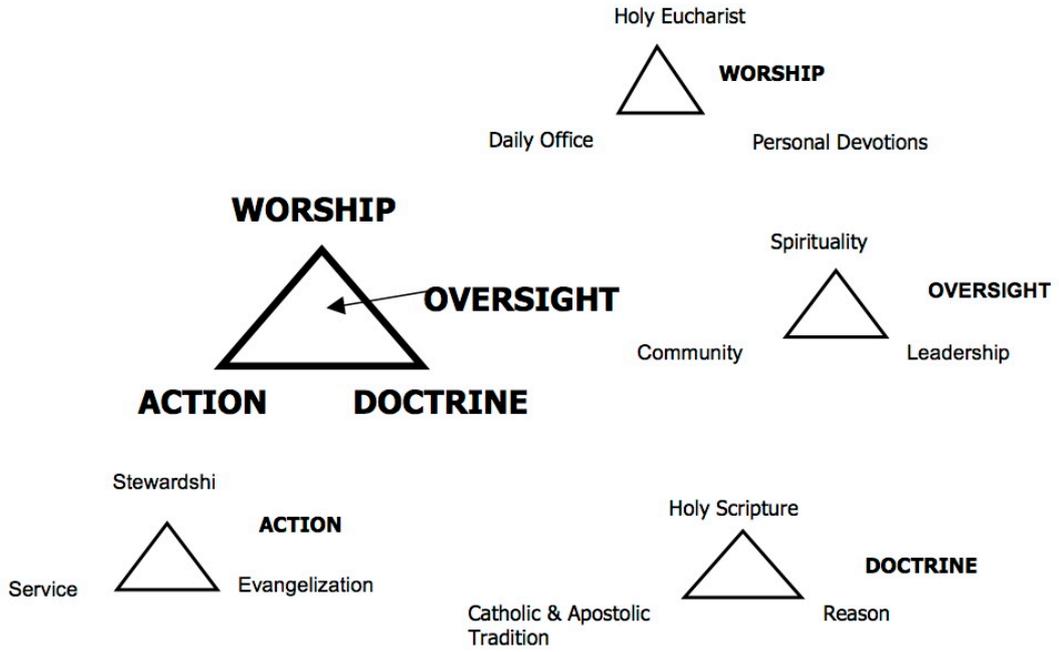
The cycle is between a conscious and intentional attention to God, prayer life, our relationships, Christian formation **and** a subconscious reliance upon God as members of the Body of Christ, in the workplace, family, friendship, civic life and congregational life.

In that Cycle:

We need:	Which is helped by:	Which the parish helps by:
To accept our dependence on God	Openness to spiritual guidance	An emphasis in its life on worship; nothing comes before the Eucharist and Daily Office. Also, more attention to formation and spiritual growth than other programs or ministries.
To accept responsibility for ordering our spiritual life	Establishing a rule of life	Offering programs and guidance in creating, experimenting with, and revising a spiritual discipline.
To accept our interdependence with others in the Church	Life in Christian community, a parish church	Being a healthy and faithful parish church and by helping people relate to the parish community in ways appropriate to their personality and the parish's capacities. Having opportunities for social life and the development of friendships.

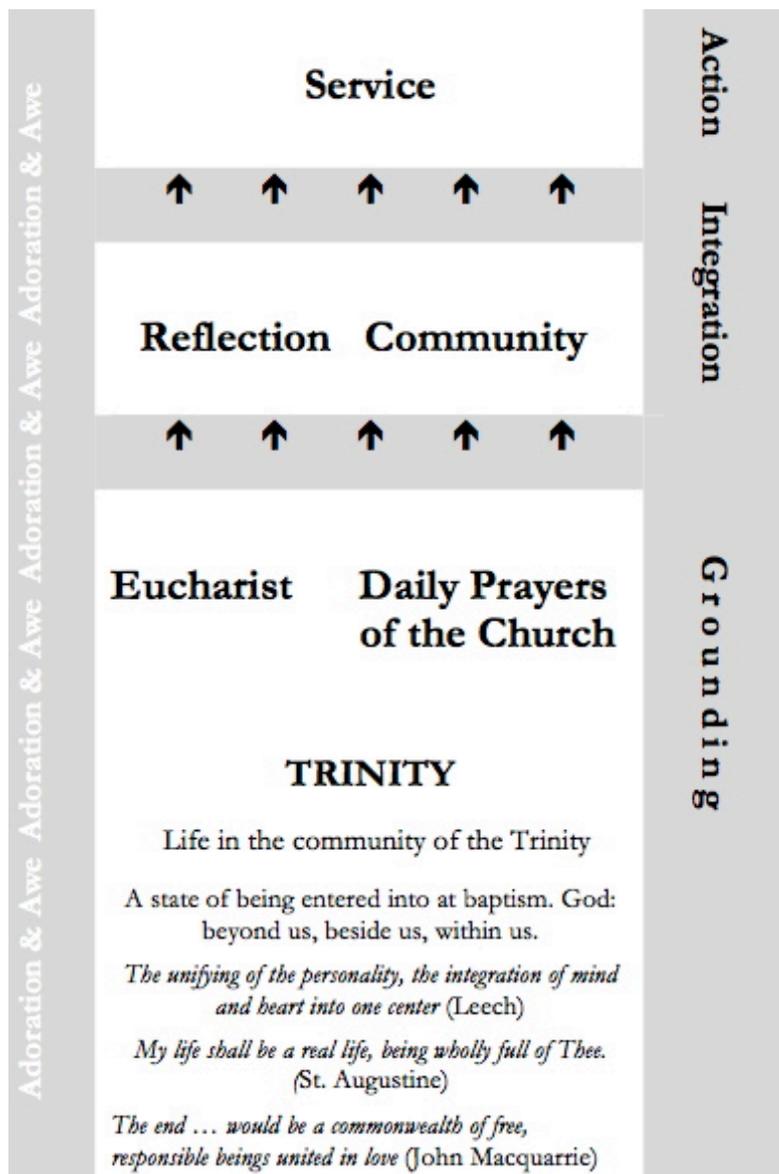
From *Fill All Things: The Spiritual Dynamics of the Parish Church*, Robert A Gallagher, Ascension Press, 2008

The Christian Life Model



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In Your Holy Spirit Model

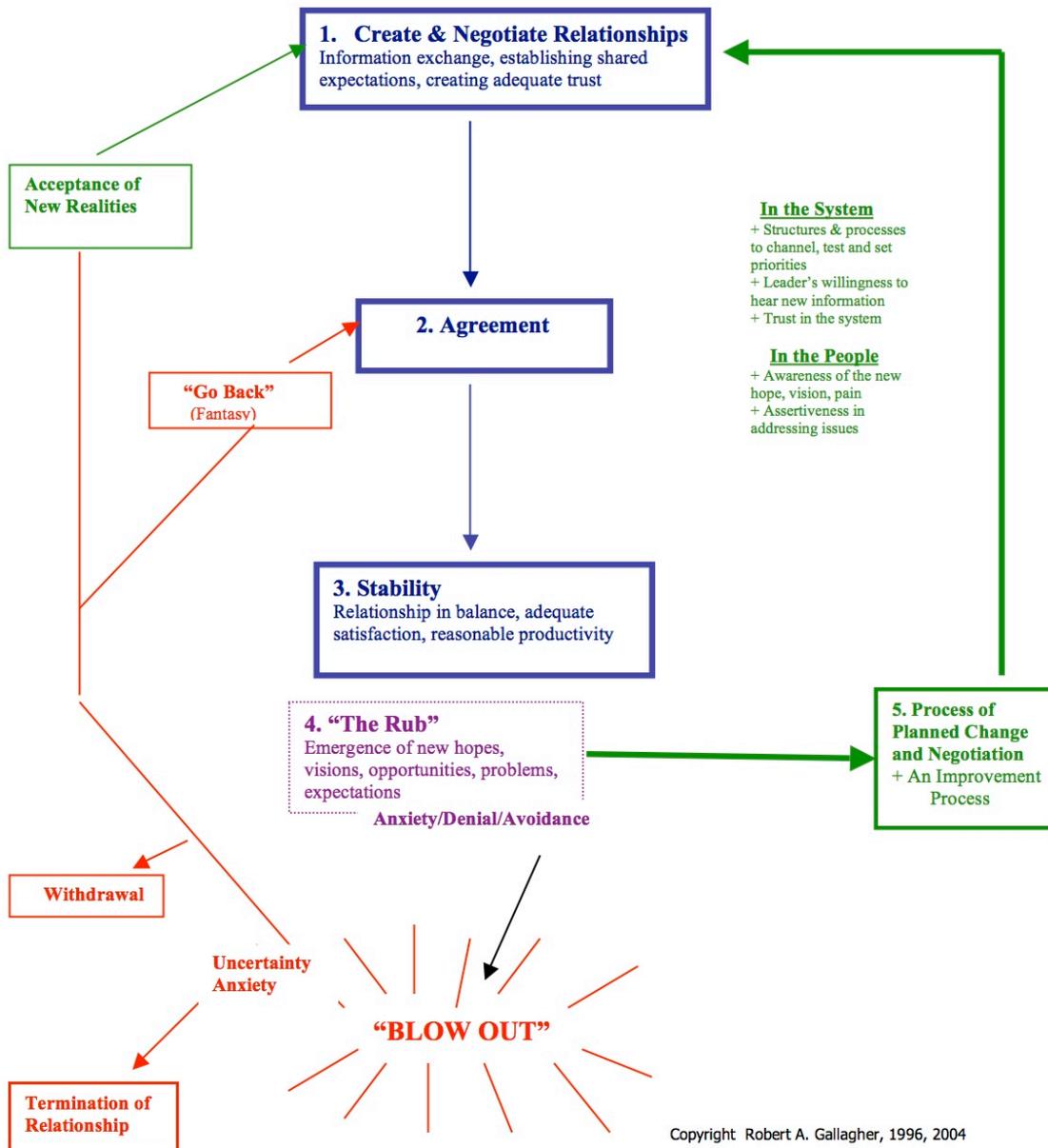


Copyright 2011 Michelle Heyne & Robert Gallagher, Ascension Press

For more: *In Your Holy Spirit: Shaping the Parish Through Spiritual Practices*, 2011 by Robert Gallagher & and *In Your Holy Spirit: Traditional Spiritual Practices in Today's Christian Life* by Michelle Heyne

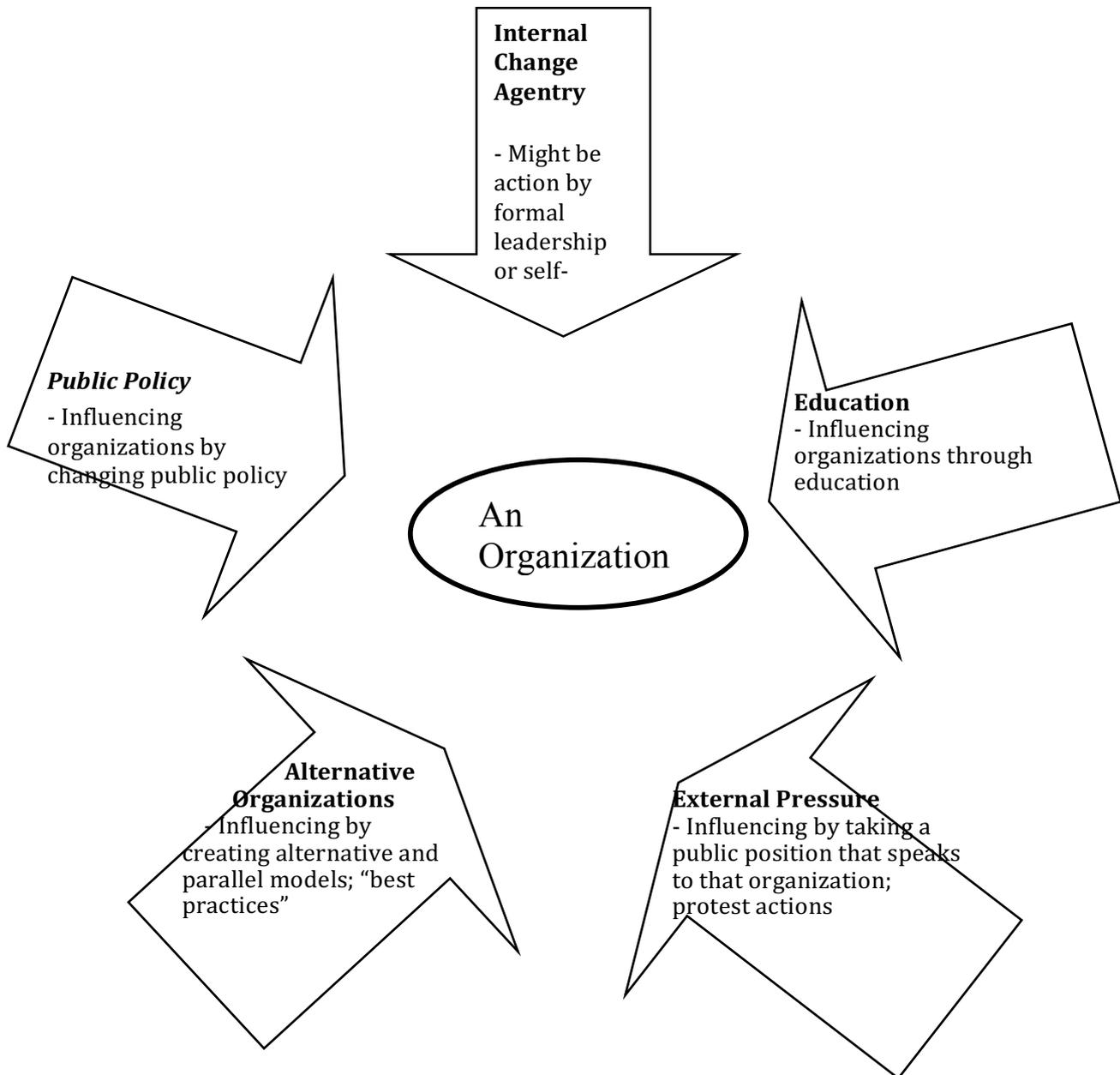
One's first duty is adoration, and one's second duty is awe and only one's third duty is service. And that for those three things and nothing else, addressed to God and no one else, you and I and all other countless human creatures evolved upon the surface of this planet were created. We observe then that two of the three things for which our souls were made are matters of attitude, of relation: adoration and awe. Unless these two are right, the last of the triad, service, won't be right. Unless the whole of your...life is a movement of praise and adoration, unless it is instinct with awe, the work which the life produces won't be much good. Evelyn Underhill

RELATIONSHIP CYCLE IN ORGANIZATIONS



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Organizational Change Strategies



Some issues to consider:

1. What are change strategies have you had success with? What is your existing strength?
2. What change strategies are likely to be most successful with a particular organization?
3. What resources, new competencies will you need to develop to act on a change strategy you would like to pursue?

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The Church: Analogies and Images

IMAGE	MISSION/ PURPOSE	ROLE OF PRIEST	EVANGELIZATION	STEWARDSHIP	WHAT HOLDS IT TOGETHER?
CLUB					
FAMILY					
CORPORATION					
SOCIAL CHANGE MOVEMENT					
SOCIAL WELFARE AGENCY					
MENTAL HEALTH CENTER					
PEOPLE OF GOD					
BODY OF CHRIST					

People naturally make the analogy between the Church and other groups with which they are familiar: clubs, corporations, families and so on. References to "organized religion" or "institutionalized religion" reveal the assumption that the Church is just one more form of human organization. While the process of making analogies with the club, corporation, etc., is inevitable, it also creates a problem. "People come to the conclusion that the Church is a "society created by human enterprise and designed to serve particular human ends," that it is created by the "agreement of a number of individual persons who presumably define the terms of their association and its goals." ... "Church means, not corporation and not club, but a collection of people who have been called out together by a voice or a word or a summons which comes to them from outside." (Richard Norris, *Understanding the Faith of the Church*, Seabury Press, NY, 1979)

From *Fill All Things: The Dynamics of Spirituality in the Parish Church*, Robert A Gallagher, Ascension Press, 2008

Parish Theology -- Images

The material below is a draft of a chapter from a new book by Heyne and Gallagher on the parish church.

If used as an educational process:

Beginning on the next page there are a series of theological images – “This is the Body of Christ,” “An Energy not its own,” etc.

1. Read the material. Make notes in the margins as you want – What speaks to you?; What touches you?; Which image do you most resist?; Which image most attracts you?
2. Which image does the parish need to live into now? Circle that one. We’ll pick up on that during the workshop.

Chapter Two: Parish theology images

If most people were asked about the structures, processes and dynamics of their parish it’s likely that the response would include comments about the vestry and rector, the annual meeting, how the pledging effort is carried out, and possibly a few words on issues the parish faces and matters about which people are in disagreement. It would all be true in as much as the person had knowledge about these things.

True but incomplete and shallow. It’s as though they were describing an iceberg by pointing to the 1/8th that is above the water line. What about the other 7/8th?

This section is about the part of a parish that is unseen and unacknowledged in our conventional descriptions of our parish church.

We’re offering a few images that point to that larger and Spirit driven aspect of our shared life.

Each theological image is something that is true about the parish church as it now is. It’s not something we need to create or make happen. It is the work of the Spirit in the church. It is as Underhill puts it, the efforts of “one who is called to stand alongside us.” Our task is to give ourselves to it. To listen and reflect so we might see and cooperate with what the Holy Spirit offers us. We are to place ourselves and the parish in the pathways of grace.

Below we provide a number of theological images of the parish church. Each gets at something different and each acknowledges (or rather, insists that we accept) that the parish is a living, evolving *system*.

We have intentionally used “dynamic” images. We are encouraging the reader to consider the range of forces and motions that characterize the parish, and specifically to come away with a renewed understanding that the work of intervening in parishes is complex stuff and it doesn’t stop. One change begets another; new or altered interactions shift our understanding of the problem; improvement in one sphere reveals the inadequacies of another. We never really “arrive” and we’re not supposed to. We can, though, make significant progress and

help create parishes that are consistent vehicles of God's grace and places of genuine renewal.

We are also delighted and humbled by the diversity of expression found in our parishes. We hope that by illustrating parish theology with similarly diverse images we will fuel the reader's sense of mystery and possibility while staying grounded in the parish's actual life.

An assumption about each theological image is that this is something that is true about the parish church as it now is. It's not something we need to create or make happen. It is the work of the Spirit in the church. At the same time we are to understand and cooperate with what the Spirit is doing in the parish. It's also true that we shape the parish by the images we use, by what we give energy to, the climate we nurture, and the structures and processes we establish.

This is the Body of Christ

The parish church is the Body of Christ. The parish church, in itself, bears the nature and purpose of the church. All the marks of that nature are present—one, holy, catholic, and apostolic. All the images that point to its identity and dynamics are present—People of God, the vine, bride, and especially, Body of Christ. The parish is not a division of the Body, it is in microcosm the Body.

It helps to take care with our language. It isn't that we are *becoming* the Body of Christ. Nor is it that we "should" work at becoming one, holy, catholic, and apostolic. The church *has come into being by God's call*. The church is stationed by God's grace.

We *are* the Body of Christ. We *are* one, holy, catholic, and apostolic—the parish is all those, but not fully expressed.

Renewed in baptismal identity and purpose and living as instruments of God's love and grace in daily life

This is the clearest image we know of living in the patterns and purpose parish life. It gets at what the parish church exists to do in the lives of its members. It also represents an oscillation cycle—moving regularly between Renewal and Apostolate—and hints at the importance of that movement and the critical interrelationship of the two ends of the cycle. When breathing, we don't select *either* inhaling *or* exhalation. We recognize that the two actions are part of an entire cycle fundamental to the ongoing life of the organism.

In organization development, the term "primary task" describes what the organization or group was formed to accomplish. A critical mass of leaders or members must have a shared understanding of primary task if the organization or group is to get its work done. So, re-phrasing the image above, the primary task of a parish is most usefully understood as renewal and nurturance of baptismal identity and purpose, which is itself accomplished primarily through (1) worship and related efforts around equipping for worship and other spiritual

practices; and (2) deepening the parish's understanding of how each of us is an instrument of Christ's love in our daily life, and regularly sending us out, renewed, to do the work we were given to do. To the extent a significant amount of the parish's energy is directed toward other things, the parish likely has a confusion about primary task.

“An energy not its own”

That phrase is from Charles Williams in *He Came Down from Heaven*. Williams wrote, “The Church (it was early decided) was not an organization of sinless men but of sinful, not a union of adepts but of less than neophytes, not illuminati but of those that sat in darkness. Nevertheless, it carried within it an energy not its own, and it knew what it believed about that energy.”

The Holy Spirit dwells in and guides the parish. Because of this “energy not its own” the parish is sanctified and holy. Efforts at parish development need to assume this reality.

We are concerned with developing understanding of models, and skill in methods used in the field of organization development. We think that increased capacity in the use of these methods and models will increase the capacity of the parish for self-renewal and health. At the same time, we recognize that the Holy Spirit is present and active in the parish and may be called on by leaders in their work. Both are true and they are interrelated.

“Power from the center pervades the whole”ⁱ

In *Light the Dark Streets*, Kilmer Myers wrote, “One of the main tasks of the parish priest is to train the militant core of his parishioners in such a way that they understand as fully as possible the true nature of a Christian parish.” He understood the importance of that core group. There need to be people of Apostolic faith at the center of each parish.

Health in the parish church is finally measured not by extraordinary acts of prayer and service but by ordinary and routine acts. The call is to proficiency, a capable efficiency, a baseline ability to participate in the core spiritual practices of the Anglican tradition.

The process is one of immersion not possession. The parish is a community in which the baptized are soaked in the ways of holiness; and being so saturated, the Spirit's ways fill us, and seep into and pervade our lives.

The prayer of the Apostolic—those at the center—streams outward, flowing through the parish, touching members in seen and unseen ways.

In a healthy parish, members are caught up in the stream—some swim regularly in the currents, some stand near the banks, others find stepping stones that permit them to approach the depths from a safe distance. But the stream is where members are drawn and where attention is focused in the search for refreshment.

In an unhealthy parish, there is more energy around erecting barriers to the stream's organic flow and there may be a number of attempts to divert it or to dam it up entirely.

Spiritual growth—the development of special capacities for prayer and Christian action—will rise from the parish environment that focuses on health. But we need to be clear with ourselves—this is God's work, this is of the Holy Spirit. The attention of the parish as a whole, and its clergy, needs to be on spiritual health.

Such health includes regular skilled attention to the temporal needs of the parish—to paying the bills, getting the grass cut, the gutters cleaned. To maintaining the service schedule, getting bulletins printed, generating an annual report. But a parish that understands its primary task, its reason for being, as the worship of God and the formation of Christians in the Episcopal tradition will see the oversight and competent implementation of administrative matters as central to support of the mission, not ends in themselves.

Health also requires attention to the Apostolic so they may fulfill their vocation within the Body. The parish must provide ways to develop the competence of the Apostolic for living in the ancient pattern as adapted for modern life. The parish must focus on improving their ability to become and stay spiritually healthy, which means creating specific and integrated means of building competence in spiritual practice.

What the parish offers to equip the Apostolic will also feed some others who may be ready to go deeper. The “power from the center” therefore flows through and from the core into the rest of the Body.

“The stream of redemptive power flows out”

How is it that the parish influences society? How does the parish have an impact upon the daily lives of men and women?

This principle of things flowing from a source was picked up by William Temple and applied to the church's impact on society—“the stream of redemptive power flows out from the church through the lives of its members into the society which they influence.” (*What Christians Stand for in the Secular World*)

Pope John XXIII said this about the laity (note that he is talking about the laity generally, not about the clergy, and his use of masculine pronouns and masculine collective nouns were, in this context, intended to include both men and women):

Here once more We exhort Our sons to take an active part in public life, and to work together for the benefit of the whole human race, as well as for their own political communities. It is vitally necessary for them to endeavor, in the light of Christian faith and with love as their guide, to ensure that every institution whether economic, social,

cultural or political, be such as not to obstruct but rather to facilitate man's self betterment, both in the natural and in the supernatural order... And yet, if they are to imbue civilization with right ideals and Christian principles, it is not enough for Our sons to be illumined by the heavenly light of faith and to be fired with enthusiasm for a cause; they must involve themselves in the work of these institutions, and strive to influence them effectively from within.ⁱⁱ

This issue is frequently confused. When Pope John talked about the need for Christians to “involve themselves in the work of these institutions,” he meant all sorts of institutions *other than* the Church. He was talking about a way of seeing Christian life that understands the organic nature of our witness: if we have become salt and light, we will be salt and light, with the people and in the circumstances of our daily lives. This will hold true in all our interactions, not just those that are explicitly “religious,” or those designated “service projects.”

Yet it is in many ways difficult to even *see* the Apostolate of daily life given the weight and ubiquity of church needs, structures, and priorities. This is just a fact. It is natural (and necessary) for institutions to focus on their own preservation and nurturance. It is also natural for this focus to morph and expand out of proportion. Without careful attention, this tendency will overshadow the parish's real business: namely, the support and renewal of its members' baptismal identity and the support of their lives in Christ out in the world.

This natural “institutionalization” is often reframed—usually not explicitly—as something like, “The parish exists to do good works in the community and to maintain a solid administrative presence supported by the gifts and resources of its members.” Our understanding of the lay apostolate is so mixed up with our understanding of the institutional church that it can be difficult to see how we undermine the former. Here's an example.

We attended a diocesan gathering in which a number of us were discussing support of the lay apostolate. A diocesan consultant participating in the conversation grew more and more excited as she described some of the things her diocese was doing to address this. She explained that they had instituted a story-telling program and related award at convention, at which members of different parishes in the diocese were invited to tell their “mission success story.” Each example was some official “ministry” of the parish, and one inevitably offering direct service to a particular disenfranchised group.

We're not saying this is a bad thing (although Michelle routinely objects to the doling out of extrinsic rewards for complex virtues, but that's a different book), but it definitely missed the point. Or rather, it demonstrated how difficult it is even for trained church professionals to distinguish between service work done by members of the parish through the parish, and the service of the baptized in the routine events of their daily lives—at work, with friends, with family, in civic life. It is this latter type of service—one nurtured by, but not controlled, vetted, or otherwise determined by, the parish church—that we mean when we talk about the lay apostolate.

In another example, we were consulting to a group of parishes struggling with regional mergers. A deacon involved in the process began complaining about how we're all too focused on the church and we don't live out our faith in the world. She mentioned some projects she was working on to support lay people and the one she cared the most about was setting up a Eucharist in the park for the homeless. The problem with this, of course, is that she had confused setting with function, and she had confused renewal with apostolate. A Eucharist in the park for the homeless is one way to help the homeless shape, renew, and connect with their Christian identity; it is not, in itself, recognition of the apostolate of the homeless. What do those people who attended the Eucharist in the park do after they leave the Eucharist? That is where their apostolate is expressed.

Our final example is a story we heard about an exchange between a priest and a deacon at a clergy gathering.

Deacon: "We need to get our people to *go out there*."

Priest leading the gathering: "I wasn't aware we were keeping them trapped in the church."

Bear One Another's Burdens

The call to bear one another's burdens is an expression of the parish church's oneness and holiness. It is first a sacramental expression of the church's nature; then secondly, it is a moral claim upon us.

The parish church does this in its formal structures and processes of Eucharistic offering, intercessory prayer, pastoral care teams, mobilizing around a specific need of members – hospitalization, long illness, sudden death. Then there is the more hidden stuff that occurs. It occurs simply because you are there in the parish. In the Peace we touch and bless one another and may in so doing change others and ourselves.

In the parish's clusters of friendships we find more intimate moments and actions. In the side conversations of coffee hour, discussions over Sunday brunch, phone calls, text messages, Facebook communications and in dozens of other ways we carry one another. It helps when parish leaders recognize that the parish's formal listening and discernment processes are probably much less than 1% of the overall listening and taking care of one another that happens in the parish.

This bearing of one another's burdens is about other members of the Body of Christ. It is the divine charity acted out within this local manifestation of the Body of Christ. Obviously we may also hope that this energy will overflow beyond the parish and into the daily life of the baptized. But it is important to be clear: the starting place is within the parish church. The love we share for one another flows into the world. As William Temple wrote, "The stream of redemptive power flows out."

Holy Unity—Holy Beings

The parish exists to join in God's work and do that in its own life and in relation to all we touch.

John Macquarrie described the direction God moves us toward as "a commonwealth of free, responsible beings united in love." The parish community joins all people in their work of being a full human being and also being in relationship with others.

While we certainly see this in worship that is beautiful, dignified, and offered to the glory of God, we also see it in the routine structures of our interactions. We design a reverence for people, for work, for our tools, for our environment, into our meetings, our spaces, and our communication. We assume that we must welcome others into our life, and that our life will thereby be in some way transformed. We assume that free and responsible adults will choose whether to accept that welcome and whether to enter in to what we offer.

Grounded in awe and adoration

When we understand our parishes as microcosms of the Body of the Christ, we also tend to ground our worship and community life more and more consciously in what Evelyn Underhill described as "awe and adoration." This is in contrast to a grounding in programs or, frequently, a stated "missional" or "service" orientation that actually focuses the parish on institutional responses to institutionally-identified needs. A stance of adoration and awe is, by definition, directed toward the divine. The difference in stance—and in action that emerges from the stance—is radical and can also be difficult to see.

Service itself—which is often what we attempt to get at when we talk about "mission" or "outreach" is best understood as an organic response to baptismal identity and our membership in the Body of Christ. The parish is uniquely equipped to nurture those responses, especially through worship and by consciously equipping members to engage Anglican spiritual practices. As we are formed in Christ, so we become Christ to the world. If the formation is shaky or poorly-developed, the service that grows out of it will also be shaky or poorly-developed:

One's first duty is adoration, and one's second duty is awe and only one's third duty is service. And that for those three things and nothing else, addressed to God and no one else, you and I and all other countless human creatures evolved upon the surface of this planet were created. We observe then that two of the three things for which our souls were made are matters of attitude, of relation: adoration and awe. Unless these two are right, the last of the triad, service, won't be right. Unless the whole of your...life is a movement of praise and adoration, unless it is instinct with awe, the work which the life produces won't be much good.

Evelyn Underhill wrote this in 1926: “We are drifting towards a religion which consciously or unconsciously keeps its eye on humanity rather than on Deity—which lays all stress on service, and hardly any of the stress on awe: and that is a type of religion which in practice does not wear well.” (*Concerning the Inner Life*, p 15)

Segments of the church continue to approach service by way of guilt—if we can make people feel bad enough maybe they’ll do what we think they should do. It finds expression in some parish churches where a few members attempt to “guilt” the rest over their lack of greenness, failure to treat the homeless “properly,” or not giving enough time to particular parish service projects. It reaches its high point around Christmas as the pleasure of the secular feast is assaulted in the name of a purer feast. Or the impulse to spend more on gifts for those we love is set over against the needs of the poor.

Service that emerges from adoration and awe is first a stance, an attitude, influencing and filling all our activities. We assume that God strengthens our “hearts in holiness.” (1 Thessalonians 3:13) The parish can reinforce that stance in many ways:

- Maintain a deep and rich life of worship and prayer as a community.
- Build capacity for reverence, both in worship itself (for those serving at the altar and those participating in the congregation) and in the day-to-day encounters of parish life.
- Close the parish office when the Eucharist is being celebrated or the Office said. Keep the parish schedule clear of activities (meetings, educational events, etc.) that conflict with scheduled worship.
- Build competence for practice (e.g., saying the Office on our own, strengthening teams for saying public Offices, developing skill for participation in the Eucharist that creates a broad sense of ownership in the congregation, providing structured opportunities for listening carefully and respectfully to one another and to God).
- Provide opportunities for members to reflect on their own lives and work. Where is the presence of Jesus Christ in the people, things and circumstances of daily life?
- When offering institutional service projects, include brief worship (e.g., Morning or Evening Prayer) as the group gathers or departs.
- Keep the weight in the parish around worship. When parishioners are serving in various (necessary) institutional roles, such as greeter, bookkeeper, vestry member, buildings & grounds maintenance team member, be clear that those are appreciated and needed functions but they are not a substitute for participation in worship.
- Hold in front of members the moral vision of Christian Faith¹.

¹ As a starting place see “The Church’s Influence in Society” in *Fill All Things*, pages 167 – 168. William Temple wrote “The world...results from His love; creation is a kind of overflow of the divine love.” And, “The aim of a Christian social order is the fullest possible development of individual personality in the widest and deepest possible fellowship.”

Obedience-stability-conversion of life

The Benedictine dynamics of Obedience, Stability, and Conversion of Life, are present in all parish churches. It may, though, be difficult to see them clearly or how they inter-relate.

Stability is finding God here, now, in this place, exactly as it. In the parish, it is expressed primarily through worship, the development of owned “common prayer,” and in the relationships and rhythms of community life. Esther de Waal, in *Seeking God: the Way of St. Benedict*, says, “...stability means that I must not run away from where my battles are being fought, that I have to stand still where the real issues have to be faced.”

Obedience is best understood as deep, mutual listening, and deep, considered response to that listening. We must listen and respond to ourselves, to parish leaders, and to other sources of authority, such as scripture, tradition, and the wider Church. Such listening and response demands the humility to be present to what we don’t want to hear, to recognize that others have claims on the community that transcend our own, and that we may be called in a direction we don’t want to go.

Conversion of Life is openness to where the Spirit is leading us. It is about our ability to recognize and act on new opportunities and new challenges. Esther de Waal describes it as being “*ready to pick myself up, and start all over again in a pattern of growth which will not end until the day of my final dying. And all the time the journey is based on that Gospel paradox of losing life and finding it...my goal is Christ.*”

The key to understanding how the elements inter-relate is to see that healthy Stability (in contrast to rigidity or being stuck in a certain kind of sentimentality about how things “should” be) and healthy Obedience (in contrast to endless listening and no action, or an inability to identify what is truly worth listening to) are the ground from which emerges invitations to move the parish to new places. Conversion springs from the ground of Stability and Obedience, and will in turn affect the quality of our Stability and of our Obedience. Unless Conversion has been nurtured in a life of Stability and Obedience, our change may be shallow or reactive.

“Repent, believe, love”

See, understand, enjoy, said the Gnostic; repent, believe, love, said the Church, and if you see anything by the way, say so. Charles Williams, The Descent of the Dove

In our culture, one aspect of the parish’s ongoing conversation with itself is this – do we shape a parish life that incarnates the church’s pathway of repentance, belief and love, or do we shape that life around “see, understand, enjoy?” Each pathway is real. Each has value. One is primary. One is a pathway of grace.

The world apprehends “see, understand, enjoy” more easily than the other. Most people in most parishes grasp that more easily than the other. So, for the sake of harmony, growth and comfort, why not allow ourselves the easy pathway?

We live in a world of the first three. That’s the rhythm that drives much of our existence. That rhythm won’t satisfy over time but we fall into seeking more of it. The first doesn’t assume you have to change anything very deep in yourself. The second assumes that the pathway into true life is self-forgetfulness and sacrifice.

Thomas Merton wrote, “Our vocation is not simply to be, but to work together with God in the creation of our own life, our own identity, our own destiny—to work out our own identity in God, which the Bible calls ‘working out salvation,’ is a labor which requires sacrifice and anguish, risk and many tears.” Augustine wrote, “Understanding is the reward of faith. Therefore, seek not to understand that you may believe, but believe that you may understand.”

We miss the point if what we hear is that “see, understand, enjoy” is morally wrong. Or if we hear that it isn’t to have a place in life, including parish life. The point is that God’s interplay with us is not fundamentally about that. Rather the interplay is about the self-emptying inherent in repenting, in believing, and in loving. Not repenting only if we see a reason to do so; not believing only in what we have come to understand; and not loving only what we enjoy.

It’s not that there’s anything wrong with seeing, understanding and enjoying. It is about getting things in the right order. And in so doing to cooperate with the work of the Spirit in the parish.

To live in the heart of a parish church is to live in a place that assumes you will grow by changing. That our rootedness and openness is in the service of that change. That out of our stability and obedience rises conversion of life.

ⁱ In *Pastoral Theology: A Reorientation* Martin Thornton presented his understanding of the parish church as the Body of Christ, “the complete Body in microcosm,” and his Remnant Concept, “in which power from the center pervades the whole.” The holiness and love of a Remnant at the center of parish life is for Thornton what makes a parish a true parish.

ⁱⁱ *Pacem in Terris*. Encyclical of Pope John XXIII on Establishing Universal Peace in Truth, Justice, Charity, and Liberty. April 11, 1963.