Congregational Development through Spiritual Practices

January 28, 2011

Robert A. Gallagher

The primary job of a church is to be a spiritual community that forms people in faith.

Diana Butler Bass, *Christianity for the Rest of Us*, Harper One, 2006

Contents

Assessing Your Spiritual Practices	3
Assessing the parish's spiritual practices	6
Assumptions on the Spiritual Life	11
A Map: Spiritual Practices	12
Renewal – Apostolate Cycle	14
Shape of the Parish	18
Episcopal Church Spirituality	21
Biographical information	
Resources	24

The development of a parish is a process of entering more deeply into the life of Christ and the nature and mission of the Church. A parish is being renewed as it enters into and reflects the mind, heart and work of Christ. A parish is being renewed as it enters into and reflects the unity, holiness, catholicity and apostolicity of the Church. A parish is being renewed as it pursues the mission of holy unity. Parish development is our striving, as a community of Christian people, toward God. It is not primarily something we do, or create, or make happen. It is the way in which a parish, a local manifestation of the Holy Catholic Church, shares in the Divine Life. It is living the Christian life, not simply as individuals, but as a people. The movement of a parish into a comprehensive and deep expression of the Christian Life is the result of years of striving, submitting and molding. It is the responsibility of clergy and lay leaders to monitor the life and ministry of, the parish and to take initiative in increasing the faithfulness and effectiveness of that life and ministry.

From *Power from on High*, Robert A. Gallagher, Ascension Press, 1983.

Assessing your spiritual practices

Sunday Eucharist

1. Attendance (circle one)

About 1/4 of the time	Half the time	¾ of the time	Just about every Sunday

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

Participating in the Daily Prayers of the Church

3. **Doing the Office** in some form on my own or with others

Never	Only when offered at a meeting or retreat	Sporadically or at during some season(s) of the church year	Most days

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	2	3	4	5

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	2	3	4	5

Participating in the parish community

6. 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	2	3	4	5

7. Connection with people

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

8. Participation in parish social life

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

Service

9. In Daily Life

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	3	4	5

The process of spiritual growth

10. 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	3	4	5

11. Experiment

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

Permission is given to those purchasing the book to make copies of this assessment form for parish use. No charge is to be attached and the form may not be modified. This notice must be included in all copies of the assessment. Copyright Robert A Gallagher & Michelle Heyne 2010
Found in: *In Your Holy Spirit: Traditional Spiritual Practices in Today's Christian Life,* 2011 by Michelle Heyne and *In Your Holy Spirit: Shaping the Parish through Spiritual Practice*, by Robert Gallagher, 2011

Assessing the parish's spiritual practices

Your name:

A. Your Attendance at the Sunday Eucharist (circle one)

About 1/4 of the time	Half the time	¾ of the time	Just about every Sunday

B. Your Spiritual Discipline – I have a spiritual disciple grounded in the church's tradition

No				Very much so
1	2	3	4	5

Overall

1. The degree of awareness of spiritual practices **and proficiency** among regular attendees (circle one)

No idea	15% of the adult average Sunday attendees are aware of the core spiritual practices and few are proficient	40% of the adult average Sunday attendees are aware of the core spiritual practices and 5% are proficient	80% of the adult average Sunday attendees are aware of the core spiritual practices and 30% are proficient

Sunday Eucharist

2. Member's ability to participate

Most are frequently confused and uncertain about how to participate.				A critical mass of people "flow" with it. Mostly don't need a Prayer Book or leaflet.
1	2	3	4	5

3. Congregation or audience

We are like an audience. We wait for instructions and prompting before participating.				We are a congregation – competent in the liturgy. There are no instructions during the Eucharist.
1	2	3	4	5

4. Competence of liturgical assistants – We effectively equip those with a special role in the celebration, e.g., cantor, lector, ministers of the altar, acolyte.

We do a poor job				Done well
1	2	3	4	5

5. Liturgical presence of the presiding priest – A sacramental presence. The person and the role are held together. The priest's personality doesn't overwhelm the role; the role doesn't make the personality disappear. Graceful, attentive.

Awful				Done well
1	2	3	4	5

6. The liturgy is usually well done. It has the structure, climate and rhythm of Apostolic faith. It requires some competence. It has the potential to catch people up in something beyond themselves; to feed wonder and awe. The congregation knows how to participate without prompting.

Not at all				Very much so
1	2	3	4	5

7. The **preaching** usually has a good pace, style, sense of ease, and length. It connects the tradition with life. There is an authenticity about the preacher and what is said.

Not at all				Very much so
1	2	3	4	5

8. The **Liturgical Space** is graceful, not cluttered; is beautiful; fits the congregation's size and style of worship. Those serving at the altar can move about without awkwardness.

Not at all				Very much so
1	2	3	4	5

9. The Holy Eucharist is celebrated on **enough occasions**, at times, each week as to allow people with a variety of schedules to find one that might serve as their weekly spiritual practice.

Not at all				Very much so
1	2	3	4	5

Note: There is a longer Eucharistic Assessment available in Robert Gallagher's *Eucharistic Spirituality: From Audience to Congregation*, Ascension Press, 2011

Participating in the Daily Prayers of the Church

10. The parish offers a **public form of the Daily Office**

Never	Sporadically or at during some season(s) of the church year	A few days each week	Most days of the week

11. Those **participating in officiating** at the parish's public offering of the Daily Office are:

There is no public offering of the Office				Both clergy and lay members officiate on a regular basis
1	2	3	4	5

12. The **parish equips and supports** parishioners in saying the Daily Prayer of the Church on their own in the course of daily life by offering training and guidance

Not at all				Regular and frequent training and guidance are provided
1	2	3	4	5

13. 15 – 20% of those regularly attending a weekly Eucharist **say the Office in some form**

Few or none in the parish say the Office				At least that many
1	2	3	4	5

Disciplined ways of reflecting

14. The **parish provides members assistance** in identifying and maintaining ways of being reflective.

Not at all				Regularly
1	2	3	4	5

15. The parish **engages in reflective processes**, ways of listening to and learning from its own life as a community.

Not at all				Regularly
1	2	3	4	5

16. The parish's reflective processes have helped it **become more flexible and adaptive.**

Not at all				Very much so
1	2	3	4	5

Participating in the parish community

17. This is a parish community 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.

Not at all				Very much so
1	2	3	4	5

18. Connection with people

Most don't know anyone well			Regular attendees usually know a number of people and have a few friends in the parish
1	2	3	4	5

19. Participation in parish social life is easy for members to engage. The climate is one of acceptance whether you participate or not.

Not at all				Very much so
1	2	3	4	5

Service

20. Service in Daily Life (within our friendships, families, work, and civic life)

Few have a clear understanding of how they serve in daily life			Most regular attendees are very clear about service in daily life
1	2	3	4	5

21. As a parish community we have a form of serving beyond the parish's needs that is **sustainable and in proportion** to what we can manage.

We are overwhelmed by it			It's easily managed
1	2	3	4	5

22. Our parish's corporate service ministry **fits our gifts** as a parish.

Not a fit				Fits us
1	2	3	4	5

The Process of Change

It can also model an approach to change or experimentation and learning from experience. It can teach methods that allow people to face change

23. An adult foundations course is offered regularly and frequently in the parish

Never				Regular & frequent
1	2	3	4	5

24. The parish has a climate and an approach to the spiritual life that encourages **experimentation *and* the engagement** of the tradition.

Not the case				Very much so
1	2	3	4	5

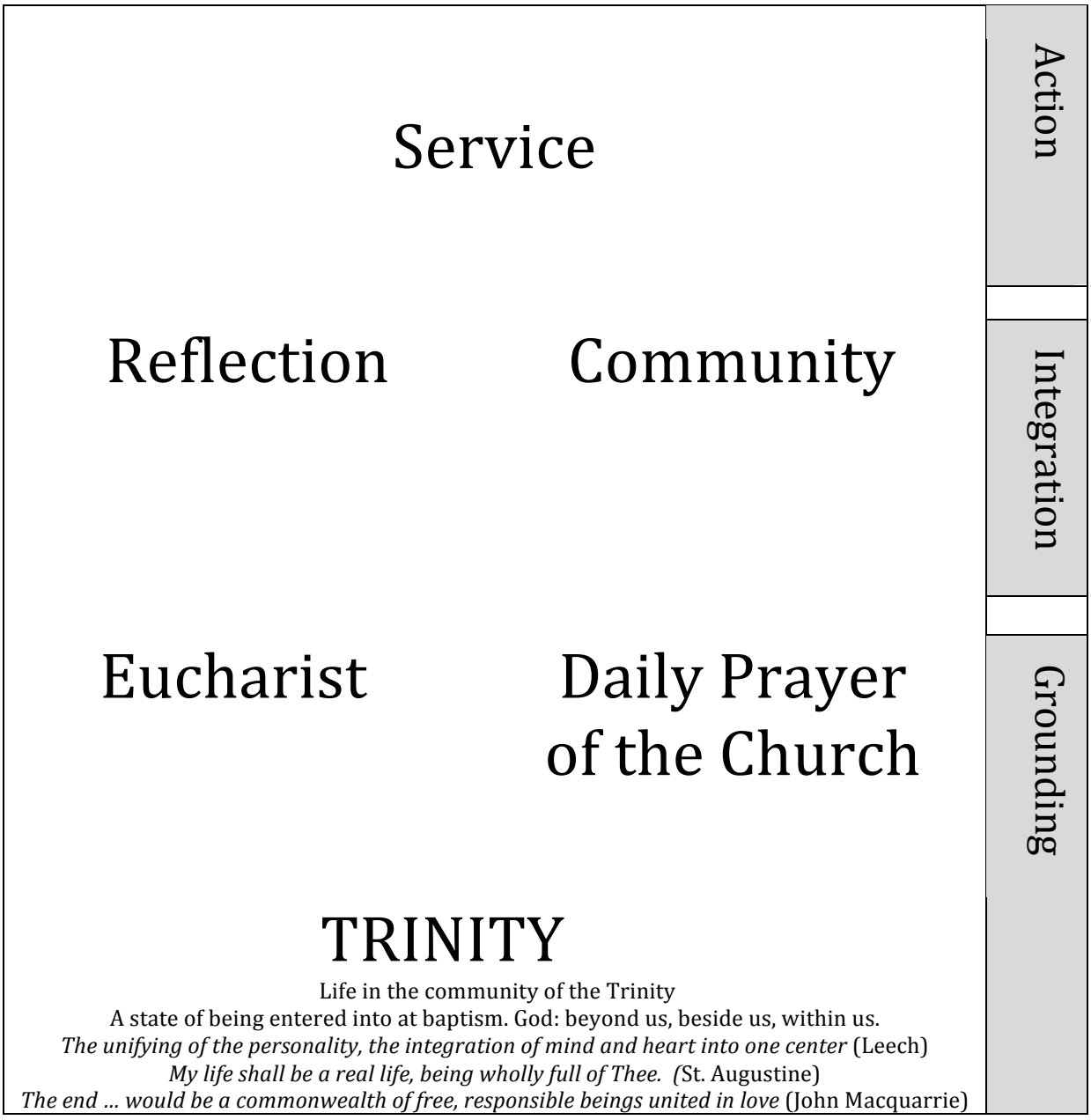
Permission is given to those purchasing the book to make copies of this assessment form for parish use. No charge is to be attached and the form may not be modified. This notice must be included in all copies of the assessment. Copyright Robert A Gallagher & Michelle Heyne 2010 Found in: *In Your Holy Spirit: Traditional Spiritual Practices in Today's Christian Life,* 2011 by Michelle Heyne and *In Your Holy Spirit: Shaping the Parish through Spiritual Practice*, by Robert Gallagher, 2011

Assumptions on the Spiritual Life

1. We all have a spiritual life.
2. It's a significant act of spiritual growth when we accept responsibility for our spiritual life.
3. A healthy spiritual life assumes engagement rather than escape, an interest in the life of the world instead of spiritual sentimentality or being caught up in illusions.
4. We are seeking a spiritual practice with roots in ancient ways and useful in modern life.
5. We need a spirituality that is both solid and resilient.
6. Our spiritual life serves us best when we understand that it is to evolve over time. What serves us when we are 11 differs from when we are 18 and still again from when we are 35 or 60. A fruitful evolution rises out of forms of spiritual life that are complex, rich and paradoxical. They continue to change as we increase our self-awareness, insight, and in response to changing circumstances.
7. It requires efficiency if it is to serve modern daily life
8. It requires attention and time if it is to serve modern daily life.
9. Our spiritual life and discipline is to be based on an integrated system, a pattern, rather than a series of random practices. We are to live our spiritual life by Rule, not rules.
10. It's possible for the average member to become proficient, competent, in spiritual practices.
11. We must decide to base our spiritual life on persistence, courage, and competence, rather than on feelings, whether we feel like praying or not. A useful and faithful spiritual life requires critical reasoning and intelligence. We need to intentionally turn away from the spiritual fads and fast food.
12. The parish church's primary task is the spiritual formation of its people.

Copyrighted material - From *In Your Holy Spirit: Shaping the Parish Through Spiritual Practices*, Robert A. Gallagher, Ascension Press, 2011

A Map: Spiritual Practices



Copyrighted material - From *In Your Holy Spirit: Shaping the Parish Through Spiritual Practices*, Robert A. Gallagher, Ascension Press, 2011

A map of spiritual practice for the parish might look something like this

Weekly Practice: Holy Eucharist

The Holy Eucharist celebrated several times each week as to allow people with a variety of schedules to find one that might serve as their weekly spiritual practice.

Daily Practice: The Daily Prayers of the Church

There are two things to do here. The first is to equip and support parishioners in saying the Daily Prayer of the Church on their own in the course of daily life. The second is to offer the Daily Office in some routine form on most days of the week.

Reflection

There are two primary acts for the parish to take. One is to offer members assistance in identifying and maintaining ways of being reflective. The second is for the parish itself to engage in reflective processes, ways of listening to and learning from its own life as a community. The beginning place for this is to create an environment with significant space for stillness and silence.

Parish Community

The parish needs to provide opportunities for social life among parishioners and create an environment in which they may find and live what Augustine called a "real life," a life in which they might be genuine, be open and honest about themselves, and still be in deep relationship with others and God. This is a community where our differences can be expressed and will be accepted; in which we can fight with those we love without fearing the loss of the relationship.

Serve

The parish can hold in front of its members the moral vision of Christian Faith. The primary place, the most effective place, of service for the Christian is in his or her daily life. We serve within our friendships, families, work, and civic life. The parish can help members identify how they serve, how they may better serve, and the gifts each brings to that task. The parish can also have at least one service ministry that is done as a parish. This is a call to a wise and generous love.

The Process of Change

The parish can provide a foundations program that equips people to take responsibility for their own spiritual life and moral action in daily life. It can also model an approach to change or experimentation and learning from experience. It can teach methods that allow people to face change

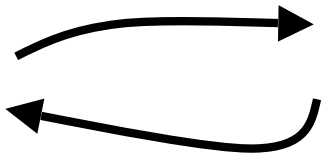
Copyrighted material - From *In Your Holy Spirit: Shaping the Parish Through Spiritual Practices*, Robert A. Gallagher, Ascension Press, 2011

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, Copyright 2008

The Cycle

The Renewal-Apostolate Cycle is a way of describing the Christian's movement between being formed in Christ and the apostolate of daily life. It is also a way of describing the work of the parish church.

In Renewal

In renewal we intentionally engage in disciplines and patterns of behavior that ground us more deeply in our identity and purpose as baptized members of the church. We grow up into Christ -- by living with others in a parish community that is healthy and faithful; by worship and prayer; and by learning about ourselves, others, and God. It is the process of becoming light, salt, leaven; of developing "an inquiring and discerning heart"; and of becoming what Evelyn Underhill calls "instruments of love."

When people are asked about how they are emotionally and physically renewed they talk about things like exercise, music, rest, sexual intimacy, time with friends, being hugged, walking city streets or country roads, having a pet, and dancing. When they are asked about what contributes to their renewal as baptismal people they speak of things like a priest's spiritual guidance, educational programs, the beauty of the worship space, a parish climate in which they don't have to always meet the expectations of others, being part of a special support groups, intercessory prayer groups, a discipline of daily prayer and spiritual reading, helping and serving others, and being exposed to other people's spirituality. The most common thing mentioned is the Sunday gathering of the community for the Eucharist. It's the week-by-week coming together of the community in Eucharist (and coffee hour) that people return to when describing the mystery of how they are renewed in the Christian life. They talk about -- how the ritual is always there providing roots and wings; being with people they love and who love them; old and new friendships within the parish; a breakfast group after the early Mass and how the Sunday gathering of the Eucharistic community brings them in contact with people of different views, ages, orientations, expressions of intelligence, economic well-being, and on occasion people of other races.

When asked, some see a relationship between their emotional and physical renewal and the renewal of their baptismal identity and purpose. Some make no distinction seeing them as one thing, others see physical/emotional renewal as a base for the other, still others express it as a kind of fabric into which baptismal renewal and physical/emotional renewal are woven together in the fabric of their life.

In working out an approach to our own renewal we will want to take into account the realities of our personality, the options available in the tradition, and consultation with other Christians. We may find some way of thinking about it that seems especially useful. Graham Greene saw three ways for people to be open to spirituality: we need moments of solitude, the ability to suffer with another, and the ability to pay attention to the restlessness of our soul. The Benedictine tradition sees a dynamic engagement among obedience, conversion of life and stability. Henri Nouwen, in *Reaching Out*, offers a dynamic between -- loneliness and solitude; hostility and hospitality; illusion and prayer.

In Apostolate
In our apostolate we join Christ in the transformation of the world. The starting point is the place we are with family and friends, in our workplace, in civic life, and as we participate in the church's oversight and collective apostolate.

Most of us, most of the time, have a primary vocation in the arenas of our daily life. In our workplace, family and civic involvement we are instruments of compassion and justice.

We are caught up in a process that is largely organic and subconscious. We are light and salt to the extent we have become light and salt. We are invited to love and serve in the places we find ourselves. The process isn't at its core strategic, a matter of our planning and awareness; rather it is dependent on our status as people incorporated by baptism into the Body of Christ. It is living as an extension of the sacrament that is the Church in which God's compassion and justice is offered through us in the routine and ordinary places of life.

In addition to this primary, organic apostolic vocation, some of us may have a vocation that involves participation in the church's collective work. So, we may serve on the vestry, become a catechist, assist in the Eucharist, clean the bathrooms, and participate in the parish's service ministries or its evangelistic program.

Using the Cycle in Congregational Development

The model is used in two ways:
1. **By individuals in reflecting on, and shaping, a pattern of spirituality.**

Many of us have had the experience of drawing and sharing a spiritual lifeline. We draw a line that represents our relationship with God and the church from birth to the present. Then each person is invited to share their line, and in doing that, to tell the group of our experience with God and the church. On occasion we are asked to reflect on the exercise and say what we have learned or taken away from it. As people debrief a common theme is often about how God has worked with each person in such different ways.

It's not an insight that is new to most people at the intellectual level but is often new at the operational level. We know in our head that the journey is different for different people. At the same time we often hold onto a formula about how it happens, or should happen, or we vaguely assume that our own way into faith is that of others.

God's various ways of being in our lives will show itself in how people live the Renewal – Apostolate Cycle. Each person will have a unique way of living in the cycle. Some have an inclination toward renewal, others to apostolic action; some are nurtured more by contemplation, others in the Eucharist; many are called to an apostolate in the family, others in civic life.

In every congregation there are people with a vocation to serve the church as a community of faith. They serve on the vestry and parish committees; they organize service projects and the incorporation of new members. Most members have another calling. They understand themselves, and their ministry, more in terms of their family and friendships, the work they do, or their participation in civic life.

Members have their own way of living this rhythm. How God works with me on the journey may be very different from how God works with my friend. The practices and disciplines of the Christian life that feed one may not feed another. Some are more enriched in contemplative prayer, some in ethical reflection, and others by giving and receiving support in approaching the demands of daily life. People also have levels of competence in managing the rhythm of the Cycle. Some easily accept adult responsibility for their spiritual life; others are inclined to an immature dependency. Some carry images of the church and its mission that are distorted. The distortion may arise because they transfer the ways of businesses or social service agencies or political movements onto the parish church. It also comes from having taken some true but narrow expression on the mission and made it the whole thing. So, some speak of the Great Commission and quote Matthew, others look to the command to love, and still others to the call to proclaim release to captives and liberty to the oppressed.

2. The cycle can also be used by parish leaders in exploring and improving the parish's ministry of formation.

The parish offers a common life. The quality of that life, and its capacity to transform lives, varies widely among parishes. Dietrich Bonhoffer was struck by how even the most miserable of parish churches could produce faithful Christians. I've often taken comfort in his insight as I've consulted with some parishes. The Episcopal Church has parishes that are marked by how competently they nurture people both, as they are, with whatever spiritual maturity they currently possess, while inviting them into a deeper and richer life.

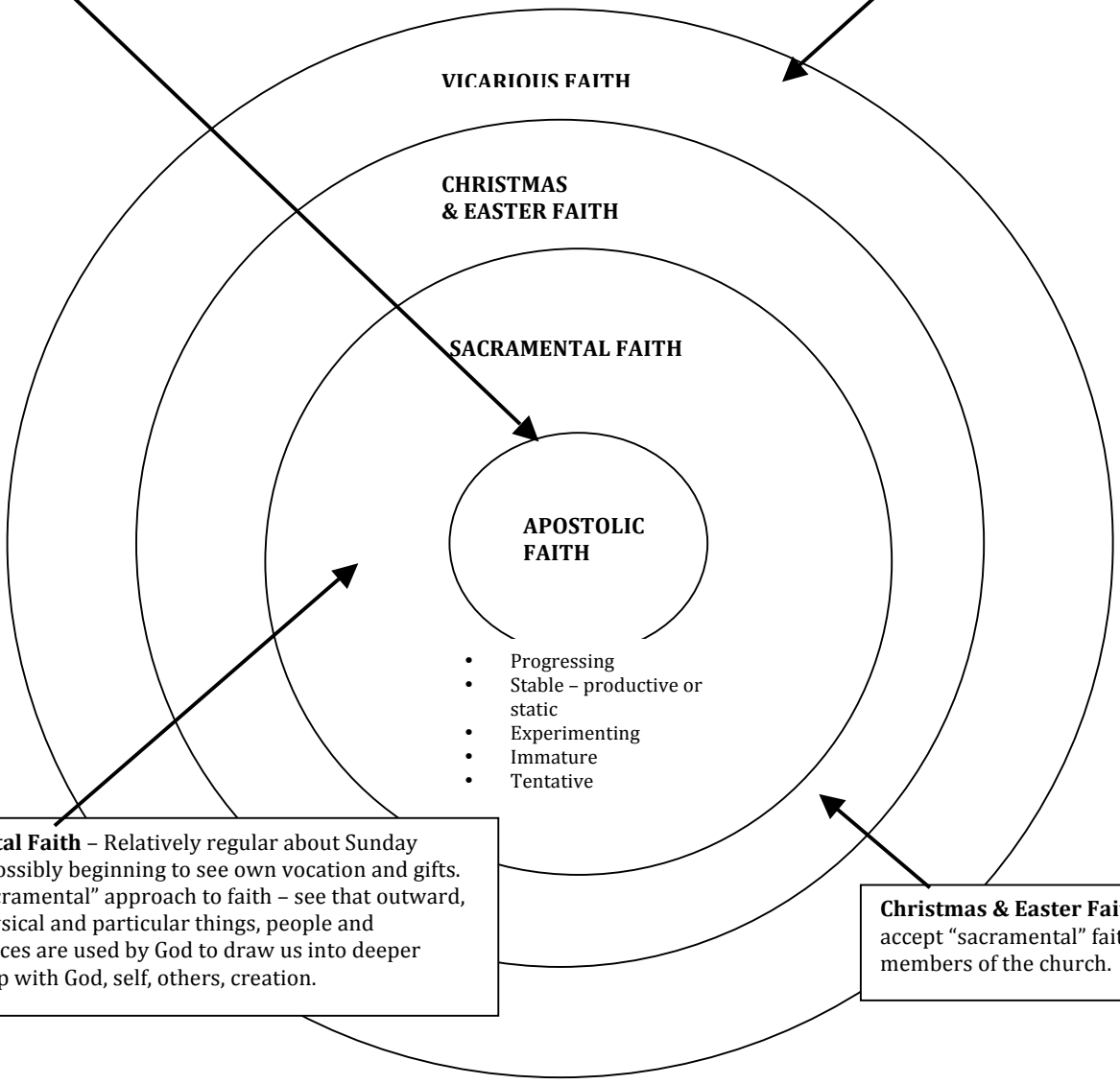
In all parishes members participate in the parish's pattern of worship, education, and social life. The parish has its way of being and doing. Each has a parish culture that has the primary formative impact in people. The parish's collective behavior, its stated values and its deeper assumptions about human beings, God, and the church all create an environment that influences people over time. The parish's culture may be one of deep prayer and compassionate action or it may be anxious and turf focused, or it may be driven and obsessed by some standard of success. This culture becomes the soil that feeds us, the air we breathe. Because parish culture is so close to us it is something that most leaders have no awareness of. We live in it but aren't aware of it or engaged in thoughtfully shaping it. Making use of an external consultant with training in organizational culture is one-way parishes begin to develop "eyes to see" what is usually hidden. There are also experiential training programs available that can help leaders develop their ability to work with organizational culture. A related issue is that in too many places leaders find themselves so caught up in program development and implementation, or in responding to the most difficult members, or in administrative matters around property and finances, that they have little time for truly developmental and formative work. The ability of leaders to get their heads above water is central to a parish's development into a community of formation.

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

The Shape of the Parish

Apostolic Faith – People with a relatively disciplined, mature, full spiritual life; flexibility with self and others; an experimental and exploratory stance; competent and committed Christians

Vicarious Faith – Do not attend worship; not usually members; but may see the parish as "their parish" or be directly or indirectly influenced by the parish's life. Connected through geography, family friends.



Sacramental Faith – Relatively regular about Sunday worship. Possibly beginning to see own vocation and gifts. Accept "sacramental" approach to faith – see that outward, visible, physical and particular things, people and circumstances are used by God to draw us into deeper relationship with God, self, others, creation.

Christmas & Easter Faith – Do not accept "sacramental" faith. Are members of the church.

The model can be used:

- To assess the health of a parish, and
- To develop a strategy that deepens the parish's spiritual life, while staying open to 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

More on Shaping the Parish

The Shape of the Parish is a critical mass theory. Critical mass theories are used by many Organization Development practitioners. The theory focuses our attention on building the level of commitment, competence and emotional intelligence at the center of the organization. The assumption is that this will orient the organization toward its own best self.

Critical mass models draw the attention of leaders away from obsessing about "fixing" the problems and dysfunction at the edges and toward building the center. We can all too easily find our attention drawn toward the “difficult people” or those who constantly demand personal attention. A critical mass model suggests that we give much more of our time and energy to developing the center by equipping those already of Apostolic Faith and those ready to move in that direction. *Fill All Things: The Dynamics of Spirituality in the Parish Church*, Robert A Gallagher, Ascension Press, 2008, p. 125)

“When a parish has a healthy and productive Shape you see a definite movement. People are drawn into a deeper relationship with God and the church. There is a sense of spiritual movement in the parish.“ (*Fill All Things,* p. 142) Leaders are establishing two dynamics at the center in shaping the parish. They are the deep underlying assumptions that provide the base for a healthy parish culture. The parish church is about forming people for “real life;” for maturity in Christ. It is developing in women and men a taste for life in what John Macquarrie saw as “a commonwealth of free, responsible beings united in love.” Secondly, the parish is about engaging “an energy not its own.” Formation isn’t about creating perfect, sinless people. It is about connecting us to the power of the Holy Spirit. (*Fill All Things,* p. 156)

General Comments on Nurturing Growth

1. The core pastoral strategy is to **accept** people where they are *and* to **invite** them to move beyond where they are.
2. Individual growth often comes in leaps (e.g., a person may move quickly from Experimenting to Progressing to Apostolic Faith).
3. Foundations are important. At times there is a desire to grow, or there may be deep feeling about God and/or the church. Such feelings can be the pastor's opening to invite the person into a setting where the needed base is offered. That foundation in spiritual life or knowledge may serve the person ten years later when they are prepared to move more deeply into the relationship with God and the church.
4. Address the gaps that people live in. The gap may be between the person’s intentions and the impact of their behavior on others. There may be gaps of understanding more common to some forms of faith than others. The “Believing-Belonging” gaps may be especially strong in people of Vicarious and C&E Faith. The gap between faith and daily life may be common in the phases of Vicarious, C&E and early Sacramental faith.
5. New members need special attention. They may be people transferring from other parishes who already live an Apostolic or Stable Sacramental Faith. They might be C&E or people who for some reason have decided to begin attending. Or they could be people with

almost no religious background, without any connection to the parish, who have just decided to "try it." Often these people may come with a good bit of emotional intelligence, a strong longing, and good intentions but lack foundational practices. There is the potential that they might move quickly into a progressing expression of Sacramental faith."
(Fill All Things, page 135)

Many of the assumptions of this approach are seen in other places:

- "Critical mass theories are used by many Organization Development practitioners. The model suggests building the level of commitment, competence and emotional maturity at the center of the organization so that it grounds the system in a mission orientation and an organizational culture that supports the mission. The grounding then is enfleshed; made real in the lives of men and women. It's in the habits of people rather than statements of leaders." *(Fill All Things*, p. 125)
- You can see the same orientation when Bishop Kilmer Myers wrote in *Light the Dark Streets*, "One possible definition for a parish is that it is God's way of meeting the problems of the unloved. This meeting between God and the unloved, the unwanted, takes place in the preaching of the Word, in the Sacraments, in the social life of the parish made possible by the climate of acceptance which is engendered by those who have been baptized and confirmed in the Catholic faith. 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."
- In *Pastoral Theology: A Reorientation* Martin Thornton presented his understanding of the parish church as the Body of Christ, "the complete Body in microcosm," (p. 19) and his Remnant Concept, "in which power from the center pervades the whole." (p. 21) The holiness and love of a Remnant at the center of parish life is for Thornton what makes a parish a true parish. In describing how the Remnant Concept works he writes: "This palpitating heart pumps the blood of life to all the body as leaven leavens the lump or salt savours the whole." (p. 23)

Episcopal Church Spirituality

The Episcopal Church has developed a particular form of Christian spirituality that has emerged from its roots in Anglicanism and in the American experience. That spirit can be found in most parishes and dioceses of the church (but not all). What follows is just one attempt to describe that spirituality.

A Christian Spirituality

Grounded in the love of God for humanity as seen in the incarnation of Jesus Christ.

Christian Life is life lived in Christ: "Christ in us and we in him." Worship, doctrine and action are the means by which we participate in the life of Christ's Body, the Church; in her unity, holiness, catholicity and apostolicity. They are the means by which we participate in the Church's mission, "to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ." We are restored to unity as we are drawn into the prayer of Christ, the mind of Christ, and the work of Christ. In prayer, study, and work we become instruments of God's holy mission.

A Spirituality of Beauty

We tend to take delight in the natural rhythm of life. We rejoice in the beauty of creation and have a strong commitment to environmental protection. Our worship strives for good music, a sense of flow and grace, and poetry and drama. We seek beauty in our worship space using artists, live flowers, and real candles in creating an appropriate climate.

An Adult Spirituality

We value **personal responsibility and freedom** in the process of shaping and living life as a Christian. Adults are invited to **explore and experiment with** the resources of Christian and Anglican spirituality to discover ways that best nurture them in the Christian life. We understand that what feeds one person may not feed another. We each work out our relationship with God, each other, creation and self in unique ways. The adult Christian shapes a spiritual life that fits his or her personality and circumstances. Please note -- this isn't about whether children are included, they are, but about what kind of adults we hope children will become.

A Balanced-Holistic Spirituality

We are moderate, seeking a balanced, reasonable approach to life. It is a life in which prayer, work, study and play have a rhythm, taking into account the whole of experience, ambiguity and all.

An Organic Spirituality

We understand individual spiritual development to be rooted in communal daily prayer that shapes our relationship to God. Decisions are made in the context of communal prayer so the Holy Spirit fills and enfolds us. We are sacramental - "outward and visible signs of inward and spiritual grace" ; as Christ was the sacrament of God, the church is the sacrament of Christ in the world.

A World Embracing Spirituality

- Our tendency is to **affirm life and this world**. Those things in life that give us pleasure are understood as being fundamentally good. Fun, our bodies, material things, good food are all accepted as part of living a full life. Our call to faith is linked to hope and love rather than fear and guilt.
- We see Christian faith as **having political implications**. Episcopalians have a long history of involvement in the civic life of communities and the nation. The individual Christian is called to both inform and act on their conscience. The church doesn't usually ask its members to accept particular political views but it does ask members to consider in their thinking process what might be understood from the Scriptures, what the church has learned over the centuries (as seen in the Tradition and the contemporary councils of the church) and in their own Reason. As a church we take positions on public issues. The church's public positions are a community's attempt to express God's compassion and justice in society. They also frequently exhibit an Anglican comprehensiveness in affirming the complexity of a situation.
- For most of us the **Christian life is lived in the context of our family, work and civic life**. Those are the places in which the love of Christ may flow through us to offer light and hope in the world. We generally see that process as organic rather than planned. To the extent we have been touched by the love of God we will show that love in our daily life.

An Open–Minded Spirituality

- Our way has stressed **an open-minded, searching approach** to faith. Engagement with God and the church is intended to open us to the mystery that is God. So doubt, questioning, exploration and openness to new insights is a path to God and wholeness of life. This involves being open to what may be learned: from studying and praying the Scriptures, from the wisdom gained as the church has struggled with life's issues in the past, from the councils of the church today, from the insights and views of other people, and from the application of our own reason and what we have learned from our experience.
- We see value in **comprehensiveness and ambiguity**. Our way includes holding opposites in tension, appreciating paradoxical thinking, assuming that what appears to be irreconcilable differences may contain a balanced truth, allowing a certain messiness and grayness in our theological and ethical thinking. Living in this way means developing a tolerance of differences in thinking and practice. It also calls for a capacity to listen deeply and respectfully, to have courage in expressing one's own understanding, to wait on God in silence and with patience. Our unity is not the unity of sameness of thought but a unity of trust in God and God's wisdom. This makes for a roomy church with space for many people.

Permission is given to use this document for parish or diocesan training and education programs. With the following conditions: 1) it is used as is, 2) it not be sold. Available at www.shapingtheparish.com/free-documents/

For additional resources go to www.CongregationalDevelopment.com

Robert Gallagher brings 40 years of experience in leadership training and parish development. Bob offers exceptional skills in facilitating shifts and changes in people and organizations. He provides practical methods and vision for a transformed parish. He's served on an industrial mission staff, as a parish priest and a diocesan staff person. He is the founder of the Church Development Institute. Bob lives in Seattle.

Bob has been a consultant and trainer in religious systems, non-profit organizations and small businesses since 1970. He comes with wide experience in the church having served as a parish priest, and on the staff of or consultant to ecumenical training organizations, an industrial mission and metropolitan and state councils of churches. He served as the congregational development officer for the Diocese of Connecticut through most of the 1980's. He has consulted with hundreds of congregations. Bob has an MA in Organization Development from Goddard College. He has served as adjunct faculty in congregational development at Hartford Seminary and Seabury-Western Theological Seminary. Bob founded the Church Development Institute (CDI) and was Director of the national program at the General Theological Seminary from 1985 – 2000 and later in Maine and Seattle. Bob is a senior trainer with Leadership Training Institute.

Father Gallagher's written work includes: *Fill All Things: The Dynamics of Spirituality in the Parish Church,* Ascension Press, 2008. *Parish Assessment Workbook*, Coauthor, a manual for conducting a self-study, Ascension Press, 1988; *Faith Sharing*, Coauthor, exercises for groups exploring life histories and spirituality. Ascension Press, 1989; *Conformed to Christ: Structures and Standards for Parish Life*, Coauthor, guidelines and samples of job descriptions for staff and committees. Ascension Press, 1983, revised 1988 and 2004 as a CD; *Power from on High: A Model for Parish Life and Development,* Ascension Press, 1982; *Stay in the City*, A strategy for dioceses in regard to urban parishes. Forward Movement, 1981; *The Ministry of the Laity as Agents of Institutional Change*, *Audenshaw Documents*, 1972 and a shorter version in *Asian Focus*, East Asian Christian Conference, 1971. Books in process include:*In Your Holy Spirit: Shaping the Parish Through Spiritual Practices*;*Eucharistic Spirituality: From Audience to Congregation*; Interventions*: Methods and Processes for Building Healthier Parishes,* with Michelle Heyne; *and Hope of Glory: Congregational Options.* He has also produced a series of handout and booklet resources for parishes at www.CongregtaionalDevelopment.com. That includes an Anglican Spirituality Course designed along with Michelle Heyne.

For more information see

Web and print resources

From Shaping the Parish
www.shapingtheparish.com/shapingtheparish-materials/

From ODCT
www.congregationaldevelopment.com/resources.htm

From Ascension Press
www.orderoftheascension.org/ascension_press.htm

Training Programs

Shaping the Parish
www.shapingtheparish.com/diocesan-programs/

Leadership Training Institute
www.congregationaldevelopment.com/LTI_programs.htm