

POWER FROM ON HIGH

A Model for Parish Life and Development

by
Robert A. Gallagher

A MONOGRAPH FROM



ASCENSION PRESS

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The **ORDER OF THE ASCENSION** founded in 1983 has helped ground and center its members in their daily life and their roles as parish leaders and developers.

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2. *the struggle for compassion and justice*.

The *common life* includes:

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. Parish Renewal and Development

The renewal and 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 Christian life is a reflection of God's unity. The unity and life of the Church, and therefore of each parish, rests in the unity and life of the Holy Trinity. The divine movement of reconciling love creates and sustains the Church's unity, its integrity as an instrument of God's saving activity.

The parish stays rooted in and participates in the Christian life through the signs and means of that holy unity: The Sacraments, Apostolic Ministry, Creeds, and Scriptures. In this way, the parish moves ever deeper in its expression of the Christian life in worship, doctrine and action.

B. Using a Model for Parish Life and Development

This tract provides both an outline of a pattern for parish life and development, and a series of suggestions on how to live within that pattern.

This, like any model, is a conceptual aid to help a parish focus on certain essential elements of its life. It is a map; a great help on the journey, yet not the same as the journey itself. The journey is full of smells and sights, of wonder and awe, of fear and excitement; the map is only a set of lines on paper. Still, maps help us move forward on a purposeful journey.

There are many ways of thinking about the pattern of parish life.

Each will have its own character determined by what it lifts up. The most broadly useful models for parish development are:

1. *Rooted in, and congruent with, the mission, nature and tradition of the Church.* The model should fit the tradition. It should spring from our history and identity as Anglicans. It should offer a parish its own depth. It is, therefore, not something I make up, my latest thought on "straightening out the Church", but something that already exists as a pattern. What we do is point to it and hold it up.

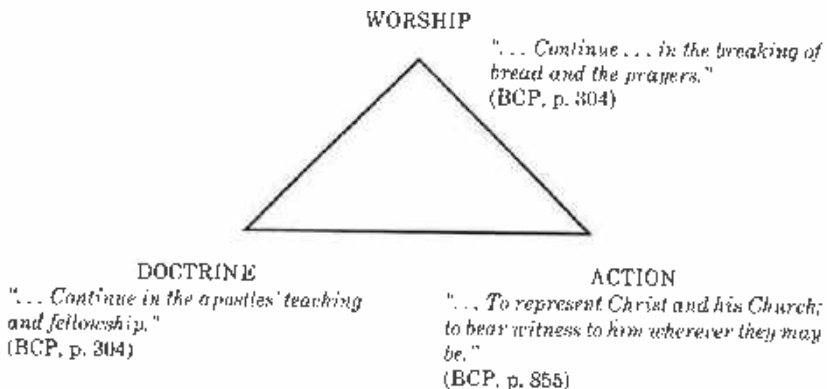
2. *Easy to recall.*

3. *Understandable and usable for most people.* They should allow for various levels of sophistication in their use. Therefore, they can provide a common reference point for people of various cultural and educational backgrounds.

4. *Useful as a parish orders its life.* A model should provide practical ways to structure planning and general parish oversight; it should provide a general pattern that can be adapted in a particular situation, and allow us to cope with the present experience of people.

C. A Christian Life Model

A pattern for understanding and living the Christian life is found in the relationship among worship, doctrine and action.



These three central elements of the Christian Life are all part of a whole. They are interdependent. Weakness or distortion in one element eventually brings weakness or distortion in the others. Devel-

opment is directed toward the strength of each element and a proper balance and exchange among them in parish life.

The Anglican bishops spoke of it at Lambeth in 1978: ". . . This inextricable fusion of worship, of doctrine, and of action constitutes the distinctive contribution the churches of the Anglican Communion desire to make to the Universal Church of God in Jesus Christ. . ." Martin Thornton points to it in *The Rock and the River*: ". . . Moral action only flows from doctrinal truth by grace and faith, that is through prayer. . ." The Christian Life can be compared to a piece of fabric; all the threads must be strong and properly connected if the whole piece is to have its full strength and beauty.

Worship, doctrine, and action are each ways in which we seek Christ and through which Christ comes to us. They are passageways into a form of renewal and development that is directed toward the mind, heart and work of Christ; the unity, holiness, catholicity and apostolicity of the Church; and the mission of holy unity. In using this pattern for shaping the life and development of the parish we are directed toward the primary concerns of the Church and are provided a means for integration, stability and comprehensiveness in that life and development.

In using this pattern as a model for parish revitalization there is a need for parish leaders to understand the interrelatedness of the elements. Most of us have seen what results when a congregation neglects or misuses one of these primary elements.

How we understand the Gospel and the Faith of the Church will depend on our experiencing of it as true in prayer and action. To pray well we need to understand the nature and mission of God and of our relationship with God. In prayer comes a deeper understanding of God and the experience of the relationship. Prayer will drift into fads, gimmicks, and sentimentality unless it is grounded in the doctrine of the Church. Sacraments which bring the power of the Incarnation into our lives will be misunderstood and turned against us without Christian action that addresses our responsibility to the poor, oppressed and outcasts of our society. We cannot lead people to take the Church lightly in regard to its teaching and expectations regarding disciplined participation in worship, standards for baptism and marriage, its call for fasting and special devotions, and then expect them to respond with a stable commitment to the demands of faith in regard to social justice or adequate pledging. It all goes together. The Church is an organism, a Body with interdependent organs, processes, and structures.

In consulting with parishes I have come across several, of various traditions, that had been deeply involved in the social issues of the sixties and early seventies. In the early meetings with one parish, the leaders would describe how they were now feeling lost. They were not sure what they were about, now that the world wasn't giving such clear messages. As they talked, it would often come out that they had centered most of the parish's energy around "the issues." Worship and educational offerings were all tailored to the current issues. (In some parishes during these years, there weren't *any* forms of Christian education that weren't focused on some current topic.) What should have been events of Christian formation, in which men and women were soaked in the Scriptures and Tradition of the Church, turned into debating or bull sessions, a chance to share opinions. It was all very important and very unrooted.

Another case involved a parish that was faced with a change in the racial composition of the community as new public housing was built. The neighborhood climate was hostile and close to violence. The Rector, in collaboration with other priests in the area, was providing very careful and sensitive guidance in the congregation, urging them to prayer and to basic Christian standards in regard to violence and dealing with people who were different from themselves. The response was largely defensive, i.e., "The Rector doesn't understand." People assumed he was saying things that he had not said. His relationship with them was not damaged because of a level of trust that had developed since his arrival two years earlier. But he received a very confused and angry response in relation to this one issue.

As we looked at the previous parish history it became apparent that:

There had been no serious adult education for generations. Most members had only the vaguest notion of Christian teaching. They didn't know how to think like Christians.

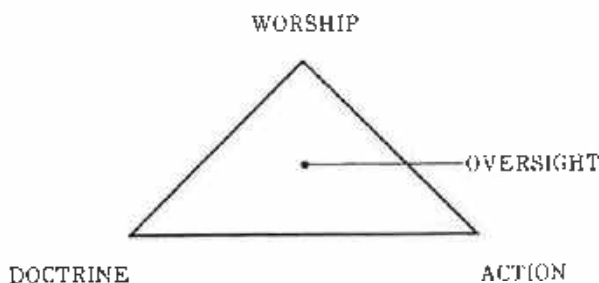
There had been no stable oversight for a number of years. Clergy had come and gone after relatively brief stays. Some had invested their time in the neighborhood problems without providing the means for the congregation to grow in faith and in ethical discernment. Clergy were not easily trusted. There had been no long-term development of the parish or formation of the people.

People remembered one recent priest who seemed to use the teach-

ing of the Church as a tool for pushing his views on specific issues of justice. Doctrine was only worked with when the priest was trying to sell something. People had no foundation. They experienced the Church's teaching as a club used to tell them how wrong they were.

In each situation the proper place and balance of the three elements was misused. Clergy and laity can easily get caught up in something that is good and true and pursue it to the extent that the overall fabric of parish life suffers. We all have some tendency to reshape things to fit our personal values, desires, politics and views. We would use Scripture and worship for our own ends. This may be an unconscious activity or simply the expression of the culture we have uncritically accepted. We would change these holy things, bend them for some private or political use, rather than let them change us. We would create God in our image. We need to remind ourselves regularly of the interdependence that exists among worship, doctrine, and action, and of their proper expression in the Catholic and Apostolic tradition of the Anglican Communion.

The ministry of oversight is one of enabling a true and appropriate order for the parish.



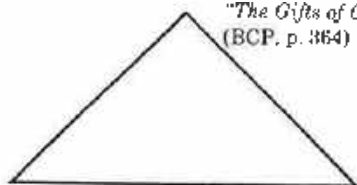
The movement of a parish into a comprehensive and deep expression of the Christian Life is the result of years of striving, submitting and molding. It is the responsibility of clergy and lay leaders to monitor the life and ministry of the parish and to take initiative in increasing the faithfulness and effectiveness of that life and ministry.

II. WORSHIP

"... Continue ... in the breaking of bread and the prayers."
(BCP p. 304)

HOLY EUCHARIST

"The Gifts of God for the people of God."
(BCP, p. 364)



DAILY OFFICE

*"Day by day we bless you; We praise your
Name forever."*
(BCP, p. 98)

PERSONAL DEVOTIONS

*"That in all the cares and occupations of
our life we may not forget you, but may
remember that we are ever walking in
your sight."*
(BCP, p. 100)

The Christian congregation at worship is a people that has entered into a mystery. They are being sanctified. They are resting in God and wrestling with God. An old self is dying and a new self being born. The dying and the birth is all in Christ and through Christ. Its end is Christ, so at last we live in Christ and Christ in us.

To worship is to be on a journey. We are seeking our true home. We don't finally belong to this world. We are not finally owned by the claims of this world. In worship we remember and anticipate home.

All prayer is done in communion: in communion with the whole Church, in this place and in all places; with angels and archangels and the whole company of heaven. All prayer is offered in union with the whole Church through Jesus Christ the Head. Prayer's beginning is not in our needs, feelings, or concerns but in Christ and his work — Christ in Scripture, Christ in the Church, Christ in the Blessed Sacrament. So prayer begins with thanksgiving and praise.

Christian worship is participation in a new order of life, the holy order of Christ's Body. Worship is always related to the community. It is always of the Church. It is never really an individual matter, though it may be a very personal matter.

Worship is a sharing in God's holy order. In sacred space and

action a new order is shown and offered. The new order is encountered in the simplicity of a house mass and in the grandeur of a high solemn mass. It is known in the routine of daily morning prayer and in the solitude of meditation. In worship we meet the holy order of Christ — the kingdom, the holy city, the co-inherence, the mystical body, the Republic. It is solemn celebration, an awe-filled simplicity and beauty, a taste of the power and the glory. The order and depth of our prayer life is bound up with the relationships and order of our entire life. It is interrelated with our openness to see the needs of our neighbors, to hear the call for justice and peace, and to acknowledge the wisdom of the Church through the ages. It is interdependent with the habits of our daily life in eating, rest, leisure, friendships, sexuality and work.

In neighborhoods where people are subjected to forces that reduce life and that tell them of their insignificance, in which noise, dirt and disorder seem ready to overwhelm life — in such places beauty, wonder, dignity, routine and silence lift up a vision. In the power of that vision of the holy order of Christ, men and women may be able to hear the needs of their neighbors in the noise; scrub the marble steps as an act of dignity and co-inherence; and focus themselves on providing routine and structure for family life.

Where the power and glory of status and possessions are reaffirmed daily, men and women need to encounter the true order of reality. They need to meet another power and glory with the capacity to break and recreate. Where there is nothing but striving, achieving and rushing, men and women need to know the holy order of discipline, ritual and solitude.

Worship is an opening of human life to divine life. The encounter develops a sensitivity toward the ways of God. It helps us to discern what is at stake, to see the claim of God on us, and to obey. A Christian life that is weak in prayer will not wear well. In times of success and happiness and in times of despair and fear we will tend to lose our grounding. Awe, mystery, contemplation, solitude and liturgy keep our roots in the living waters. Worship frees us to see things as they really are and to live with others and ourselves as we really are.

The task is to put ourselves, as individuals and as a congregation, in those habits and structures that keep us in relationship with the power of that divine life. As the local expression of the universal Church, the parish offers and enables a pattern of worship grounded in the Church's ascetical tradition. That pattern is comprehensive,

integrated and focused. It may be offered well or ineptly, completely or partially. There is a great deal to learn about the pattern itself and how the structures of parish life need to be arranged so the pattern can express itself in an efficient and effective manner. The need is for a parish spirituality that is stable, relaxed, and filled with compassion and gentleness.

A. **The Threefold Rule of Prayer**

Our worship tradition is based on a three-part structure. Martin Thornton calls it the Catholic Threefold Rule, and provides a detailed presentation of the Rule in his books. Michael Ramsey, the one-hundredth Archbishop of Canterbury, refers to it as the Benedictine triangle. The three elements, Eucharist, Office, and personal devotion, comprise the fundamentals of a disciplined Christian spirituality in the Anglican tradition.

The use of the Rule is a movement away from a series of unintegrated devotions and unrelated religious "rules" toward an integrated Rule grounded in the worship and prayer life of the Holy Catholic Church as expressed in the Book of Common Prayer. The Rule is a system which holds together transcendence and immanence, discipline and freedom, common prayer and personal devotions, objective and subjective, reason and emotion.

Through the Rule the parish joins in the tradition and practice of the larger Church and so avails itself of and participates in that grace-filled life. It simply makes good spiritual sense to base the parish discipline on what the Church has developed and lived through the ages.

The basic shape and particular expressions of the Rule have been handed on to us in the Prayer Book. The Prayer Book is largely concerned with the Eucharist and the Office as the forms of prayer we share in common. It assumes that the individual Christian is engaged in personal forms of devotion as well. The norm of the Prayer Book and of Catholic tradition is the Holy Eucharist as the principal Sunday act of worship and the Divine Office as our daily offering of common praise to God the Father.

The parish's prayer life needs balance, discipline, and order. It also needs experimentation. The Threefold Rule is designed to meet these needs. It provides a system that people may learn, in which they may come to rest and grow in maturity. The Rule recognizes the uniqueness of each parish's and person's spiritual life and the paradox

that this uniqueness is finally known only from within the Body of Christ.

How the essential elements are to be expressed will vary from parish to parish. How they are enriched with additional practices will depend on each parish's particular needs and traditions. Testing and experimentation are necessary in each parish.

Each parish will need to try new ways of entering into the Threefold Rule. The Rule is a base. It is not the end, it is not a law, it is not limited to one expression. If the parish, in its use of the Rule, takes on a tone that is fussy and narrow rather than rested and creative, the Rule is being inappropriately applied.

The Threefold Rule offers a parish a "balanced diet" and focuses on the essentials of a prayer life rooted in and totally congruent with our heritage as Episcopalians. All sorts of other forms are acceptable and of great benefit. Stations of the Cross, Charismatic prayer meetings, hymn sings, and other special acts of worship all have an important role to play in our Church's worship. They are needed, but they are not the core. They do not provide the day by day, week by week routine necessary to sustain and ground Christian living. That is the role of the Threefold Rule of Prayer.

The parish's task is to structure its pattern of prayer life around the Eucharist, the Offices and the personal devotions of its people. The parish as an organ of the whole Body of Christ, in this particular place, is to live within the pattern of that Body. The Benedictine triangle is part of that pattern.

A parish can add depth to the pattern by carefully instructing its members in its use and meaning; helping people develop their own rule of life based on the Threefold Rule; providing for individual and/or group spiritual guidance; and regularly offering the sacrament of Penance.

B. Holy Eucharist

1. *A gift of God*

"The Holy Eucharist is the sacrament commanded by Christ for the continual remembrance of his life, death and resurrection, until his coming again." (Catechism, BCP, p. 859.) It is the principal act of Christian worship on Sundays and other major Feasts (BCP, p. 13.)

In the Eucharist the sacrifice of Christ is proclaimed and represented by the Church. In it the congregation is united to his self-offering and participates in the benefits of his passion. Our life is

brought to, caught up in, and transformed by sharing in his act of self-offering.

In the Eucharist, Christ is present in his Word proclaimed to his people; as the High Priest who through his priest presides at the altar; and sacramentally in his Body and Blood. This sacramental presence is real and objective. It is not a matter of opinions, feelings or faith. It is by the power of God that he is present with and for us. As in all of our relationships with God, his presence is not forced upon us. We must welcome him in faith. When we do so, there is a life-giving event in which we are empowered for holiness, love, and service.

As we know him to be present in the Blessed Sacrament, we are given the eyes to see him present in our brothers and sisters, especially the poor, the outcast and the oppressed. In the Eucharist we are sanctified for mission as evangelists, stewards and servants of Christ. In receiving the Sacrament, we become a sacrament of Christ to the world.

In the Eucharist, Christ makes effective for us the benefits of his victory. Our true life, begun in Holy Baptism, is renewed and strengthened. We are shaped into his likeness and given something of his mind and heart. The identity and vocation given in Baptism is nurtured and deepened. Our faith is renewed and our perseverance in the Christian life is strengthened. In the Holy Communion we receive a foretaste of the joy that is ours with the saints in his Kingdom. Through his Body and Blood he builds up his Church and unites the parish. The sacred unity is expressed and furthered as the parish shares in this mystery of the whole Body and receives the benefits into its life.

Each Eucharist is offered in communion with the whole Church and on behalf of all creation and all people. It is, at the same time, offered especially for the part of God's creation embodied in this particular neighborhood. There is a coming together of the universal and the local, of the eternal and the limited. What is ordinary and routine in life may be offered and known as holy. All our longings and hoping may be offered and transformed. Things that are broken may be offered and used to redeem.

2. Living with the gift

The parish needs to be taught, to be shaped for its celebration of the Eucharist. Liturgy needs to be rehearsed with the congregation from time to time. Points where people hesitate or withdraw from participation need to be reviewed. A mass setting should be rehearsed until people have clearly learned it. People should be given guidelines

about how things are usually done in the parish, when to stand and kneel, how to participate in the intercessions, etc. In most parishes the absence of guidelines will not produce flexibility but anxiety. Tell people how the parish normally does things and let them know other ways that are acceptable. The clergy and appropriate lay leaders need to provide a constant stream of instruction. Educational programs, announcements, newsletters and Sunday leaflets all provide opportunities to teach about worship.

It is apparent that in many parishes people don't know what to do with silence. There is a lot of talking in the pews before and after the Eucharist and a lot of uneasy shifting about during silences after readings, before the confession and at other places in the liturgy. People need to be told when silence is expected, how the silence might be entered into and used, and about the Christian courtesy that does not interfere with the silence of others.

In many congregations the Peace is a problem. It is not used in some places and its purpose is distorted in others. The mad rush to embrace friends; the beginning of coffee hour chatter; and the back-slapping celebration of "our warm, friendly parish" all effectively reduce the Peace to a point where its real purpose is lost. People need to be taught and encouraged to slow down and exchange the Peace with dignity and warmth. The parish needs to come to know the Peace as a form of blessing exchanged, of welcome to strangers, reconciliation for the alienated, and peace for the anxious. So if there is to be movement during the Peace we go first to the stranger and the alienated and the hurting; we reach out first to those who stand nearby, then if there is time, and if it is the way the Peace is exchanged in the parish, we go to our friends and bless them with the Lord's Peace.

The Offertory has become disordered and cluttered in some parishes. In place of straightforward acts of presentation, preparation and offering, there are separate presentations of the elements and the money, extra anthems and doxologies, and patriotic ceremonies. The clarity with which the acts of offering occur sets the stage for the revelation of the presence of Christ.

C. Daily Office

The Office is the Church's common, daily prayer of praise to God. Various forms of it are found in the Book of Common Prayer (pages 35-140) yet all share the same basic shape of three primary elements — offering praise in the Psalter, hearing the Word of God in the reading

of Holy Scripture, and joining in the set prayers of the Church. The appointed Psalms and readings are found in the Lectionary that begins on page 933.

As part of the Rule of the Church, the Office is understood to be an objective and daily act. It is like a pulse beat, or an essential part of a balanced diet. It should be done as the Church intends it to be done — using the Church's appointed form, prayers, and readings. To reduce it to a Sunday act of worship or a special program in parish life is to undermine its real purpose in the Church's spiritual life. When the Church is understood as an organism, the office is seen as essential rather than optional and as having a prior claim over other devotions in the parish's life.

1. *Benefits of the Office*

When the Office is done in the parish, both as public worship and by individual members as the common, objective, daily prayer of the whole Church as provided in the Prayer Book, there are several benefits to the congregation.

a. *The Office provides a concrete, daily response to God's love, mystery, and majesty.* It gives us a way of making that response regardless of our passing feelings and desires. We can rest in its routine. Sunday worship alone, or worse, waiting on our own emotional readiness, is not adequate. A daily encounter with the objective reality of God is necessary to support the Christian life.

b. *The Office provides the base for spiritual maturity and stability.* The Office is a means of regular nurture. It is rarely exciting, but it is necessary. It is a staple in a balanced spiritual diet. Through the use of the Office we are protected from the temptation to base our spiritual life on the quest for particular emotional experiences, and we are supported in times of spiritual dryness.

The Office is the skeleton of a prayer life. On it and around it may be added all sorts of additional devotions, meditations, and specific intercessions. Through it we are taught the nature of Christian prayer and we learn to see and know God.

c. *The Office is a support in our increasing awareness of the presence of God.* Because of its nature as a specific, regular, adult discipline of response to God, it reminds us daily of God's presence in our life and work. It helps to sanctify all our thoughts and acts, raising them out of service to self, into service of God.

d. *The Office grounds us more firmly in the life of the Body of*

Christ, the Church. To pray the set forms provided by the Church is to live more fully as a part of the Church, to participate in and further its unity. The Office joins the Church Militant with the continual adoration and praise of the Church Triumphant. We pray with the whole company of heaven. The Office is recited daily throughout the world in various forms by the different communions of the Church. In the Anglican Communion it is done in cathedrals, schools, parish churches, seminaries, homes, convents and monasteries. It is done as public worship and in private. It is said, sung, or done silently, in chapels, when riding the bus to work and in kitchens while washing dishes. I know one person who sang Morning Prayer in the shower. Through it, God's grace flows in such a manner as to produce and support a continuity of Christian life rooted in the Vine which is Christ.

e. *The Office immerses us in the Holy Scriptures.* In the Office we increase our familiarity with the ways of God. In this regular discipline of reading the Bible we are allowing ourselves to be shaped by the Church's primary source of authority.

2. Objectives in a Parish's Use of the Office

There are two main objectives in the parish's use of the Daily Office. First, the parish, as the local expression of the Body of Christ, prays the Office in some public manner. Second, the parish trains and supports its members in the use of the Office as part of their own daily routine.

a. *Public use of the Office.* The first step is simply to decide to do it. Initially it may have to be carried by the commitment of the parish priest. The Rector or Vicar will have to give himself to a public routine.

Most of us seem to resist pinning ourselves down to the schedule necessary if the parish is to have the Office read publicly. Even clergy who already do the Office themselves may have difficulty in establishing a specific time and place where they must be each day. We may even recognize the conflict between our proclaimed commitment to prayer and our compulsive use of time. What we know we should do, we just can't bring ourselves to do.

There are a number of things we can do to open ourselves to the commitment. First, we can pray for the necessary desire and will. Second, we can work at being intellectually honest with ourselves regarding the place of the Office in the organic life of the Church and

our understanding of the priority of worship. We need to be aware of our own tendency to rationalize away our resistance to prayer, and to accept a form of the "numbers game" in regard to worship by refusing to schedule the office for "just a few people."

Third, we can be realistic and practical in relation to our public use of the Office. It is better to have a schedule we keep of Evening Prayer four times a week than to have a schedule of Morning and Evening Prayer every day which we experience as an overwhelming burden. Set a time that fits the life of those ready to enter into the commitment. Don't be totally inflexible about the schedule. If there is an event you want to attend that conflicts with the Office schedule, then announce that there will not be Evening Prayer on that day, or find a lay reader willing to fill in.

Fourth, recruit and train lay readers to officiate. This provides for lay participation in an essential ministry; allows for the pressure many clergy feel about binding themselves to too rigid a time schedule; and allows the parish to receive the benefits the Office will provide. At a minimum lay readers can be asked to fill in from time to time. Most parishes will find that in time they will have several lay readers willing to commit themselves to a regular share in the congregation's offering of a public Office.

Fifth, make regular use of the Office in relation to ordinary parish gatherings. Use Compline to close vestry meetings and classes. Do Morning Prayer at the beginning of a Bible class. This is a way to root the parish in the Church's prayer and also to make the Office more available for individual use. It helps teach people how to use it.

If the Office is to be restored to its proper place in a parish's life, an active commitment on the part of the clergy is almost always required. They will have to stop using the Office as though it were some form of clerical personal devotion. In our tradition, the Office is for both laity and clergy as the Prayer of the whole Church.

It may be a long time before others in the parish make use of the public Office or are willing to be on a schedule for sharing in officiating. For months the priest is likely to be alone for the Office. It becomes an opportunity to learn of the communion of saints, and to face our anxiety about "numbers."

Eventually a few people are likely to show up to pray for someone who is seriously ill. A person who is actively seeking to re-connect himself to the Church will come off and on. A member who just wants to have a few minutes with the Vicar will stop in. In most congrega-

tions a small group of regular attenders will emerge. This group, the priest and lay readers, and those who use the Office at home and work will serve the whole parish by lifting its life in prayer, connecting it to the larger Church; and by being shaped themselves by the Scriptures and the prayers of the Church.

If this work of prayer is to be effectively shared, the priest will want to give special attention to equipping people for participation. Such teaching should occur in the regular round of instruction for adults and children. What will have the most significant impact is the equipping that goes on when people first begin to use the Office. It is important that the officiant not establish a fixed dependency by leading people step by step and page by page through the Office. People should be helped to grasp the logic of the Office and to know how to participate so they "know they know." This can be done by having the necessary page numbers posted; having a leaflet available explaining the Office and outlining the basic parts and pages; and by taking time to announce the page numbers before beginning. Putting ribbons or book markers in the Prayer Books allows people to mark the pages before the service.

All these suggestions will require adaptation to fit particular people and occasions. The goal remains to equip people for worship so they can carry their participation without an inappropriate dependency on the clergy or lay leaders.

b. *Train and support parishioners to use the Office as part of their daily routine.* The parish needs to teach people how to use the Daily Office as part of their own rule of life apart from their participation in the public office. This is how most people are likely to use the Office.

Most of us who use the Office will say it alone. Even when done in private, it remains the prayer of the whole Church. We offer it in union with the Church and on behalf of all people. If possible, it is best to do it aloud. This is an aid to our careful use of the Office. It slows us down and prevents carelessness. The Office may be said at any time and in any place. It is possible to do all of Evening Prayer just before dinner and a short, memorized form of Morning Prayer when driving to work in the morning. How we do the Office will depend on the concrete requirements of our life. Be realistic with yourself. It is better to use only a brief form and do it daily, than to intend to do both Morning and Evening Prayer every day but never manage to get around to it.

The person making a decision to join in this daily prayer of the Church will frequently be helped by following certain guidelines.

When they first start out to use the Office, they will need to plan. Which of the forms will be used? How many lessons will be read? When will it be done? A careful review of the Office and how to use the Lectionary is necessary. The parish clergy and spiritual guides can offer individual attention for those planning to use the Office. Members may find it helpful to participate occasionally in the Office being said in the Church.

Some people find it best to do the Bible readings separately from the rest of the Office. For some this allows for a more careful and meditative reading of the Scripture. It may be supportive to join others in reciting the Office at least a few times each month. Invite friends or family members to join you.

The Office may be enriched by reading about the saint commemorated that day, and by using the Anglican Cycle of Prayer and "Forward Day by Day." Such practices can aid us in being more aware of our unity with the larger Church in this daily offering.

Everyone in the parish should know about the place of the Office in the Christian life and the parish should make the Office available through a schedule of public worship. But men and women should only be encouraged to take it on as a private discipline when they are ready. Spiritual guides need to be sensitive to the issue of "readiness". The Daily Office in its fuller forms is a discipline only likely to be undertaken by relatively mature Christians. It requires work and self control. Those with a limited view of their own true needs, and inclined to worship only when they feel like it, are not yet candidates for the regular use of the Office. Even when that readiness begins to appear, people may attempt to use the Office at several different points in their lives before gaining the realism and commitment to make it "stick" as a discipline.

D. Personal Devotions

There is a unique relationship between God and each soul. This is not something apart from the Church but is within and of the Church. Within the shaping and nurturing of the Church, its Eucharist and Office, we discover our unique relationship with God. Whatever is peculiar to me, my vocation and gifts, is bound up with the Body, fed by the Body, and given me for the benefit of the Body and its mission.

Personal devotions are a means for opening each person's experiences and decisions to the light of faith. Rooted in the Mass and Office, our devotions can enable a sense of holy distance. A contempla-

tive stance can develop from which we more clearly see people and situations for what they are in the light of Christ. Those the world calls worthless are seen as God's beloved. Lives the world sees as meaningless are seen as overflowing in holy purpose. Ways of ordering society that the world sees as routine and necessary, we may come to know as oppressive and evil. In our personal prayers, God's reality and the world's reality meet. In each meeting is a new opportunity to repent and to love.

Personal devotions require training and support within parish life. Many prayer lives seem trapped at an elementary level. "God bless Daddy and Mommy" may be a place to begin but it is not an acceptable place to end. Parishes must provide teaching and personal guidance if men and women are to be helped move beyond the prayers of childhood.

There are three traditional forms of personal devotions: recollection, mental prayer, and colloquy. While each has its own nature, in experience they tend to overlap and merge toward each other. All are concerned with a real and personal encounter with Jesus Christ.

1. *Recollection*

Recollection is normally divided into habitual recollection and actual recollection.

a. *Habitual or continual recollection* is more a state of being than something we do. It is a state of being in Christ while being fully in the world. It is the key to being in the world but not of the world. It is an awareness of the presence of God: of God at the center of our life, of our status in God as his sons, daughters and heirs, as parts and members of his Body. In a sense, habitual recollection is not really a division of personal devotion but is the end of all worship. Habitual recollection is the mark of Christian maturity in which the human personality is brought back into unity with its own true self by focusing the whole person on God in whom we live and move and have our being.

This continuous awareness of God's presence is usually subconscious. It is the condition of the mature Christian, living in the world as salt and light. It is nurtured by and expressed in actual recollection, mental prayer, the Office and the Eucharist.

b. *Actual recollection* is an act or series of acts in which we remember God and his work in our daily life. The acts may be formal or informal, public or in secret. Normally they are brief. Such recollection can penetrate and color our daily life and work with God's

love and wisdom. St. Benedict urged that recollection be "short and frequent." Jeremy Taylor advised that "rather your prayers be often than long." Formal acts of recollection include short prayers of offering or thanks in relation to an event, a meal, a new book to read, or a task to do. The sign of the cross and the Angelus are acts of recollection. Other acts of recollection include the spontaneous "Thank you Lord", or "God help me", the sudden and emotional awareness of the presence and love of Christ, or the recalling of a moral and ethical duty. Recollection, as all prayer, is the Holy Spirit praying within and through us.

As the Christian matures and enters more into a state of habitual recollection, these acts may become more occasional, may pass from use entirely or may continue to serve as a nurturing, centering habit. For most of us they will be helpful aids in our growth if we can restrain any tendency to make them "laws", or to use them as a form of public witness. They are generally to be used as a private discipline.

Fasting and abstinence may be seen as a type of recollection. In fasting there is a bodily remembering of God. It is done for the sake of God. It is a way of recalling that God is the center and I am not the center. It is a way of letting go of ourselves, of opening ourselves to obedience, so God may use us.

Ordinarily the pattern of fasting should be that of the Prayer Book (p. 17). Giving ourselves over to the rhythm of the Body is an act of humility, of submitting ourselves in a tangible manner to God.

Fasting for reasons of self improvement or social impact are not what the Church's basic routine of fasting is about. There is nothing wrong with such fasting. It simply should not be confused with the Church's understanding of fasting as part of the liturgical year and as an act of recollection. In this latter type of fasting and abstinence we are focused on placing ourselves in the hands of God. As our Lord meets us in the fast, we may, of course, find ourselves united to the poor and hungry; growing in self discipline; and simplifying our way of life. The Compassionate One always leads his people in such paths. We begin, however, with God's love and his drawing us to himself, not with our own will.

2. Mental Prayer

Mental Prayer is a source of, and support for, recollection. At times they will tend to merge. If in the midst of our daily activities, the awareness of God's presence rises to consciousness, and we respond by

paying careful attention to it, we have a form of mental prayer. On the other hand, we can look at mental prayer as something done more formally in which we purposefully give our attention to the presence which we trust is already with us.

Mental prayer is being with God, paying attention to him, walking with him. In mental prayer we direct our thoughts to God, without necessarily attempting to form them into words or phrases.

A basic form of mental prayer is meditation, a careful, reasoned thinking in the presence of God. There are many possibilities for meditation—the life and ministry of our Lord, the truths of Faith, the teachings of our Lord, dilemmas of our life, etc. In meditation we look at his life, truth, and love, and are confronted with our own life, truth, and love. In the Anglican tradition we usually make use of the Holy Scriptures as a starting point. While there are many ways of meditating, they all require a method, with the method being understood as a guide rather than as a law.

A person just beginning to meditate should be realistic. It is better to use a simple, brief method on a regular basis than to learn a more involved method which we never use. Starting with five minutes a day is adequate. A simple method is to read slowly a short passage from one of the Gospels, to ask God to give us light, to listen in silence, to open oneself to whatever God may want of us through this reading, and to close by thanking God for whatever happens.

This form of prayer places a special value on rational thought. We are expected to bring our reason to prayer, to wrestle with and critically think through the implications of the Scriptures for our lives. It's also an opportunity to submit our reason to the silence of prayer, and, in that silence, to allow God to raise it to a new level. In the silence of the heart of Christ, our rationality may be transformed by holy love.

3. Colloquy

Colloquy is our informal conversation with God. As children we do it in our "God bless Daddy and Mommy," "Help me get an 'A' on the test," and so on. In such simple ways we begin to talk with God, to learn about God, to depend on him and to trust him. As we mature in the Christian life, our conversation with God will be reshaped as we learn the teachings of the Church about God, his nature and purposes, the nature and purpose of human beings, and the place of worship and prayer in the whole life of the Christian. Our prayers will mature as

we learn and grow through our participation in the common prayers of the Church.

Our informal conversation with God is just that — informal. We approach God as the One who fully knows us and loves us. So we come as we are, in the ways most natural for us. In private prayer the Holy Spirit comes to us as we open ourselves up to Reality, Love and Truth. In his love, we are free to be honest, to struggle with God, be angry with God, to ask for what we need, and to lift our hearts and minds to him. It is a time to give specific thanks for blessings received, to confess specific sins committed, to ask for the development of certain virtues in us, and to join ourselves with others in compassion and love as we intercede for them.

E. Some objectives for parish worship

1. Use the Threefold Rule of Prayer as the shape of the parish's worship.
2. Teach members how to apply the Rule of Prayer in their own rule of life so it serves as something to rest in rather than as a burden.
3. Live within the Church's rhythm and ways of worship. Participate fully in the liturgical year. If the Prayer Book makes something available, do it. Use the rites provided. Use them as they are intended to be used.
4. Create a climate that encourages the congregation's participation, and maintains a sense of awe, wonder, and mystery.
5. Do things well, decently and in order. Train people for worship. Rehearse ceremony. Ceremony that doesn't effectively dramatize the rite, either by overdoing it or underdoing it, can cause boredom, a weakening of identity, and a feeling of being lost. People end up still hungry.

Clergy need to watch out for "junk food" worship. Filling worship with fads and gimmicks wears thin soon. Attempts to create "contemporary" ceremonies frequently end up appearing silly, possibly because they arise out of the arrogant assumption that the ancient ceremonies are inadequate to feed this generation.

6. Establish and maintain the support structures necessary for parish worship. Guilds are an effective means of providing the necessary support. Guilds suggest ministry rather than mere-

ly functions. By working with and through such groups the clergy can more easily share the ministries of worship. Guilds that are properly trained and given a clear job description can manage their own life, be responsible for scheduling, arrange for their own continued training, have something of a common prayer life, and generally work at their own development. Guilds can be effectively used as "worship committees" to provide advice to the clergy.

Five guilds useful in the ordering of the parish's worship are: an altar or sacristans guild; a guild of lay readers and chalice bearers; acolytes; greeters (an enlarged role for ushers); and spiritual guides.

All of this assumes that the worship of the parish and each member is worth a great deal of time and work. Spiritual formation requires attention.

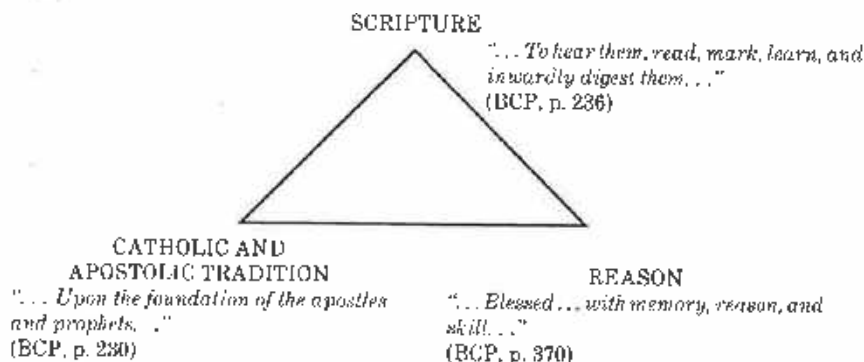
The parish that takes worship seriously will encounter resistance. "I don't have time for all this." "My life is too busy for this." "I don't get anything out of it." "It doesn't meet my needs." Such attitudes, if indulged by clergy and lay leaders, can easily control and manipulate the climate of a parish.

Clergy and lay leaders will need to hold firm to the pattern and climate that allows for and encourages a strong parish spiritual life. Those who see prayer as something to fit into leisure time (left-over time) or as something that is to fill certain emotional needs must not be permitted to set the tone of the parish's worship.

At the same time, those who are immature in the spiritual life must be dealt with as brothers and sisters. They are to be approached in love and truth. They are not to be forced into a corner, attacked as "unspiritual" or made unwelcome in the parish. There must be plenty of space for Christians in all stages of faith, and a straight-forward, unpressured explanation for those who are mystified by talk about "spiritual life."

III. DOCTRINE

"...Continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship." (BCP, p. 304)



The parish is called to open its life to the mind of Christ and to allow itself to be grasped by the authority of the Catholic Faith. The purpose of doctrine is the renewal of minds, a renewal that brings us into conformity with Jesus Christ and in tension with the passing age.

In the Christian life, the Church's doctrine provides the necessary balance and creative tension for worship and action. While study, teaching and learning are some of the means for appropriating doctrine, they are not in themselves the balancing force. It is the Scriptures and Tradition that provide a relatively objective standard which can enter into creative interaction with the other elements of the Christian life.

As Anglicans we have no written confession of faith, no outstanding historical figure (other than Jesus), no infallible book or person to answer all our questions. We have what the whole Church has always had — a journey with Christ. In that journey we strive to understand the mind of Christ. We are sometimes ambiguous, often wrong, impure in our motivations and confused about our directions. But we always return to the one trust that works: the trust in God; the trust that God meets us in this awkward condition; the trust that in Christ we have been redeemed and that God will finish what he has begun. We trust that the striving to be grasped by the mind of Christ makes sense. We trust that the Church has been provided with ways to put herself in relation to the power which is the mind of Christ.

As a Communion, we have a way of thinking that accepts balance and tension as we sort out our common life and direction. At times it seems very shaky; yet in fact it is a firm rock we stand on because it is the broad and deep rock of the Church's doctrine. The Most Rev. Geoffrey Francis Fisher, the 99th Archbishop of Canterbury put it this way: "We have no doctrine of our own . . . We only possess the Catholic doctrine of the Catholic Church enshrined in the Catholic Creeds, and these Creeds we hold without addition or diminution. We stand firm on that rock."

The parish's purposes in regard to doctrine need to include:

Making the central teachings of the Church accessible to everyone in the parish. This involves both a stable pattern of offering the teaching, and handling the teaching in a way that makes the doctrine of the Church intellectually available to the mix of people in most parishes. Our concern is to bring people to a place where they can encounter God and come to know, love and serve him. The response we hope for is not so much, "This is what I've learned," as, "This is my life; this is my story; these are my people."

Developing a core of theologically articulate laity, grounded in the basic teachings of the Church and able to apply them.

Developing a level of common language, frameworks, and knowledge that is adequate for enabling discussion among members; which establishes a climate that encourages biblical and theological study; and that provides a base for parish development that is rooted in the faith of the Church.

Preparing people to make a case for the Christian Faith in simple and practical terms.

The parish faces two opposite dangers as it shapes its pattern of study and learning. On the one hand, we can communicate tentativeness about the Faith, so that anything in the Scriptures or Holy Tradition that is too difficult or awkward is ignored or modified to the point of distortion. The teachings of the Church almost seem embarrassing. We would like to simplify them or update them so people could more easily accept them. We may begin to wonder if there is any reason to struggle with doctrine at all.

The other temptation is to take an arrogant stance. We make claims for the Faith that go beyond the capacity and purpose of Scripture or Tradition. Reason is denied its place and perspective is

lost. The Faith gets locked into a narrow, culturally limited expression.

Parishes caught up in either temptation are in need of humility and courage. We need to pray and long for just those virtues if we are to acknowledge that what we are able to understand now is not the fullness of truth; that what may not serve the needs of this generation may serve the next; and that the Faith does not provide specific solutions to each and every concern we face.

Parishioners should be provided with training in how to understand and use the Church's doctrine. People can be encouraged in a stance that allows the teaching of the Church to inform their lives. Such a stance is based on assumptions like these:

That the doctrine of the Church has something to say to me, that it sets me within a context in which answers may be found, that it points in the right direction without claiming to provide complete and absolute answers for each situation.

That something may be true and of value even if I don't see the point of it. Its truth doesn't depend on whether I understand it. Christian doctrine is not something I created; because it is not my creation, but is a gift from others, it may be of value for my life.

That I can only come to really understand the teaching of the Church from within the life of the Church. Participation in worship and Christian action opens our minds and hearts to the truth of doctrine. Doctrine is not something we merely acknowledge, but engages our life in a dialogue. It is a struggling to know the mind of Christ — a struggle best carried out from within a parish community.

That I am expected to act on it and share it with others. The teachings of the Christian faith invite a change in the way I look at and act in the world. The Faith is a gift that I am to pass on to others.

As Anglicans we seek to base our faith and practice on three sources of authority: Scripture, Catholic and Apostolic Tradition, and Reason. We give authority to those teachings that we can recognize in Scripture, have come to be generally accepted in the Church through many centuries, and can withstand the tests of human reason. Our concern in parish life and development is how these sources of authority can serve their proper purpose for the parish and in the lives of its members.

The sources of authority can only function as such if they are allowed to influence and shape us on a regular and frequent basis. That's how they become a part of us. We then live a pattern of life in which the sources of authority are part of the structure and climate of the parish. We naturally approach issues and decisions in a way that takes the three sources of authority seriously.

The world offers us other authorities on a regular basis. In the normal course of our daily lives we are invited to invest a seriousness and value in things that cannot carry the weight of our lives, things that do not point us to God: success, comfort, my feelings, my experience, independence, money, etc. None of them is bad in itself. They only become dangerous to our true life when there are no higher authorities by which they might be challenged and transformed.

It is a dangerous pattern of thinking which assumes that anything that seems right to me must be God's will; or that if it "moves" me, it must be the Holy Spirit. The Church loses itself when its authority becomes what seems right by "modern" standards, or "the way we have always done things," or what conforms to the culture. It is tragic when the Church accepts what is "reasonable" to a culture or movement as a sign of the Holy Spirit. From our vantage point we can easily see the distortion and evil in the German Christian collaboration with the Nazis, or of the Dutch Reformed Church in support of South Africa's apartheid, or of the "Christian" schools that separate races here in the United States. Responsible, Christian men and women are called to form their views about economics, race, abortion, drug use, sexuality, and the new discoveries of science on the basis of the Church's sources of authority.

The target is for the parish as a whole to let these sources shape its life and ministry. Whether this is happening is not necessarily easy to discern. You can't tell simply by observing a vestry meeting. A lot of "Bible talk" at the vestry meeting doesn't necessarily mean that the Scriptures are a strong source of authority for that congregation. It could be a form of unproductive piety or a way of avoiding a difficult decision. One gets a better picture by seeing if people go to a Bible study group, or if they have been trained how to use and understand the Scriptures, or if they read and meditate on the Scriptures each day, or if they pray the Daily Office, or if sermons are based on the propers for the day.

Scripture, Tradition, and reason are to shape our understanding and practice of worship, service, evangelization, and stewardship.

They are our guides for the Church's relationship to government and society. They inform our work of parish revitalization. They free us from the gods of "my feelings", "my experience", from the passing styles of thought and action, and from the need to be "right".

The authority many people invest in their feelings and experience calls for careful attention. The experience and feelings of many people tell them to fear people of other races and nations, to look out for "number one", and to protect one's future by accumulating things. Peter would not risk the waters because he trusted his feelings and experience rather than Jesus Christ.

Christian faith does not ask us to ignore our feelings and experience but to submit them to the claims of Jesus Christ, to look at them through the eyes of Christ and to open ourselves to his transforming truth. We need an openness toward our experience. We need to reflect on it and learn from it if we are to mature. We need to avoid the attempt to "tame" our experience by forcing it into neat categories. Our task is to allow Scriptures, the Holy Tradition, the wisdom and knowledge of the larger human experience, and our own reason to speak to our experience. In this way we may come to see what truth lies within our experience.

A. Scripture

The Holy Scriptures are the primary source of authority for the Church. They provide an objectivity which makes for a degree of stability and identity in the Church's life and teaching.

Our task is to be congruent with Scripture; to teach nothing as necessary and essential unless it is firmly grounded in Scripture; to teach nothing that is contrary to Scripture. This is not the same as proving everything from Scripture in an explicit and literal manner. We interpret the Scriptures from within the living tradition of the Church.

The Bible is the Church's book. It was written by the Church out of the experience of the Church. The Church decided what the canon of Scripture would be. The Church passes the Scriptures on through the generations.

The Scriptures testify to God's revelation of himself. They tie us to the story of the People of God and tell us of God's nature and his purposes in his relationship with us.

We are the continuation of that story. The Bible is our book and it comes alive in the living context of the Church. That story tells us who

we are and whose we are. It comes before and informs all our other stories of family, race and nation. It points us to our essential dignity as creatures made in the divine image.

B. Catholic and Apostolic Tradition

Our assumption is that the common experience and understandings of Christians through the generations throws light on our present experience. The consensus of the Church, especially the undivided Church, on the meaning of Scripture and the pattern of the Holy Spirit's activity in the Church and world needs to inform the life of each parish. Our base in the early Church grounds us in essentials and frees us to test the accretions of the later centuries, whether they are Roman, Protestant or Anglican.

We encounter the Holy Tradition in the writings, creeds and councils of the early church, in the liturgy, and in the history of the Church to the present day. Our story as Anglicans provides us with a unique attitude and approach toward the tradition.

Scripture and Tradition point us to Jesus Christ. Together they claim a priority in authority over reason.

C. Reason

Part of our tradition as Anglicans is the value we place on tolerance, rationality, and learning. We seek to enable maturity in our people. We want people to use their minds to explore God's way with us.

Doubt and searching are seen as part of how God works with us. It is a positive thing to struggle with the mystery of faith. Doubt is to be faced, not left in a haze or received as defect. Our stance is an invitation to wrestle with difficulties together: not just to accept the Church's teaching, and certainly not to assume easily that the Church must be mistaken. We desire free and open investigation and discussion as part of our parish life and we assume that the truth of Scriptures and Tradition are verifiable in the spiritual and intellectual experience of Christians. We assume that human reason is both a help in applying the truth of Scriptures and Tradition in our life and a test of those authorities.

It is part of our baptismal covenant to respect the dignity of people. This certainly includes a respect for the human mind and conscience. We make use of historical and scientific research. Atten-

tion is given to the work of Biblical and theological scholars. We start with a positive stance toward the knowledge and wisdom of this world. We trust that all truth is of God.

Part of our task is to receive the ancient teaching and to renew it for use in the present. We are engaged in learning how to look at our world, our life, problems and opportunities, through the eyes of Christ. In that effort we are not to teach anything contrary to reason. Yet we will proclaim much that goes beyond reason.

There is a personal responsibility for seeking and acting on truth. A person's conscience is to be afforded respect. A person must respond to his conscience if he is not to lose himself. Even before the responsibility to act on our conscience, however, is the duty to educate our conscience. The Christian is part of a Body. We are not to live and decide as isolated individuals, but are expected to allow ourselves to be influenced by the Scriptures, the stories of the saints and martyrs, the best thinking of others, and the current positions of the Church and our Bishops. We are expected to consult with other Christians as we make decisions of conscience.

The Church has a special responsibility in relation to the sources of authority. Through the generations the Church has decided on what constitutes the life and ministry of the Church. Scripture and Tradition come alive and are interpreted to the present age in and through the context of current experience and the living community of faith.

If we are to encourage mature and responsible participation in our parishes, people must be provided with the tools. The fact is that in many of our parishes there are few people with any capacity to think as Christians. In some cases it is a matter of conversion or sanctification; in others it is a matter of equipping. To equip people to be familiar with the sources of authority is both to root them more deeply in the Church's life and to empower a laity that is not dependent on the parish clergy to do their thinking as Christians for them. In fact, it gives people a base from which they can faithfully participate in parish life and renewal in ways that build the Body.

Our parish goals need to include:

Helping people learn, understand, and apply the usual Anglican sources of authority.

Rooting people in the sources of authority through the pattern of parish life and programs. The parish as a body can be shaped and influenced on a regular and frequent basis by those sources. This establishes a climate within which people are grounded in the mind of Christ, even though there may be no special awareness of what is happening.

Teaching people how they can allow the sources of authority to shape their lives.

D. Elements of Catechesis in the Parish

The parish's purpose is Christian formation, the development of Christian character, not merely the communication of knowledge. As a result of our efforts we want people to see things differently, to think as Christians.

Some parishes drift into the thinking and practice that says that "education is the means of salvation." Liturgy and other aspects of parish life begin to get reshaped around learning goals. Children going to church school is seen as more important than their participation in the Sunday Eucharist or a ministry of service.

When we view what we are up to from the perspective of formation, each primary element of the Christian Life is allowed its own integrity and power. They interact with one another and with us. We are recreated as a people.

What are the primary structural elements for effective catechetical work in the parish? How are we to move toward our purposes of making the Church's teaching accessible to everyone, developing a theologically articulate core, establishing the common conceptual base that allows for parish renewal, and grounding the parish and its members in the sources of authority?

I see three primary structures as necessary: a basic course for adults, a guild of lay catechists, and a stable, balanced pattern for a variety of educational efforts. Properly structured, these elements will reinforce and strengthen one another.

1. A basic course for adults

Every year, probably in the Fall or Winter, the clergy and lay catechists should offer an eight to twelve session course for adults. The basic format and content of the course should be repeated each year. This enables the development of common understandings and lan-

guage in the parish and permits people to take some of the course one year and some the next. It also frees the priest from coming up with "something new" each year. It opens the possibility of building and improving the basic offering.

This approach slowly begins to affect the whole climate of parish life. It enables people to talk with each other about their faith. When most of the vestry have completed it, the tone of vestry meetings changes.

The course can be a blend of presentations, discussions, and experiential education. It should allow adults to wrestle with the Christian faith in an adult manner. The content can include concerns such as:

The story of the People of God — Israel, Jesus Christ, the nature and mission of the Church in history, the Anglican Communion and the Episcopal Church.

A study of what it means to share the priesthood of Christ — baptism, vocation, gifts, our relationship with God, the development of Christian character.

Practical instruction in the spiritual life — participation in the Holy Eucharist, how to use the Daily Office, how to meditate, the development of a rule of life, how to use the Sacrament of Penance.

The elements of the Christian Life — worship, doctrine, action.

The Bible — how the Bible came to be, how to use and understand the Scriptures. Practical suggestions for use in study, meditation, and personal application.

Christian Believing — the sources of authority, the problem of evil, sin and forgiveness, Christian hope.

Christian Action — stewardship, evangelism, service.

In such a course, the leader should not simply talk about things, but also do them: for example, use the Daily Office to open or close the sessions as well as teaching people how to use them at home; lead a meditation; help people actually develop a rule of life; do some Bible study together; go to the place where confessions are heard, and role play the rite; look at two opposing positions on an issue the Church is dealing with by using each source of authority as a "lens."

It is important to avoid artificial or gimmicky methods. When an

experiential approach is the most natural approach, it should be used. When lecturing seems most appropriate, the leader should lecture. Clergy and catechists should not hesitate to make presentations: we need to give people the background they need to understand the faith as adults.

If the course is to help set a faithful climate in the parish it needs to take place *in* the parish. It undermines the purpose to offer a joint program with other parishes. It should be done each year in *each* parish. It should be offered if only one person is coming this year. A person could attend a few sessions each year until he has completed the course. In time, a parish will build up a significant number of people who have been through the course. It helps to put the names of those who have completed the whole course on the notice board, and to keep track of who has completed which sessions.

This course should be used as part of the training for lay catechists, as the adult confirmation course, and as a refresher program. Don't hesitate to make it an expectation for church school teachers, members of the vestry, and lay leaders.

A demanding program of adult Christian instruction will begin to communicate that this is a place where people's minds and faith are taken seriously, where we will talk about things that matter and deal with realities that expand and transform our lives.

2. *A catechist guild*

Over a two-year period a parish can develop a rather competent guild of lay catechists. Catechists can be trained to conduct new member classes, Bible study groups, the parish's basic course for adults, and to prepare people for Baptism, first Holy Communion, and Confirmation. The guild can serve as the committee that consults with the parish priest in developing policy and offerings in all these areas.

Once an initial group has been trained and admitted to the guild they can become self-managing within the general standards approved by the Rector. Such a guild can make arrangements for its own continuing education, recruitment and training of new members, providing a regular series of offerings; and collaborate with the clergy in areas where clergy and catechists need to work together.

The training of catechists should not be based on a set length of time but on competence. They should be very familiar with the Scriptures and Prayer Book; have read books in church history, ethics, liturgy, and the spiritual life; have completed the parish's basic course

for adults; have taught under supervision; have a rule of life; and be knowledgeable about the standards and traditions of the Church and the parish.

3. *A stable, balanced pattern of educational offerings*

It takes some effort to develop a firm pattern of educational offerings but in the long run it is easier for the priest and catechists to manage, and is a more reliable way of getting at the parish's educational purposes. Each offering should have some sense of routine to it. This allows members to enter into the activity with some ease. It also helps in developing the parish's schedules to know that every Lent we have a special program or that confirmation classes for young people begin eighteen months before the Bishop's visit.

Among the needed offerings are:

a. *Preparation for various rites* — for parents and other sponsors of baptism, adult candidates for baptism, candidates for first holy communion, confirmation, marriage, etc. Develop a handout for each that presents the standards and preparation for each. This is a help in facilitating the involvement of people with various roles to play in the preparation and the rite.

b. *Programs available based on need and interest* — Bible study; issue focused programs; help for parents in raising children as Christians; special topics in church history or theology; workshops on the spiritual life; etc. It may help to have some time(s) each year during which there will always be some special program.

c. *Providing information on church "culture", tradition, standards, language, etc.* There are hundreds of little pieces of information that people may need if they are to settle into the routines of the parish — the meaning of acts of reverence, how to prepare for Holy Communion, what a fast day is, how to use the various silences during worship, how to receive Communion when you have a cold, etc. It is the kind of information that is not easily dealt with in the normal formats of parish education. Yet people do need to know how and why things are done.

It doesn't help to tell them such things don't matter. If they are really so unimportant, then there is even more reason to provide the information so we can be free to move on to the "deeper issues."

The fact is that these particulars matter a great deal because these hundreds of small matters, taken together, have a profound effect in shaping a person's spiritual life, and add up to a significant part of our identity as Christians in the Anglican tradition.

Questions and answers can be offered in the Sunday leaflet. Special handouts can be made available. Some clergy have found it useful to develop a system of using 3x5 cards to record such information — one card for one concern. The cards can then be used one each week during the announcements.

d. *Church School for children and young people.* In most parishes we only have a limited time for such education. That time should not be in conflict with their participation in the Eucharist. It needs to be focused and well done. It doesn't have to be fun, though it will be at times. It should challenge and stretch the students. Each parish will want to decide carefully on when to offer the Church School. Some parishes conduct it during the week. Because of the pressure of schools for achievement and participation, some parishes have stopped having classes during the year and focused on an intensive summer program.

Parents need to become involved with their children's education. They have the primary responsibility for the Christian formation of their children. Parents can be trained in specific programs and by being involved and taught as children are prepared for First Holy Communion and Confirmation.

e. *Reading materials* — Each parish should have a library and a tract rack. Books should be carefully selected for their long-term usefulness. A library of two hundred books built up over a three to five year period will serve most parishes. If only a few people make use of it, it is a worthwhile investment. Parish libraries should not be hidden away in a special room but located in the area normally used for coffee hours, dinners, and meetings. The lending procedure should be easily accomplished and not limit the library's use by unnecessary rules. Yes, some books will disappear. That is part of the cost of having books to loan. Tracts and books in selected areas should be available for sale in every parish. Tracts should be changed every month or so.

The parish's task is to provide all the basic educational offerings most people need in their living the Christian life, as individuals and as a parish. Most of it, for most people, should be available in the parish. When it is offered in their own parish, people are more inclined to make use of it. It also helps build the parish's life as a community.

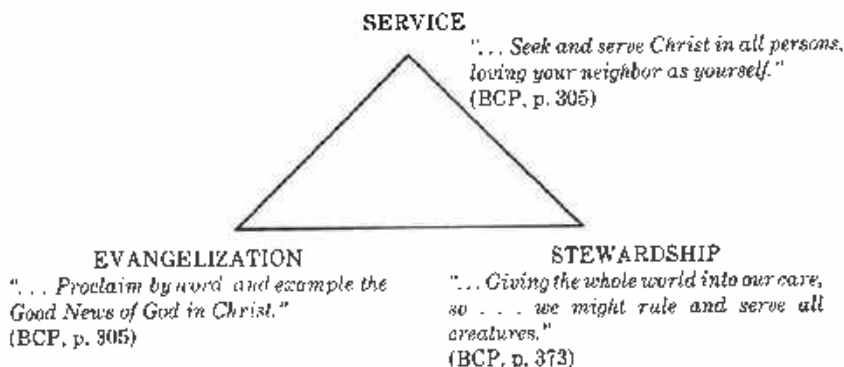
There are some things that can best be done at a diocesan or deanery level: programs that involve special expenses or staffing, and advanced courses in Bible, theology, ethics, etc.

Most people have times of experiencing their life as something rather small and lacking in significance. The families and neighborhoods of our parishes are frequently filled with an arrogant defensiveness and narrow pride. What happens in our congregations can either mirror and reinforce this smallness of mind and spirit, or can root our lives in what is universal and eternal.

The doctrine of the Church tells us of the worth and dignity of our lives, what our families and communities are really for, what it means to love our neighbor, and how we can be changed. The Church's teaching is one aid in grounding our lives, that seem so small, in what is holy, catholic, apostolic, and united with God's great purposes.

IV. ACTION

"... To represent Christ and his Church; to bear witness to him wherever they may be." (BCP, p. 855)



The parish engages in Christian action through service, evangelization, and stewardship. It is a ministry carried out both as a body and through each member's witness in daily work and life. The parish's corporate ministry is directed at its neighborhood, any special communities it has been called to serve, and the larger world. Such ministries are carried out on behalf of the whole parish by those with the necessary vocation and gifts. These ministries also can help establish a climate that supports the witness of each member.

While not often visible in the parish's life, it is in each member's witness in his daily life that most of the parish's Christian action is done. It is primarily through its laity that Christ and his Church are represented in business, unions, politics, community associations, education and government. A task of the priest is to help lay persons become aware of their priesthood, of being the People of God, when they are scattered throughout the communities and institutions of our society. In those places it is the laity who are the evangelists, servants, and stewards of the holy order.

In its preaching, education and spiritual direction, the parish needs to give a special emphasis to the lay apostolate. We need to emphasize that the laity are the primary ministers of Christ in the world. This is a matter of being and doing: of being salt and light, of

acting for love, peace and justice, and of opening ourselves to the work of the Holy Spirit in sanctifying us and making us loving, peace-filled, just people.

A. Service

The task is given: "Strive for justice and peace among all people and respect the dignity of every human being." The task is local and international. It is carried out by what we do and by who we are.

The parish's concern is first of all local. We are to serve a specific neighborhood or community, a geographical area. A parish may also serve a special community of need — people with drug or alcohol problems, transients, run-aways, the homeless.

By its participation in the life of the larger Church, the parish can address the issues of world hunger, war and peace, and refugees. Those we do not know, who are far from us, are also the neighbor we are called to serve.

The parish needs to focus its energies on doing a few things effectively and faithfully. For example:

Encourage and enable the people of the community to organize themselves to deal with the needs of the neighborhood. If the parish and the priest are trusted, they can help bring people together for initial meetings. Trained community organizers can be introduced, meeting space provided, small grants made and assistance given in raising larger sums. Parish clergy should show up at some of the meetings and/or in some of the group's work. Normally there is no need for the priest to be a group leader. It is usually more effective for the priest to encourage others to accept leadership positions. The parish may want to initiate or join in partnership with the community association around particular projects and needs.

New community groups may face resistance from local political leaders. The firm support of the parish for community organizing, and some honest conversation between the priest and the ward leader, may help smooth the transition.

A parish's internal life needs to be consistent with Christian understandings of justice. How are investments made? Can your endowment fund be used to finance low income housing? How are employees treated? Do the companies you use for supplies and property work engage in affirmative action?

Provide alternatives that deal with inadequately met needs for education, housing, recreation, day care, and health. You may want to help new organizations become independent of the parish within a few years. Some may be so related to the parish's life and ministry that they should become a permanent part of the parochial organization.

Offer direct service by establishing a food center, sending lay pastoral care teams to neighborhood shut-ins and nursing homes, or running a summer day camp.

A parish needs to take a careful look at the message it's giving the community by its direct acts of service. You don't want a reputation as a "give away" ministry. You do want to be known as a community that serves others in the name of Christ and invites people to join its life of giving and service.

Help lay members identify ways in which they can serve as the "scattered" Church. As an institution the parish can play an important but limited role in serving the community. As the people of God located in the streets, schools, and business of the community in the form of its laity, the parish can serve in more immediate and direct ways. Community groups need us as members and leaders, sick neighbors need to be looked in on, and violence and crime in the streets need to be challenged and reported. It can be a ministry for someone to sit on her front steps for a few hours each week. The streets are made safer and the bonds of community are developed by being available in such a public manner.

The parish can work with its laity in developing a sense of responsibility for the neighborhood. People need to be reminded that their lives are important and that their behavior matters. The common roles of our life in the family, at work, as citizens, in the neighborhood are the context for service.

Practice hospitality to all who come. Pray and work for a climate that accepts strangers and those who seem different from ourselves.

The parish can be an advocate for justice, peace and human dignity in the community. Use a parish community newsletter and local newspapers to speak on behalf of those who are unable to speak adequately for themselves.

The credibility of our ministry depends on the reliability of our servanthood, and that in large measure depends on an incarnate presence. We need to be present in the concrete, tangible and knowable forms of a worshipping, learning, and serving congregation, with a priest serving full time in the parish, and property that both directly serves the community and represents the holy to the community. The parish needs to root itself in the neighborhood by bringing the people of the neighborhood to share in its life and ministry. We need to be in the neighborhood not simply as another social work agency or political reform movement but as the People of God, the Body of Christ.

We have learned that there is a higher "payoff" in financing a full time priest than in reducing the time of the priest and putting the money saved into direct service projects. The priest needs to be carefully selected, competent, committed to a comprehensive expression of the Christian life, with an obvious concern for serving the poor and oppressed.

We need to confront our illusions. We are not going to "get it all together" as a parish. We are not going to create a society free of oppression and inequalities. We are not going to save the world, or this neighborhood, or ourselves. Much of what we do will seem ineffective, and some of it will even hurt those we thought we were helping.

The reality is that Jesus Christ saves and restores, that our fear of being inadequate and our rage at our limitations can be offered to him and transformed. Then we can get on with living; with doing what can be done; with proclaiming the Gospel and working for justice, peace and dignity. In his sacred heart is the source of a compassion with the power to endure.

We are to serve the world as Christ serves us. We are not to be obedient to the world's demands but to the demands of Jesus Christ. We do not serve as the world would define service, by skills, methods, and success. We serve as Christ defines service in his life, death and resurrection. To serve is to give ourselves to the holy action. It is to be taken, blessed, broken, and used for God's mission.

Just by doing the things that a parish normally does, it serves the community. It is worthwhile for a parish just to be a parish, to be what Bishop Paul Moore calls "sturdy little places in a fragile world," "centers of redemption." It is important that people gather to worship; that marriages and families are supported and nurtured; that the witness of monks and nuns to the transcendent, to a holy worldliness, is held up and affirmed. As the Church and its members are what Christ has made them — salt, light and leaven — the world is served.

It matters that people are part of something that is universal: a people that crosses the boundaries of race, class, politics, and nations. As people touch and are touched by the kingdom, in worship and belief, they may find themselves converted to a vision of the Holy City, a vision of co-inherence and interdependence. That conversion is a commitment to the covenant of justice and peace and human dignity.

B. Evangelization

"Evangelism is the presentation of Jesus Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit, in such ways that persons may be led to believe in Him as Savior and follow Him as Lord within the fellowship of His Church" — General Convention 1973.

In carrying out this element of the Church's mission there are two interrelated concerns for the parish: *to share the Christian faith* in a local context in a convincing way that is congruent with who we are as Episcopalians; *to increase our membership* so we might more fully advance the mission of the Church.

1. *Preparing the Parish for Evangelism*

a. *Operate on a scale that assumes future membership growth and makes it easier for people to relate themselves to the parish.* Many small congregations have drifted into a reduced pattern of parish life — they have moved to one Sunday Eucharist, guilds and parish groups have stopped functioning, activities have been crowded into the time available after Sunday worship, there is little adult education and infrequent weekday worship. The congregation lives with mixed feelings of sadness over its reduced condition and a compensating appreciation of being like a "family." In adjusting itself over the years, the congregation settles into an almost defensive stance toward its smallness. The first self-description received from members is about how "warm and friendly" people are, how "everyone knows everyone else," and how "we all participate in everything." People also talk about the need for more members, especially young people and families. A "cult of smallness" emerges to counter the "cult of largeness."

The issue isn't really the size of our parishes but the faithfulness of our witness. A faithful witness in the area of evangelism certainly includes seeking an increase in the number of people who have given their lives to our Lord and his Church. We do want to see our parishes grow in the number of committed Christians.

If we work for and accomplish this increase, the world may see it as success and prosperity. The world may like it or not; most often the world will be indifferent. Our concern is not for such achievements and is certainly not to impress the world. As the Gospel is proclaimed it may fill the parishes. It may also empty the pews in some parishes. We are called to faithfulness — to holiness, to unity, and to continuity with our roots. We are called to make the effort and to trust that God will use our efforts to accomplish what is best for his Church.

Even if the small parish has little chance for dramatic growth because of the limits of its neighborhood, it needs to provide a strong, whole pattern of life for the sake of its present membership. In most areas, however, there are large numbers of unchurched people. If they are to be accepted into the congregation, there needs to be a structured openness. Providing several celebrations of the Eucharist on Sunday is both a sign of openness to newcomers as well as a way of meeting the needs of the present congregation. Each celebration provides for a different type of spirituality and allows for a variety of work schedules and life styles.

A parish with forty active members can make use of the same basic pattern of life as a parish of several hundred. An early Sunday Mass is of value, whether two people or twenty make use of it. A parish can have a regular pattern of adult education, whether it serves a handful of people or many. A lay catechist guild strengthens a parish's grounding in the faith and provides a means to express people's gifts whether it has three members or twelve. A priest needs to give as much time to prepare a sermon or course of instruction for five people as for three hundred. To do otherwise is to play "the numbers game" at its worst.

The small parish deserves a full, strong life of worship, education and action for the sake of its own health. That pattern of life also serves the parish's evangelical task. It provides space and entry for people in all their diversity. If the parish is to grow it needs to structure its life on a scale that may seem a bit overdone for the current number of members. Congregations locked into a "single unit" pattern of life exclude people by their very structure. To get in, you have to buy into the norms of the unit much more obviously than in a "multi-cell" community.

The size of the parish also affects its ability to move beyond a concentration on its own survival, and to reach out in ministry to the neighborhood. An increase in membership doesn't guarantee a significant outreach to the community but it does allow for it.

b. *Provide a carefully planned approach to evangelism that fits Episcopal tradition.* Many of our parishes have never considered their responsibility for evangelism. Some are "put off" by it. Others think of it solely in terms of membership recruitment. A place to start is to develop a one year plan to introduce evangelism to the congregation. There are three steps to take.

The priest, and if possible a few interested lay people, need to become familiar with several approaches to evangelism. Find out about the theology and methods of the church growth movement, the Roman Catholics, and the Lutherans. Investigate what several Episcopal churches are doing. Get on the Episcopal Church's mailing list for the Office of Evangelism and Renewal.

Consider what you are learning in terms of Anglican theology and practice. What is consistent with our Anglican identity?

As you begin to integrate the material and develop a sense of direction, make a list of what feels comfortable to you and parts you think are important yet find yourself resisting. Talk about it with someone you know will listen and push you.

Focus the parish's attention on evangelization for one or two months. The use of diocesan consultants and resource persons should be considered as a means to introduce evangelism to the congregation.

Identify a period when the Sunday proper best fit the theme. Have a series of classes for adults. Secure the commitment of the vestry and lay leaders to participate. The church school can work with many of the same issues the adult class is dealing with. A couple of cross generation sessions might be included.

People need to become familiar with the mandate for evangelization in Scripture and Tradition. They need help in learning to describe their faith journey, to relate it to their baptism and its covenant, and to identify the place of the Church and this parish in their journey. It would be appropriate for people to share their stories with one another and to discuss their feelings about such sharing.

Part of the parish's time of focusing on evangelization includes

reviewing its corporate outreach. Statistics of the past decade can be gathered and shared to allow members to see what has been happening to attendance and membership. If the information is available, it can provide perspective to look at the statistics at ten year intervals for the past forty years.

The parish leadership should identify the ways in which the congregation carries out its evangelical task. How does the parish proclaim the Gospel in the community? How are the people invited into its life and ministry? Where is there a need for change or strengthening? What are the barriers in the neighborhood and within the congregation to evangelization? Identify ways in which the parish can grow in faithful witness. Introduce information on research that has been done on church growth.

Pray that the parish might become a more faithful instrument for the Holy Spirit's work of bringing men and women to Christ and his Church. Include such prayers in the Holy Eucharist and Daily Offices. Some parishes have set aside one evening each week for people to gather in prayer for renewal and evangelism.

Integrate evangelism more fully into the parish's life. Evangelism is not an optional program but a normal element of a parish's expression of the Christian life. It should be a regular part of the parish's prayers. The budget and goals should have evangelization as a category. There should be a clear procedure for inviting, greeting, visiting, orienting and incorporating. Brochures should be available for use in inviting people to worship and explaining the parish's practices. Those with the necessary vocation and gifts can be trained to make calls to follow up on visitors and the lapsed. Everyone needs to be taught how to evangelize friends and relatives. The parish needs a spirit of hospitality. People need to feel welcome into any aspect of the parish's life, but not pressured into social events and programs. There needs to be a climate in which men and women are invited into solitude and meaning. The parish that is largely caught up in the business of fairs, property, and fund raising will not be a home for the person seeking life.

In all of this, parish leaders will want to be open to the many

approaches and resources available. There are a number of packaged programs available for introducing and integrating evangelism in a parish. They should be carefully critiqued in terms of their consistency with our identity as Episcopalians. Some may require modification if they are to be of value.

It makes little sense to base your effort on an approach that is incongruent in theology and method with the fabric of our tradition. The means of bringing people into a relationship with Jesus Christ and the Church need to fit what people will experience in the normal routine of a faithful Episcopal parish.

2. Be a parish: Be rooted in the neighborhood

A parish church is bound up with its surrounding community. Its congregation, priest, holy space, and neighborhood are in an interdependent relationship with one another. The possibilities of that relationship for the kingdom of God constitute the goals of a parish.

This understanding of what it is to be a parish points us beyond the more limited understandings that equate "parish" with "congregation" or limit it to a certain canonical status. The Church's ministry of evangelization naturally flows from a renewed emphasis on the parish as congregation *and* neighborhood.

Those who live and work in the neighborhood are to be prayed for, served and evangelized. Their concerns, problems and hopes are to be held up in the prayers of the Church. If they are not active in some Christian community they are to be invited to participate in the life and ministry of the congregation. We are to invite all sorts and conditions of people. The diversity of the neighborhood should be reflected in the parish. The congregation should look like the neighborhood at prayer. This means refusing to allow the "principle of homogeneity" to narrow our evangelistic approach. We may accept it as sociological information that will influence our methods for reaching each of the distinct cultural groups in our community. Until the congregation reflects the community in its diversity of age, race, culture, class and marital status, this part of our work is unfinished. At times, the parish will be called to challenge barriers which unjustly limit the diversity of the neighborhood itself. When other Christian bodies in the area accept the same responsibility, it is all to the good of the neighborhood and to the glory of God. Appropriate forms of cooperation should be sought.

The parish is organism and institution; congregation and neighborhood; priest, deacons, and laity; altars and meeting rooms; sacred space, homes, shops and industry. When the parish accepts and acts on this holy interdependence, it is evangelizing. Within these relationships is the Holy City. We see this reflected when people who have never been seen at worship refer to the parish as their parish and the priest as their priest. Neighbors feel an attachment to the parish and its buildings. They may even feel some claim upon the parish.

Focusing on our life as a congregation may help us hold up the fact that we are a people with a special vocation; in but not of the world, having no continuing city, strangers and pilgrims on a journey to our true home, the City of God. Focusing on being a parish helps us stress our relationship, in mission, to and with the community. It provides a particular identity for our life and mission. We are reminded of the co-inherence of all people and things and of our inability to rigidly define who is "in" and who is "out".

We need to establish roots in the neighborhood if the parish is to be a faithful and effective evangelical instrument, fully a part of the community and culture, and a witness to the Catholic Faith and the Christian Life. Some of the ways to develop those roots are the following:

a. *Define your area.* A parish needs some sense of its boundaries. In urban areas, an eight block radius around the parish buildings is often a reasonable area within which to focus the parish's ministry. The "boundaries" should take in account transportation patterns, physical barriers, and the community's own sense of its boundaries. Hang parish maps in the office and on a notice board. "Boundaries" may overlap with those of other Episcopal parishes and will probably overlap with the churches of other communions. They aren't to be used in a legalistic or restrictive manner, but as a means to focus the parish's ministry.

b. *Be visible to the community.* Make regular use of the local newspaper. Send in articles on a frequent basis. Put out a leaflet welcoming people to worship. Develop an occasional community newsletter to be distributed throughout the neighborhood. A small congregation may find that adding a significant number of neighbors to the mailing list allows them to use a bulk mailing rate while keeping people in touch with the parish's life.

The Rector or Vicar needs to show herself in the neighborhood — take walks, use local stores, wear traditional clerical clothing,

accept local speaking engagements. Being asked to do the 2 a.m. TV sermonette isn't of much value, but being asked to bless the food at the recreation center's awards banquet is a significant relationship with the people of the neighborhood.

The parish's buildings need to invite people. Signs should announce the times of worship; the building should be kept in an attractive condition and have adequate outside lighting; and "Episcopal Church Welcomes You" signs should be posted at major intersections.

The buildings need to be used daily. Some form of the Daily Office should be used. Arrangements can be made so the doors can be kept open much of the time to allow for personal devotion. Community groups should be making use of the meeting rooms.

c. *Present the claim of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.* Decide on a means of direct witness that is appropriate to the community. It is important to move beyond complaining about how others do it and to decide how this parish will do it.

If indigenization is to be real, it will usually mean that the bulk of the congregation is from the neighborhood. For that to happen, the parish needs to invite people into its life of worship, belief and service.

d. *Accept the way that people come.* If children are the first ones to make contact with the parish, then our task is to work with them. Involve them in the life of the parish. In time they may provide access to their families, and their families to their neighbors.

Allow "interruptions" to be opportunities for ministry. People at the door and phone calls may lead on to something beyond the needs as initially presented. While we need to start with people as they present themselves, that is not where we need to leave them.

e. *Enable a transition in parish leadership to neighborhood people with a commitment to development and renewal.* In many small parishes a dedicated group of laity have helped the parish survive through the hard years. Frequently they no longer live in the community. Those with the gifts to hang on through the worst years are often not the people with the gifts necessary to lead the parish in its renewal. If this is the case, the priest will need to admit it to himself and help the old leadership let go. This can be a touchy and difficult time for everyone. Those who have led the parish in the past may need pastoral guidance to deal with their sense of loss. They need to be helped to apply their gifts in the present situation.

Lay leaders who no longer live in the parish's neighborhood need

to collaborate with their priest in transferring leadership to people who do live in the community. In some city congregations this process needs to take place every five to ten years.

f. *Clergy need to become a part of the life of the community.* They need to live in the neighborhood, preferably in the rectory. Our small inner city and rural parishes have a special need for priests who will stay five to ten years.

The Rector or Vicar doesn't need to be from the neighborhood. In fact it may be important that the clergy come from "the outside". This can point us to the catholic and apostolic nature of the Church. The priest can only really do this if she has some sense of the difference between her own cultural and class identity and Catholic faith and practice. The parish needs her to give herself to the local while she carries the universal. The parish needs her to serve the neighborhood.

We need a recovery of the vocational diaconate so that there can be one or two deacons in every parish. Depending on the policy of the Bishop, deacons may be from the parish or from another parish of the same "culture."

g. *Identify with the neighborhood.* The parish needs to develop a sense of solidarity with the concerns of the community, especially with whatever struggle or pain may be present within it.

3. *There is a Conversion to the Church*

While the primary conversion is to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, there is a related conversion to the Church and to life within the Church. In fact, the conversion to Jesus Christ remains incomplete and partial until there is a conversion to the Church and the living of the Christian life from within the Church.

We live in a very individualistic age. Most people believe that you don't have to be a member of the Church to be a good Christian, and that you should decide on your own beliefs independently of the Church. People have a restricted view of the Church and a lack of awareness of the extent to which individuals and their beliefs are bound up in, and shaped by, a larger context.

For the Episcopalian, three aspects of conversion to the Church are conversion to the Body, to the Christian Life, and to the Anglican tradition.

a. *To the Body.* This is acceptance of the corporate dimension of faith — of the fact that we are bound up with each other in Christ. We acknowledge the reality of creation: we live *from* each other, no matter what; we can choose to live *with* and *for* each other.

This membership in the Church goes beyond institutional membership. It is membership in the Body of Christ. It is organic, as the arm is a member of the body, or the branch a member of the vine. It is quite different from being a member of a club.

b. *To the Christian Life.* Christian conversion is in one sense an unfolding into depth, height and breadth. People may initially relate themselves to the Church because of a lovely building, a sentimental feeling, an intellectual belief, a parish program of music or social outreach, or the warmth and friendliness of the priest and congregation. God will use any such starting point for the journey. But it is just a starting point. The end is maturity and holiness.

The Christian life is a life of transformation. Human lives are being recreated in the divine image. God is calling men and women to true humanity as we know it in the person of Jesus Christ.

This life is a call to respect human dignity even when you can't see much dignity, to look for the image of God in men and women, and to honor it. It is a life of striving for justice and peace, even when you can't see the possibility; of loving even when you don't feel like it. There is a cost, a cross; you must lose life to have it. It is a movement from a faith which leaves Christ at the edges of life, to life with Christ at the center.

c. *To the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Tradition.* The Christian life is lived within a particular context. It is always lived as part of a particular tradition. We are not inviting people into an abstraction, but into a real, historically shaped expression of faith.

In calling men and women to faith the parish needs to present this tradition's experience of the Christian life clearly and directly. Our uniqueness is part of what we offer. We are an expression of the Catholic Church that has its own tone and climate.

To enter into this tradition is to be called beyond understandings of the faith with forms of authority that require Biblical or ecclesial literalism, a narrow, culturally limited moralism, or some specific type of emotional experience. It is to participate in a journey of faith that takes the historic faith seriously; that believes all truth is of God; that desires the mature, informed participation of its people; and that strives to speak to the current experience of the world.

Conversion to the Church requires a constant proclamation of the wholeness of the Christian Life. Some approaches to evangelization underplay one or more aspects of the Christian life in the hope that people will grow into these aspects as time passes. It is true that people

will begin the adventure in limited ways and that the process is usually one of gradual growth. However, it is important that we present the nature of this Church honestly and adequately. We need to say it. It may not be fully heard at the time, but our statements may provide the basis for future growth. They will sound familiar when the person is ready to receive and act on the claim.

C. Stewardship

Stewardship is our response to God's loving concern and his call for the proper ordering of our time, talents and resources. It begins by acknowledging God's love for us, his concern for how we live our lives, and our duty as members of Christ's Body.

Stewardship is part of our spiritual formation and maturation. It involves our relationship to the institutions of society, our personal and family life, and the life of the parish. It is concerned with our care of, responsibility for, and use and enjoyment of all that we have been given as individuals and families, as a parish and as a society.

1. *Stewardship is an issue of the spiritual life.*

Stewardship is an aspect of, and for many people, an entry into facing, some of the primary objectives of Christian formation. It is part of the parish's catechetical task to teach a Christian approach to stewardship, to guide men and women to incorporate that approach into their own lives, and, as a parish, to live out that approach in the ordering of parochial life. Among the concerns of Christian stewardship are:

a. *A spirit of poverty.* This is our personal and parish commitment to an appropriate and moderate use of possessions, food and money. It is rooted in our acceptance of the Christian hope — and therefore of the real limits and possibilities of existence — rather than in an emotional optimism or despair. It assumes our response to the poor, neglected and oppressed. It accepts the divine economy of a sharing of burdens: the carrying of another's fear, uncertainty and anxiety, and letting others carry our burdens so we might be freed from the illusion of self-sufficiency.

b. *Taking our place as responsible persons* in creation, society and the Church. This is to accept the truth that we live from each other and are interdependent. It is also to decide that we will live with and for each other. This stance of responsibility is required of congregations as well as individuals.

c. *Ordering life.* As persons and as a parish, we face the task of giving order to time, finances and our whole way of life. How are we to live now in the face of unpredictability, death, and eternal life?

d. *"Letting go."* The Christian journey includes many occasions in which we are invited to let go of what we think we need for life, so we might receive what God provides for life. These are the events in which we are freed from what binds us to a self-centered, self-serving and, therefore, destructive way of life. Nothing binds most people more than money. We need freedom from an excessive, disproportionate concern about money — how to get it, how to get more of it, how to use it to buy "happiness", etc. Our thoughts, dreams, and hopes can be captured by it. To "let go" is to begin to take on habits of giving and to let go of habits of fear.

e. *Use of gifts.* The congregation, the family and each person are given gifts which need to be identified, formed, ordered and trained for the mission of Christ and the building up of the Body of Christ. We are stewards, not owners, of our spiritual gifts, our bodies, our minds, our influence, and our abilities.

f. *Responsibility toward future generations.* An element of Christian stewardship is a sense of responsibility toward those who come after us. What is it we leave for others to cope with in the environment; in matters of war and peace; in family and parish finances, traditions and habits?

2. *We are stewards of creation, culture, and society in and through institutions.*

The concerns of Christian stewardship are largely acted out in the institutional frameworks of our life. In marriage and the family, we are stewards of one another in a most intimate way. In our common life, we shape each other. The family is a primary influence in the development of Christian character; in the formation of virtues, values, habits, and attitudes. It is the setting in which we learn to accept our interdependence on the journey; the mutual sharing and exchange of burdens; a participation in a holy, ordered life; and a sense of responsibility toward those with whom we share time and space, and those who follow us.

In our work, we share in activity that creates and maintains the fabric of our culture and society. By accepting a form of labor that is needed by the society and which provides us with purposeful activity, we serve as stewards. Part of our stewardship is using whatever

influence we have in the institution to encourage policy and action that is socially responsible.

Stewardship of institutions is also exercised through our citizenship: as we vote, participate in community organizations, accept a relationship with our neighbors, live within the law, and strive for a more just society. By the light of Christ, we are to discern what is our proper and responsible relationship as one nation among many, as one town in a state, as one neighborhood in a city. By the light of Christ, we are to order our national life; encourage men and women in the potential God gives them; bear each other's burdens, especially those of the outcast and poor; and be responsible toward our grandchildren and their grandchildren. By the light of Christ, we are to influence our government, community groups, political parties and organizations as the stewards of creation and of our common life.

3. *The parish and stewardship*

Stewardship within the parish involves:

a. *The proper care and use of parish life and resources.* This includes an appropriate stewardship of property that affirms both our tradition of sacred space and the availability of facilities for community groups and for direct parish service to the community. In this stewardship of property we are concerned with values such as: use directed toward mission, manageability, efficiency, beauty, social responsibility, and the expression of transcendence. Holy space needs to be maintained as holy space. We can be thankful that the "multi-purpose space" fad, with its narrow functionalism, has begun to pass.

In the parish community, we are companions on a common pilgrimage. We are stewards of one another and of our life together. In the congregation, we have the call and opportunity to encourage and honor each other in the identification and development of gifts; to struggle with the proper ordering of our common life and the use of gifts in building up the body; to make decisions about priorities for the use of our talents and funds in Christian living and mission.

As stewards within the parish, we are concerned with how we handle chasubles and dinner dishes; the use of endowment funds; the turning out of lights; the equipping of men and women for ministry; and our responsibility to the community in our upkeep of parish property. All are Christian issues and an affirmation of the sacramental nature of our existence.

A particularly dangerous tendency in many parishes is the

development of a narrowly protective, fearful, and defensive attitude about finances. Money that goes outside of the parish is given reluctantly and sometimes angrily. Each parish guild or group carefully maintains its own "pot" of money and uses it to dictate to the Rector or vestry. Fund-raising becomes more important than adult education and worship. There is little mid-week worship or use of the facilities by community groups in an attempt to save on utility costs. The parish budget is focused on meeting the needs of the parish rather than on the mission of the Church. If parish income increased, the money is most likely to be used internally, for example, to hire an assistant rather than to fund a mission so it might be able to have one priest on a full time basis. The spirit in such places is at best insensitive and at worst small and mean.

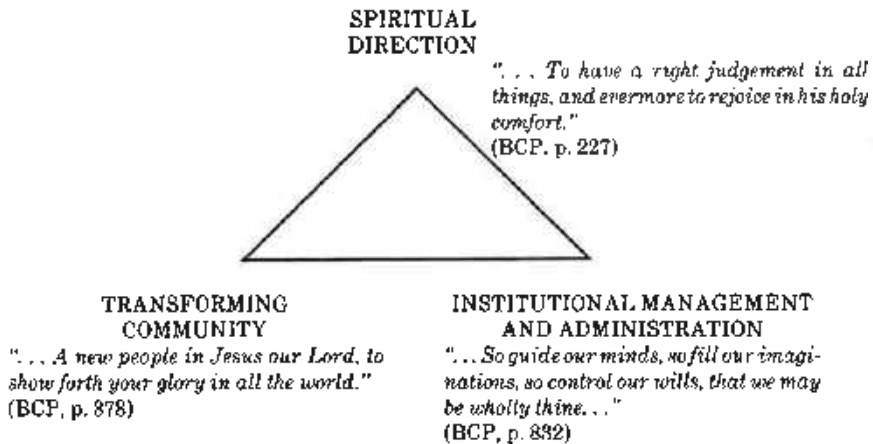
A disturbing extension of this spirit is the common practice, especially in small parishes, of making "ends meet" through a series of dishonest practices: duplicating copyrighted sheet music, improving the building with unauthorized materials from members' companies, stocking the parish office with the paper and pencils of a company storeroom. Too many of our small congregations excuse stealing because of their "need". It is a most sensitive issue, carefully avoided by many clergy. No matter how you say it, raising the issue sounds as though you are calling the Senior Warden (or some other member) a thief.

b. *Presentation of the Church's expectations for pledging and tithing.* We are called to present the expectations directly, and within the context of the whole Christian life. They are an invitation to union with God. In pledging and tithing we put God at the center of our life and we accept our place as a responsible member of the Body of Christ.

c. *Maximum responsibility for self-support.* In every reasonable case parishes should be encouraged and helped to become self-supporting of a full parish life and ministry, including a full-time priest. There may be parishes where this will not be possible for many years or may never be possible. Parishes should be expected to do what is possible. The "test" is not whether a parish is self-supporting, but whether its ministry is comprehensive, whether it is doing what it can to be financially responsible and to grow, and whether it has an adequate amount of time from ordained leadership.

V. OVERSIGHT

“. . . That your Church, being preserved in true faith and godly discipline, may fulfill all the mind of him who loved it and gave himself for it.” (BCP, p. 255)



The rector or vicar has the primary, immediate responsibility for the oversight of the parish. Oversight is a ministry exercised in loyalty to the Church's doctrine, discipline and liturgy; in mature obedience to the Bishop; and in appropriate collaboration with the vestry and other lay leaders.

Oversight is the task of facilitating the parish as a whole into a full and strong participation in the Christian Life. It is the work of bringing and preserving a proper order in the Body, the enabling of a "holy order". The expression of this "holy order" will be unique for each parish, as gifts, context, personalities, and opportunities influence the basic and common elements of the Christian life.

This ministry is not a matter of imposing a design upon the parish. It is the work of guiding the parish into a pattern of life that is of the very nature of the Catholic Church and the Christian life. It involves a spirit of discernment in which the diversity of gifts and ministries is related to the unity and mission of Christ. The attention and energy of the parish needs to be focused on the elements of the Christian life, and the current needs and priorities of the parish's life

and ministry. Structures, boundaries, and processes need to be established. The priest and vestry are faced with choices regarding the appropriate use of authority.

Oversight is not about my power, my wishes, my hopes. It is a pointing to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior of this people, this parish. It is necessarily a submitting to Christ by those exercising the ministry. If we are to oversee the parish, to point to Christ, our first task is to give ourselves to Christ; to pray that we might know, love and serve him.

Oversight involves serving the parish directly in each of the three basic elements of the Christian life. When we preside at the Eucharist, anoint the sick, teach the Faith, provide spiritual guidance, and counsel a family, we are making possible a participation in the holy order of Christ.

Oversight also involves monitoring and initiating in three areas which influence each of the basic elements: spiritual direction, enabling a transforming community, and institutional management and administration.

A. Spiritual Direction

Understood as a part of oversight, spiritual direction embraces both a concern for the parish as a whole and for the individual members. This is the task of enabling people to trust God, to be dependent on him, and to rest in him. It involves calling the parish's attention to contemplation, surrender and transcendence. It is supported by the development of a life which has stability, balance and discipline. While the priest has special responsibility and training for the task, its growth in the parish is the result of a mutual working out of approaches by priest and people. The priest is, in one sense, the trainer, coach and guide, as well as the setter of boundaries and basic direction. The task includes the training of disciples for self-accepted discipline in each element of the Christian life.

The Holy Spirit is *the* spiritual director of the parish. As the priest, I can't control the spiritual life and depth of the parish. I can't "make it happen." I can establish structures and encourage disciplines that the tradition and my experience tell me provide the necessary context. I can give attention to my own spiritual life as priest and person.

How am I to offer myself as priest and person for the benefit of this congregation? I need to allow myself to be pastor, father, mother,

“ruler”, teacher and guide; to be the “holy” person, somehow used, by grace, for the holiness of others. Yet I am at the same time a sharer of the journey, a companion facing the same groaning, longing, fear and trembling.

This calls for accepting an “otherness”, having a “holy distance” that carries us into the depths of people’s lives. The call is to be the priest for the parish so they might be priests for the world.

At times this means providing structure, laying the claim on others, presenting the church’s discipline, challenging illusions and proclaiming reality. Sometimes it is just listening and sharing the struggle. We are present as men and women with no solution to offer, yet present as people with hope. By that presence and that hope, things can be lived with that otherwise seem unbearable.

The priest’s spiritual life influences the parish in subtle ways. People can sense authenticity or the lack of it. Those in the parish who have some maturity as Christians need to see the priest as a person of integrity, someone they can respect and trust, that they can share life and ministry with. As the priest is known as open to repentance, a seeker of the kingdom, and a facer of truth, she may be a means of grace for the parish. People need to be taught the wonderful doctrine that God will provide his grace even through sacraments administered by a priest who is misdirected, or caught up in evil. The objectivity of sacramental grace is an important truth. However, it is also true that the priest’s life can be a barrier to or a channel of grace.

There can be tremendous pain in accepting one’s failure, self-doubt and sin. That acceptance is the door to repentance, learning and change; an opening to a new creation. Such receptivity is possible only to the extent we trust ourselves to the arms of the loving Christ. Those loving arms are frequently incarnate in the form of a spiritual guide, a discipline, the support of lay members or a network of friends. Making use of consultants, diocesan resource people, and a clericus are other ways of responding to the work of the Holy Spirit teaching us to receive.

The congregation needs a priest who will deal with them in a caring, direct and intentional manner. The choice is to enter or to avoid relationship. We can avoid by trying hard to be liked, by keeping everything polite, by playing tough and competent, or by literally hiding from people. To be in a truthful relationship is to risk losing the relationship. To offer the congregation and individuals reality rather than illusion will bring tension. The struggle goes on in each priest’s soul.

As the parish's priest, what are you looking for? Do you seek control, achievement, affection? We need to know our demons and idols. Then we face the battle of holding on or letting go. It is part of our spiritual development to let Christ redeem our desires, to harness them for his purposes and bring them under his authority.

As always there is a struggle — to please God or man. If we are to be Christ's priests, we must finally be broken. All our illusions are killed again and again. Out of the slaying we may be blessed to know that we are totally useless. As seen by the world, the priest — as priest — has no value.

Our choice is to accept this holy uselessness in the Divine economy or to ask the world to give us some value. If we will be good counsellors, therapists, social workers, political activists or institutional managers, there may be some small place for an acceptable identity. On that road, the world will tell us how to be professional, to build a career and move up the chain of parishes to success and respect. We will learn how to limit our responsibilities carefully and avoid doing anything not in our job description. Our children will go to decent schools and have their way paid through college, and we will have built up the necessary equity and pension for a comfortable retirement.

The other journey is one of the Cross and, of course, the Joy. It is a waiting on God, learning to be still, to keep silence, so he may lead us to places we do not choose for ourselves. We will celebrate the Eucharist, shovel snow, anoint the dying, change light bulbs, teach the faith, dust pews, and speak with and on behalf of those with no voice. This is the way of total self-giving, of a passion for holiness and truth, of accepting what Christ offers and trusting that it will fill us. On this path we will be the presence of Christ for men and women, and the bearers of the catholic and apostolic roots and mission.

There is no escaping the reality of the pressures on us as men and women who face all the same burdens and anxieties as each member of the parish. Taxes, inflation, family needs, uncertainty about our future all press upon us. How we approach our anxiety and desires will have a significant effect on how our parishioners will cope with theirs.

We may or may not end up with our friends and relatives thinking we were successful. We may or may not have an easy time of it in retirement. In the end it really doesn't matter. What does matter is trusting and believing — that we can have nothing and yet possess

everything, that we can lose the security of houses, family and investments and yet receive it all a hundredfold, and better, receive eternal life.

When guiding the congregation on its holy journey, the parish priest needs maps, and a knowledge of the landmarks and the climate. Ancient and contemporary writers have provided us with a wealth of material for understanding something of the dynamics of the spiritual life. In his cure of souls the priest is concerned with the congregation as a whole as well as the individuals within it.

The priest should be familiar with several ways of looking at the spiritual processes of the parish as an organic body. Resources of particular value include Martin Thornton's *Pastoral Theology*, Bruce Reed's *Dynamics of Religion*, Urban Holmes' *The Priest in Community*, and John Westerhoff's work on the stages of faith. The usefulness of such resources is enhanced as they are widely shared in the congregation through books available for loan, sermons, and adult education programs. Lay catechists and spiritual guides should be helped to become familiar with several approaches. Frameworks for understanding the essential dynamics of parish life can be valuable aids in planning and decision-making if they are held in common by the core leadership.

Each parish has a core of people who serve as a "spiritual center." They may or may not be aware of and equipped for their role. They are mature Christians; men and women who are relatively sensitive to and disciplined in the ways of the Christian life. By their prayer life they feed the whole parish. To fulfill their function properly they need their priest to give a significant amount of time to encourage, train and guide. It only takes a small percentage of members living within the discipline of a rule of life to set a climate that provides depth and stability in a parish's spiritual life.

To acknowledge the existence of and need for a group that provides a spiritual core for the parish is not to deny the needs of those who may be less mature as Christians. In fact, it is the best way to meet those needs. Every parish will have members who are "vaguely religious"; tentative Christians; and noisy, anxious Christians. Members will be at all the various levels or stages of Christian maturity. The parish needs to accept people in all stages of Christian formation.

Congregations often get stuck in one of two traps: either accepting a permanently immature pattern of life, or rejecting the "babes in Christ". In fact, both patterns are immature; the one obviously so, in

its fear of depth and commitment; the other in its facade of apostolic and fully-accepted faith, which maintains its purity by excluding those who don't "measure up".

Those who have grown to a stage of relative maturity in the spiritual life need to be encouraged to accept the fact that they have a specialized place in the body. Their firm grounding in Christ, through their living within the Rule of the Church, allows them to serve the parish by who they are and are becoming. In some sense they are channels of grace for the whole parish.

To encourage and support such discipline, a carefully selected and trained guild of spiritual guides or friends could be established in most parishes. Such a guild could be assigned a limited area of responsibilities for teaching in the spiritual life, being available to guide new Christians in their formation, and serving as a spiritual friend to any who request it. Their primary value may not be in a function at all, but in the tone they help maintain in parish life.

The life of the parish community is to be marked by broadness and the acceptance of complexity. Leaders need to avoid the tendency to simplify and reduce parish life in ways that restrict the full pattern of the Christian life or attempt to force some limited style on the parish. The danger is that the parish will be forced into a way of being that is fragmented and narrow rather than expressive of the full pattern of the Christian life. This problem occurs in congregations that insist on a charismatic experience or a fundamentalist stance. The same danger exists for parishes that seek blandly to provide something for everybody, in which nothing is allowed to be too strong or matter too much. In each situation, a balanced, strong expression of the Christian life is evaded. What we seek is not the false "balance" of alternating Sundays of Eucharist and Morning Prayer, or of alternating rites or customs. It is a balance of the Church's pattern as seen in the Threefold Rule expressed in a consistent, integrated way, and shaped to fit the local situation. This includes stability within a larger pattern of rich complexity, as each element of the Rule plays its proper part. It is lived out within the routine and diversity of the Church Year.

The search for some irreducible core of teaching and practice, the forcing of all parishioners into one congregation each Sunday, the single-minded pursuit of some partial vision, the neglect of daily worship altogether, the substitution of a daily Eucharist for the Daily Office, are all part of the same confusion and evasion. We end up

offering people some bare minimum or the scraps of a larger fabric rather than the whole pattern of the Christian life.

The parish living in the fullness of the Christian life will face the danger of people reacting to the complexity by feeling lost; becoming anxious and uncertain; or giving way to confusion, despair, anger and impotence. In order to live in the complexity of a comprehensive vision for parish life that is rooted in the larger Church's experience and identity, the parish needs firm and loving teaching, guidance, and management. People need to be taught the pattern, provided with the maps, and told the stories and standards. The difficulties of living within the broad pattern are matters for dialogue and guidance, not for debate or vote.

The parish as a body is to live in the fullness and complexity of the Christian life as this branch of the Holy Catholic Church has received it. In so doing, the parish makes that life immediately available to all its people.

Most individuals will enter into the parish and the Christian life through a rather narrow channel. They will make a kind of emotional-psychological "contract" focused on the clergy, parish activities and program, worship, or a particular doctrinal stance. For many this initial "contract" will continue to have some bearing on their life in the Church. However, if the parish lives in the more complete pattern, and thereby invites people into continued growth and service, many will mature. They will accept and share in the deeper, more integrated and comprehensive life of the body. This will still be unique for each person as it takes shape in the general process of Christian formation and in the discerning and equipping of particular vocations and gifts.

While living within the whole parish's life, some will be more active in one aspect of the total pattern as they find themselves called toward evangelism, service, education or prayer. Some will serve in and through the parish as catechists, liturgical assistants and vestry members. Others will focus on the basic duties of the Christian life, being regular in pledging and in their participation in the Sunday Eucharist, and continuing to study the scriptures and the Church's teaching; but they will rarely serve on the vestry or take on other internal parish ministries. Their calling may be almost exclusively to be stewards, evangelists, and servants in their daily life and work.

Rooting the parish and its members in the disciplines of the Christian life requires some familiarity with the various approaches of ascetical theology such as the threefold way of purgation, illumina-

tion and unity; the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius Loyola; and von Hugel's three elements of religion; as well as the more contemporary work of James Fenhagen, Madeleine L'Engle, Tilden Edwards, Rachel Hosmer, Kenneth Leech, Morton Kelsey, Henri Nouwen, Alan Jones, and Ruth Tiffany Barnhouse. The aim of all such approaches is union with God. From that union springs Christian behavior and action. The roads that bring us deeper into that union are all means of orienting ourselves toward God, of putting ourselves in those places where we learn to know the Holy Spirit, of opening our lives to the transforming power of Christ.

The task is to establish and maintain a pattern and climate that focuses the parish on Christ and encourages and enables people to discover the claim Christ has on them. Such efforts will best serve the whole parish if they are primarily an invitation into the basic shape of the Christian Life, rather than a push into the latest renewal movement. Special programs for the renewal of the parish's spiritual life are most useful if they are enriching, deepening, and/or inspiring experiences that reinforce the parish's commitment to the Christian Life, and specifically to the Threefold Rule of the Church.

The work of spiritual guidance of the body is partly a matter of maintaining in the parish a routine of common prayer. Some members will have a calling for regular participation in mid-week Offices and Eucharists. Their ministry is to and for the whole parish. They help the congregation experience prayer as central, normal and resting in the divine arms. It is also a matter of maintaining a parish rhythm between contemplation, solitude and silence on the one hand, and ministry, programs and Christian action on the other. The witness of a small, humble core, and the firmness of a compassionate pastor, can allow the congregation to live in a pattern that is a reflection of Christ's holiness rather than of our own compulsive activity. There is a shape, a pattern, to the Christian life. It is not a random collection of "religious odds and ends", but the orderly functioning of an organism.

B. Transforming Community

The parish community needs to know what it "is" if it is to know what to expect of itself in life and ministry. It "is" the People of God, the Body of Christ, an extension of the Incarnation within a particular space and time. It is not a club, a corporation, or a social reform movement. It is not held together by sameness — sameness of race, nationality, sex, politics, or class. Its life does not depend on success,

society's approval, internal agreement, being clear about its goals or reforming its structures. Its members do not all have to participate in every activity, personally know everyone else, or understand, be comfortable with or like everyone in the congregation.

The parish is held together by and in Christ. Its life depends on Christ. It is the Holy Catholic Church. It has a shared baptismal covenant, continues in the apostolic tradition and order, and is fed by the Sacraments and the Word. From these holy facts flow virtues, gifts and grace.

Kindness, mutual understanding and agreement on goals and structures are all desirable in parish life. They are not what we start with. They aren't even what we really end up with. They are sometimes gifts along the way, possibly small tastes of what the banquet is like. The beginning is Christ and the end is Christ. The Church is about unity, holiness, catholicity, and apostolicity. It is a sign of the kingdom of God. Because it is transformed by the Holy Spirit, it is a community in which the lives of men and women may be transformed.

People in the parish often spend a good bit of time talking about "community" or fellowship. We complain about not having it. We have pot luck dinners, fund raising events, coffee hours, and small groups hoping to create it. We want to develop a community. We aren't certain we want to receive it. We seem to look for something nice, something comfortable. God offers something that will burn us and transform us.

The first question is not what the Church ought to be and do but what the Church is and what has it been given to do. What is the nature and mission of the Church? The Prayer Book catechism echoes Scripture in describing the Church as the "community of the New Covenant", "the Body of which Jesus Christ is the Head and of which all baptized persons are members"; and describes the Church, in words from the Creed, as "one, holy, catholic and apostolic." The catechism goes on to tell us, "The mission of the Church is to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ."

The Church's nature and mission are not things we create by our will and activity, but are given by the grace of God to a world desperately in need of a true covenant, body and head. They are given to a world groaning in its need for the unity that comes through holiness, universality and apostolicity.

Christ has created his Church by his love and self-giving, by his headship. It is his Body because in his death and resurrection he

united us to his Body, and because he continues to feed us with his Body and Blood.

The parish church is the local expression of that one Church he has created and sustains. It is the expression in a particular neighborhood of the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church. In and through the parish, we participate in the grace and work of Christ in his Church.

The parish is not an institution which just happens to be located in this particular neighborhood. It is an organism, interdependent with and responsible to that neighborhood. The parish is a means for the sanctification of that neighborhood. The neighborhood provides a sacramentality of place and therefore a rooting for the parish's life and ministry.

The Church universal is not created by the will of all the local churches. What is Catholic and Apostolic comes first, the universal comes first. The local diocese, then the local parish, represents the whole Church in this place. There is one Church with many local expressions, not many churches that join together to form a larger Church. This does not diminish the parish church, but grounds it in its true glory. Its value and life are not found in the illusions of isolation and narrow parochialism, but in its share in the very nature and mission of the Catholic Church. In a sense it is not just part of the Body, it is the Body of Christ; not just part of the People of God, it is the People of God, a divinely constituted assembly.

One of the ways in which we confuse ourselves about what we are as a parish is by "forgetting" what we are in relation to the whole Church. Another way is by defining the parish in images that are not of the Scriptures and Tradition.

Probably the most common image that is laid upon the parish is that of the club. Depending on the background of the parishioners, it may be seen as a country club, a VFW post, or the Lions. It raises money and builds its membership for its own needs and survival. It wants to raise enough money to have its own program and possibly a few dollars for some good cause. The club wants just enough new members to replace those who leave. It has no real purpose outside the desires and needs of its members. There is nothing wrong with clubs. However, the Church is not a club. When it begins to think of itself or act as a club, its life gets distorted. Worship space is made to reflect the most narrow limits of the members' culture. Helping at a Saturday fair is an excuse for missing Sunday worship. Flowers on the altar and memorial gifts are seen as "ours" to use as we wish.

These are all small things, but are signs of distortion. The process isn't necessarily conscious. It is something we do to make sense of things. We take what is familiar in our culture and we use it to understand the Church.

Another common image is that of being a welfare agency, a sort of travelers' aid society, a social service center, or a place I can go to when I need it. Some still speak of the church as an army. Others seem to view the parish as a historical society, a corporation, a political and social change movement, or a family.

Each of the images may point to something that is true about the church. Each may help to illumine some aspect of the Church's life. Such models also confuse and distort our understanding of the Church.

A family is held together by bonds that can't be broken, and so is the Church. But the Church is not held together by the bonds of blood and human relationship. It is held together by Christ, and his body and blood. It is universal, and includes within its body the diversity of all human families. The family-like bonds in any parish are always in tension with the universality of the Church. It is not a family in the sense of "our parish family", based on our good feelings or loyalty toward one another. It is God's family of which Christ is the head. It is created by God's love. We are bound together by our baptism into Christ.

The parish is not a club that we have created and built up, and which we may feel free to leave if it no longer meets our needs. Nor is it a corporation with some product to sell for its success. Nor is it a historical society in the business of preserving a past age in our memories.

The parish may have social activities. It does have an institutional corporate life. It is concerned with remembering. The parish may engage in activities similar to any of the models mentioned, but those activities do not define the parish. The parish's identity comes from its being a microcosm of the Body of Christ.

The models that prevail in a parish shape people's understanding of what the parish's purpose is; of what the rector's role is; and of the meaning of stewardship, worship and evangelism. Many of the conflicts that go on in parishes are related to the models people have of the Church. How we understand what the Church is will shape what we think the Church is to do and how it is to live.

A core of the parish leadership needs to be very familiar with this

tendency to project images onto the parish, and of its consequences. The whole parish can be helped to understand much of what is involved and at stake in this issue of images. Along with an awareness of this natural process, there needs to be the clear presentation of the Church's own teaching of its nature and mission. This work can be important in enabling the parish to remain faithful in its own life, and should help simplify many of the decisions in that life.

Part of the confusion we face in our attempt to keep the parish rooted in the Catholic Faith and the Christian life is the popular assumption that the Church exists to attend to my desires and to meet my needs. The needs may relate to art, tradition, social change, personal growth, food and clothing, fine music, order, friendships and social activities, self-expression or a chance to serve others. It is not that there is anything wrong with any of these needs. They are all part of how God may stretch, and at times, break us, so we may come to know our final dependence on him. Within the parish an incredible diversity of desires and needs will have their place. In the context of the Body, these needs and desires may be transformed, finding their best expression in the holy exchange of the Church.

What needs to be put firmly and clearly before men and women is that the Church does not exist to meet their needs. The Church exists to carry out the mission of Jesus Christ. As our needs and desires are turned toward that mission, they move toward their own true fulfillment.

Maintaining clarity about the nature and mission of the Church will allow a richer and more integrated parish life than will occur if the various desires and needs, tied to some false or partial view of the Church, are permitted to shape the congregation's life. The parish is a manifestation in this local community of the whole Church. Its nature is that of the whole Church. Its mission is the mission of the whole Church. This life and mission are of God. We did not create the Church; it does not exist by our will and support, its purpose is not something we make up in a planning committee. The clergy are the organs and instruments of the Universal Church. They are not the representatives of the local parish. The local parish depends on the whole Church for its life. All that is essential comes by virtue of its being part of the whole.

In practice this means seeking ways to focus the parish and each parochial organization on the mission of the Church. How each group and guild is participating in the mission of holy unity needs to be

revealed. The structure and activities of some groups may need to be modified if they are to be an adequate expression of the mission. The way to such change is patient teaching, spiritual guidance and the skillful exercise of influence and authority.

As priest and people experience frustration in all their best efforts, find themselves drifting and uncertain, or feel beaten down by the overwhelming task before them, they may be upheld by grace because they have grounded themselves in the life of the Church. A parish soaked in the stories of the saints, the prayers of the Church, and the support of the larger Christian community will be better able to understand and receive the pain it encounters.

A community regular in prayer is constantly in touch with death and resurrection. The priest who can admit her fear of failure to a spouse, bishop, or friend has already begun to die to self and so may be ready to see once again by that special light.

Numbers and programs are real. We do care about them. We do judge ourselves and are judged by others on the basis of growth in numbers and successful programs. Within the context of the Church's saints, prayers, challenge and support, these concerns can be kept in perspective. What is finally important is kept before us. After we have done the best that is in us, and the membership declines and programs fail, we may have the discernment to see the victory beyond and within the event.

The life of the Church provides a context for people in which they may be transformed, not so much by being educated as by being recreated and formed into the divine image. This happens in the exchanges of the body — repentance and forgiveness, mutual support, the sacraments, the dialogue between the standards of the Church and my own willfulness.

The transformation is social in nature, and will, in the end, have an expression in the world. In a society that declares some people superfluous, in which the bonds are broken, the Church lives the life of exchange and interdependence. To live within the context of the transforming community is to have our political, economic and social attitudes and behavior changed. It is to experience what it is to be a member of a community, to be someone with dignity and worth, to make commitments, to have others expect something of us, to be a channel of power, and to share, sacrifice and risk with and for others.

The pastoral care of the community can be oriented toward a more shared organic approach and away from dealing with people

individualistically or on a crisis-by-crisis basis. The task is pastoral care of the whole body and therefore of individuals as members of that body. Our hope is so to root the parish in the life of the Vine that the result is a spiritually healthy community filled with God's transforming power. The overall concern is to enable an environment in which men and women know, love and serve Jesus Christ in worship, doctrine and action. The parish's climate will either encourage maturity or immaturity in the Christian life.

Clergy often have a tendency to pour their time into those who are chronically in trouble. While this is especially true of the newly ordained, it is a pattern that seems structured into the assumptions of parish pastoral care. The tendency is to respond to those who call.

If the parish is to be a transforming community, the priest needs to shift away from spending large amounts of time with the immature on "their problems" toward guiding those who are ready for maturity, training and supporting people with the gifts for the nurture and pastoral care of others, and establishing a tone in the parish that encourages maturity. This is not to suggest that the immature are to be ignored, or that the clergy give them no time. What is necessary, given the organic nature of the Church, is that we focus our attention on the whole body, its general effect on people, its internal dynamics and the role of various vocations and gifts as they relate to pastoral care. Otherwise the clergy spend their time with the "sick and troubled" and have little time for those who are already relatively mature. The result is frequently worn out, depressed clergy and an inappropriately dependent parish that seems to feed immaturity, and in which the gifts of the laity are not nurtured and developed.

C. Institutional Management and Administration

Our focus here is on the parish as an institution. We can develop it. We can act upon and within it to provide structure for this community of God's people. Our task, as in all of oversight, is to facilitate the congregation in a process and pattern of parish development that reflects the holy order of Christ.

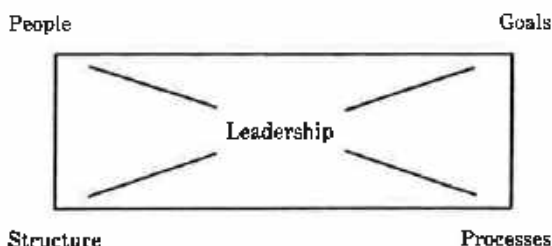
The parish uses the knowledge and methods of organization development, management and administration to provide stability and movement, to monitor the parish's total life, and to initiate new work. A frequently used image is that of the orchestra, with its various instruments. The conductor may focus on particular elements for a time, but she will strive to bring all the elements into a harmony of

purpose. All sorts of knowledge, ancient and modern, may be of use in achieving an appropriate direction and balance for the parish's life and ministry.

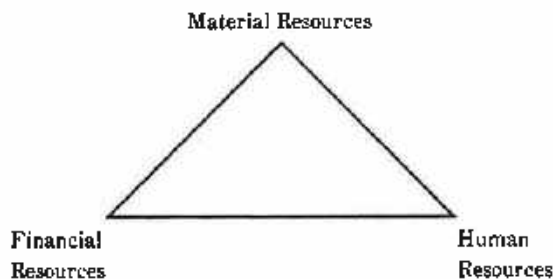
In management and administration we are usually approaching the parish in the same way we would any other organization. This has its dangers, both in the tendency to project the model of the corporation onto the parish, and in the introduction of technology that will have effects beyond what was originally intended. Care needs to be taken to uphold the other aspects of oversight so that the uniqueness of the Church's nature, mission and spiritual dynamics is held up before both leaders and members.

The understanding and use of management knowledge and skills will vary from one parish to another. In most congregations things will be done in a manner that is far less formal and complex than in other organizations. However they are applied, the necessary knowledge and skills will include the following:

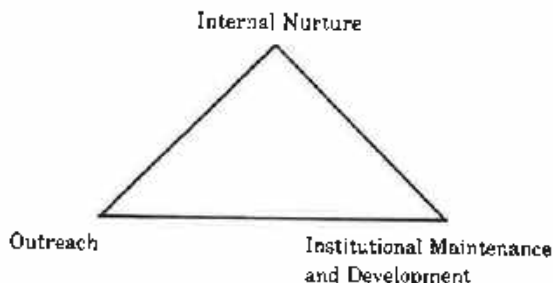
1. *Models of the elements of an organization.* Such models provide an overview and encourage a balanced approach to management. The Christian Life Model developed in this paper is one approach. Another would be:



A third model is:



A fourth model is:



Many other models exist. Each has the value of helping us to focus our attention on certain essential elements without losing an awareness of other elements, and raises up the need for strength in each and for an overall balance.

2. *An understanding of the functions of management.* These include problem solving, motivating, coping with conflict, organizing and coordinating, information handling, etc.

3. *Systems Theory.* These concepts provide a very broad overview of the parish in relation to its environment; an analysis of resources (input), results (output), and the processes by which the results are achieved (transformation); and a sense of the interdependence of elements.

4. *A process of planned change.* Steps in the process include diagnosis, planning, implementing, and evaluation. Each parish can benefit from developing a 3 to 5 year long-range plan. The Christian Life Model can serve as the plan's outline. The process and the amount of paper work should be as straightforward and minimal as possible. Keep it simple. A yearly period of reflection and evaluation is needed in every parish. It should be done at the same time every year. How to do it will depend on the current situation. In some years, the format may be an extended vestry meeting. In other years, the parish may make use of a more extensive process involving the entire congregation. Alongside the parish evaluation should be an evaluation of clergy. This should be designed as a learning opportunity for the priest; should not be a matter for public discussion; and should be shaped largely by the priest.

5. *Vestry and leadership development.* This involves enabling the discernment of gifts, establishing clear expectations, providing the

necessary training, and having a carefully planned evaluation process.

Strong, equipped, and articulate lay leaders are essential in parish revitalization. Those with the necessary vocation and gifts for leadership in the parish should be helped to identify their gifts, and encouraged and equipped to use them in the building up of the body by serving on the vestry, as liturgical assistants, in the stewardship of parish property and finances, in the ministry of Christian formation and spiritual guidance, etc. Each member is to be assisted to "take their place in the life, worship, and governance of the Church."

Each congregation needs ways to root all its members, but especially its lay leaders, in the Church's Scriptures, Tradition, and worship. The necessary training for particular roles and ministries should be provided.

While lay participation in parish leadership and internal ministries is essential to the life and renewal of a congregation, we need to grow in our awareness that the primary vocation of most lay people is outside the congregation.

6. *The dynamics of change.* This area includes making positive use of resistance to change, changing the "culture" of the organization (norms, tone, assumptions), managing the tension between stability and change, etc.

7. *Special skill areas.* Needs include financial administration, property and building management, office management, writing job descriptions, staff supervision, etc.

Many clergy seem to have difficulties in establishing a leadership style that fits the needs of the parish. Sometimes unclarity about the nature of priesthood expresses itself in a separation between sacramental functioning and oversight, between service and authority. Some of the difficulty is a simple matter of awareness and skill that could be dealt with through training. Sometimes the problem is clergy anxiety about accepting the responsibility involved.

Clergy frequently complain about the "burden" of administration and management. Proposals are put forward to turn it over to the laity: sometimes because "they can do a better job", sometimes "to free the priest for what she was ordained for." This sharing can be helpful if it is rooted in an understanding of the Body and the place of various orders, vocations and gifts within the Body. It is dangerous if it is

rooted only in "corporation" images, clerical "professionalism", and a reduction of the priesthood to a narrow list of functions.

The rector's responsibility in this aspect of oversight is not to do it all, but to see to it that it is done, and done in a manner that is fitting for a Christian community. This means that the parish priest will need some training in management and administration. It also means that for a time, in some congregations, the priest will have to take on personally some of the particular functions while he seeks and trains those with the necessary gifts to assume them.

Those who share responsibility for institutional management and administration need a long-range perspective. Vestries can set time aside on a regular basis to evaluate, envision and plan for the future. The parish needs to be freed from focusing its energy and attention primarily on immediate problems to work on tomorrow's needs and possibilities. Vestries can help this happen by delegating decision making authority in many matters to property and finance committees, the treasurer, and the wardens. Many vestries find themselves in a rut of minor property and financial concerns. They are so focused on small, relatively unimportant matters that the parish drifts from year to year. The vestry's time is best used by providing overall direction in matters of property and finance, delegating most of the day by day decisions, and collaborating with the rector to advance the parish's life and mission in Christ.

Parishes increasingly require clergy with a range of leadership styles. Much of the tension in parishes seems related to clergy who cannot let go of an unbending, narrow approach to leadership ("I make all the decisions", or "Everything is decided by all of us"), and those who avoid being clear about where the final decisions will be made on various issues. What makes sense in a parish will depend in its culture, the particular decision to be made, the standards of the larger Church, the stage of development the parish is in, and the relationship between the rector and the congregation.

Regardless of the degree of sharing and consultation that leads up to it, the rector needs to accept responsibility for the final decision in matters related to worship, the spiritual formation of the congregation, and the hiring, supervision and terminating of parish staff. Avoidance of responsibility in these areas can undermine the congregation's unity, detract it from its mission, and set up the congregation and its next priest for serious conflict in the future.

Parishes that are in the early stages of renewal and development,

just coming out of a period of decline, and/or not used to participating in major decisions need strong leadership. It is not a service to congregations to let them drift in an unrooted and unproductive manner. Careful attention is necessary to the tasks of rooting potential leaders in the Catholic Faith and Christian Life, lifting the community's sights to new visions of mission and ministry, guiding leaders in decision-making based on sufficient information and real choices, and establishing the basic structures and planning processes. Firm, strong leadership from the priest in the early stages can provide the base for strong, informed lay participation in the later stages of development.

Possibly the most common mistake clergy make is that of not keeping the decision-making process clear. Many congregations have experienced the rector inviting members into a discussion in which they assume they will join in making the decisions involved. At some point it becomes apparent that the rector has already made some of the decisions, or assumes he will make the final decision. People end up feeling deceived and ill-used.

The problem in such cases isn't usually the rector's desire to make the decisions, but that this was not clear from the beginning. Clergy who are going to test their ideas or consult with lay leaders on concerns in the rector's sphere of decisions need to take care in keeping the picture clear. If the rector intends to make the final decision, or has already made decisions or part of the decision, his obligation is to let people know these things when they are asked to offer their responses or advice.

Whether it is the rector or the vestry that has the final word on a particular matter, it is appropriate that others share in the thinking. Meetings and information should, as a rule, be open. Procedures should exist that encourage collaboration and discussion in all areas of parish life. In all cases the process should be kept clear. Start out by stating who has the final say and what kind of involvement is being requested.

This can be simplified by involving in decisions those groups and individuals who are already informed and have some functional relationship to the issue at hand. Rather than creating worship or education committees made up of a random group of parishioners, it is more straightforward and in keeping with our understanding of gifts in the Body to consult with a guild of lay readers and chalice bearers or catechists and church school teachers.

D. General Remarks

1. Oversight is frequently controversial, time consuming, and difficult. It is intertwined with a priest's own personality, maturity, and needs. All of this makes it something we might rather avoid or reduce.

2. The concern of oversight is to develop, not just maintain the parish. The development, if it is to be congruent with the nature and mission of the Church, needs to be led by a priest and lay leaders who have turned away from their own pet solutions and toward an attempt to understand the dynamics of the parish as an organic local manifestation of the whole Church. Development is concerned with the climate of the parish as a whole, with the unity, holiness, catholicity, and apostolicity of the parish as an organism.

3. Oversight includes enabling the proper functioning of the various orders of the Church and the discerning and equipping of vocations and gifts. Orders, vocation, and gifts need to be a central theme in parish development.

Congregations need to establish and sustain an environment and structures within which people can discern and mature in their vocation and gifts and be equipped for their share in Christ's ministry within the Church and in their daily life and work.

Laity and clergy share in the priesthood of Christ. They are partners in the mission of the Church. All are ministers of Christ. All are representatives of Christ and his Church. The expression of this will vary from person to person depending on the order of ministry and the vocation and gifts of each individual.

In the ministry of oversight, in leading a congregation in a comprehensive and faithful life and ministry, the various orders, vocations and gifts are all given for the building up of the Body and advancing the mission of the Church. We want a strong priesthood, diaconate, and lay ministry. Each order needs to accept full responsibility to function in the Church's life in ways appropriate to that order. Each is called to competence and a mutual accountability.

4. There is a danger in clergy shying away from a true understanding of Holy Orders out of some false humility, or an avoidance of responsibility. The apostolic ministry and succession are a means, along with the Scriptures, Creeds and sacraments, given by God to keep his Church in the truth of the Gospel and the Christian Life. What a priest is engaged in as a minister of the sacraments, preacher of the Word, and overseer of the Body is not something between himself and

the congregation in some limited private sense. They are not the tasks of an employee of the congregation, and they are not about clerical status or power. They are the works of Christ in his Church, done as an organ in his Body; not as a representative of the congregation, yet certainly not apart from the congregation.

The rector or vicar is the "Bishop's person" in that parish. The congregation may have voted to call him, the congregation may provide a salary and a house, nevertheless, he is not an employee of the congregation. He is there to share that congregation's life with them; to be salt and light to them so they may be salt and light to the world; to be the priest for them so they may be priests to the world. He is the spiritual father and mother. He is there to represent the universal Church to the local church, to carry the catholic and apostolic to these people. Into places of Christian maturity and strength he comes to maintain and nurture. Into places of insipid worship, weak discipline and little self-giving, he comes with the doctrine, liturgy, discipline and standards of the larger Church. He is within — and for the body's restoration and maintenance in — the holy order of Christ.

5. The local parish is under, or better yet, within the larger authority. That authority is Christ. It is mediated in and through the Church in the Scriptures, in the apostolic ministry, in the creeds, in the sacraments and in prayer. This authority is not primarily legal, though it has its legal expressions. Something has authority because the Church has come to know that it points us to and grounds us in Christ. This authority is a natural part of the dynamics of the parish as a manifestation of the Catholic Church. To root ourselves in the unity of the larger Church is a means of rooting ourselves in the unity of God.

In exercising parish oversight, the priest is under authority. She is bound by ordination to the various authorities of the Church. She is to reflect Christ and his order, not her own desires and opinions. The priest has no right to impose her will on the parish. She does have an obligation to lead the parish into the way of the Church.

The Rector or Vicar's task is to let the parish rest in the ways the Church establishes for parish life. There is something "given" here. The Church's standards in regard to Baptism, marriage, burial and the receiving of Holy Communion are to be followed. We are to use the Book of Common Prayer and other authorized liturgical forms as they are provided and as they are intended to be used. We are to conform to the rubrics. We show wisdom when we use what is provided and clearly implied rather than making up our own way.

Another aspect of living within the authority of the Church is the priest's responsibility to teach people how to live within the community. Men and women need to be taught that Christian faith requires a free choice of taking on the duties and disciplines of the Christian life. We are to be at public worship on Sundays (usually the Eucharist), we are to pray daily, to study the Scriptures, to support the Church, to keep the appointed feasts and fasts, to love one another and our enemies, to serve in the name of Christ, and to share the faith with others.

Parish leaders should be expected to commit themselves to the usual duties and disciplines, and to perform faithfully the special responsibilities they have taken on. By-laws and job descriptions should be done in ways that provide clear guidance for lay leaders.

6. The quality of parish oversight may become most apparent in the liturgy. A priest can do a wonderful job of celebrating, doing everything in a dignified, orderly and relaxed manner, while the acolytes wander about lost, not even sure of what to do with their hands let alone the rest of themselves; the congregation watches, few participate, some make noisy efforts to find the page. In the sanctuary is peace, in the nave is chaos.

Some clergy try to solve this problem by announcing the page numbers, telling people when to stand, sit and kneel, and giving directions every time they want something from acolytes or liturgical assistants. Everyone remains dependent on the priest for their liturgical participation.

Both of the above approaches encourage immature participation in worship. The parish priest is finally responsible for teaching, guiding and structuring the congregation's worship life. She shares aspects of this oversight with deacons, lectors, chalice bearers, acolytes, musicians, and with those in the congregation who have gifts for participation in liturgy. The handful of people in the pews who are at ease in the liturgy are sharers in the oversight. They join the more obvious liturgical leaders in shaping the liturgical event.

All of those named above need to be carefully trained and rehearsed for their roles in worship. Once again the issue of gifts applies. Not everyone has the gifts necessary. It is not being kind to a person to put him in the choir when he can't sing, to make him an acolyte when he can't learn to move gracefully and be attentive, or to make him a lector when he can't read easily. This false tolerance is really only sloppy disregard for the life of the body, and distracts people from seeing and using the gifts they do have.

The congregation needs to be trained in special classes, in announcements, before the liturgy, and in special handouts. They need to be taught how to use the Prayer Book and how to take their place in the liturgical action, including preparation for worship, the use of silence, how to listen to the readings, exchanging the Peace, the appropriate use of the sign of the cross, acts of reverence toward the Blessed Sacrament and the altar, and so on. People need to be taught how to participate in this salvation drama.

This process of learning to participate in the liturgy is interfered with when the dramatic action is broken by misplaced "educational" additions, such as introductions to the readings and creeds; or frequent changes in rite used; or attempts to add some special element to make the worship "relevant", "cute", or "meaningful". These are all attempts to make the Church's liturgy something other than liturgy. Our tradition is not one of making up liturgies. We trust the liturgy, as provided by the Church, to be a means of grace to the glory of God and the transformation of men and women.

People seem to go through three stages. When they first become active in the parish's life, they are often confused and lost during worship. If a strong core of people know how to participate, the new people will be able to follow. People should be taught to offer an open Prayer Book or Hymnal to a person who is obviously new. This, along with instruction and some individual study of the Prayer Book, will usually bring the person to a second stage. Here you know how to find your way around the book. You can follow the service easily. This is the "nose stuck in the book" stage. You may be afraid of not having it in front of you. Clergy need to encourage, and lay leaders need to model, participation that uses the Prayer Book when necessary but puts it down or aside for most of the liturgy. In this third stage people show confidence in their participation. They are more attentive to the whole liturgical action. The congregation may seem to be flowing gracefully together in a great drama. It is a function of oversight to lead the congregation to this point.

7. There are many ways in which clergy seem to get distracted from a proper exercise of oversight.

a. *It is easy to get caught up in or drift into some current fad about parish leadership.* These fads usually emphasize some aspect of the truth to the exclusion of a more balanced and complex view. Some seem to find the idea of co-pastors compelling. Others emphasize a vague form of shared ministry. Some speak loosely of being part of a

team. Language and conceptual games are common, such as, "Jesus is Rector of this parish." In each case, it is often difficult to find out who is in charge, decisions are not easily made, development efforts are not integrated or focused, and the "bonding" between priest and people is interfered with. In too many cases, it is a smoke screen for a form of autocratic decision-making or an avoidance of accepting responsibility for the consequences of decisions.

Jesus is not rector, Jesus is Lord and Savior. Some priest is rector. As rector (or vicar) he functions within the standards of the Church. No priest or congregation has any right to make up an approach to parish oversight that is not obedient to and congruent with the standards of the Church.

b. *All Clergy face the temptation to seek the world's affirmation of their role.* It may involve adapting oneself to each passing fad or of taking on a model of the secular professional. In any case, we want to justify our ministry on the world's terms.

Some do it by taking their lead from some professional group. They get trained as, and begin to operate in the parish as, a social worker, consultant, therapist, or business executive. Often there is a parallel acceptance of secular standards, of competence and success. The professional model appeals to the middle or upper class assumptions of many clergy. It also effectively cuts the poor and working class off from any role in the church except that of clients.

The solution to the problem, as always, is God. In the Divine Life is hidden and revealed our vocation and purpose. The way is sacrifice and self-giving — in prayer, in study, in service. There is nothing wrong with a priest being trained in secular disciplines as long as there is a fire within and a clear grasp of essentials. Schemes to reduce the amount of education for those preparing to be ordained as priests need serious debate. But the answer to that debate will not produce priests willing to serve the poor and outcast, unless there is a fire within and a clear grasp of essentials. Men and women need to be asked to sacrifice themselves in the cause of Christ. All our issues of whom to minister to, of how to do it and how to prepare men and women for it will be irrelevant except as we face the issue of the Cross.

c. *A discussion that begins in seminary, and continues for some clergy well into their active ministry, is one about identifying the "irreducible core" of the ordained priesthood.* "What can the priest do that no one else may do?" Given that the Church is an organic body, in which orders are not made up of certain functions but of organs, the

question is meaningless. The functions of the ordained belong to the whole Church. None of them is the exclusive, fixed property of clergy. The discussion is reductionist, distorts our understanding of the Church and Holy Orders, and seems to involve some attempt to escape responsibility for the oversight of the whole parish.

A related practice is that of putting certain roles that priests perform into a priority ranking, such as worship leader first, counselor second, and so on. All this is done as though you could neglect some basic function and not be responsible for it.

8. The rector and vestry are responsible for oversight. They may, and should, share that responsibility with others. They should delegate authority to individuals and groups. However, they need to be clear that, as rector and vestry, they are finally in charge and accountable. Every parish guild and group is accountable to, and should on occasion report to, the rector and/or the vestry. It is not adequate for such groups to report to a general meeting of the congregation. The whole congregation cannot maintain the week by week oversight that is necessary for a parish's health. That's why we have wardens and vestries.

Some groups should be primarily accountable to the vestry, others to the rector. But all are accountable to one or the other, or both. This accountability to the Body through its designated leaders includes such matters as scheduling public events, deciding whether there may be fund raising activities, and the control of all funds raised in the parish. Without such clarity there is a tendency for guilds, ECW's and group leaders to get involved with struggles over "turf", to become power groups that avoid or undermine the Church's standards, and to use the funds they raise to control decisions affecting the whole parish.

9. The three focus areas — spiritual direction, enabling a transforming community, and institutional management and administration — serve to integrate, root, stabilize the parish in the Catholic Faith and the Christian life. Each area will have individuals and groups that will have some share in the oversight task. The groups will overlap in membership and functions. The focus on spiritual direction can be furthered by a faithful, disciplined spiritual core and possibly a guild of spiritual friends. The vestry and others will assist the parish's focus on institutional management. Guilds and members with a concern for welcoming and incorporating new members, for catechesis and pastoral care may help deepen the parish's life as a transforming community.

VI. CONCLUSION

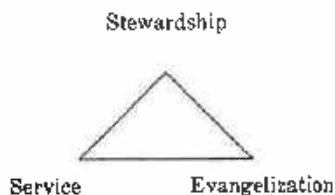
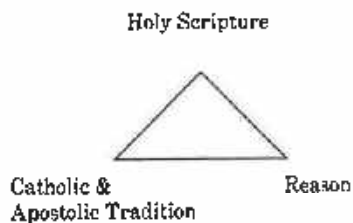
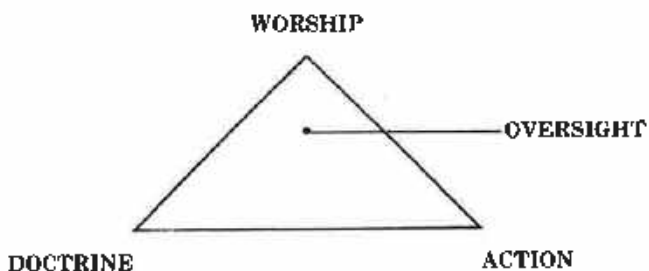
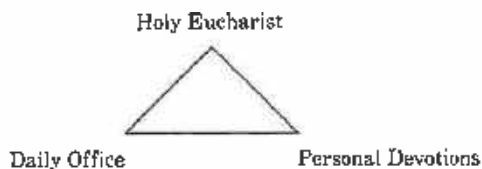
Our heritage as Episcopalians includes a valuing of balance, comprehensiveness and depth; it is a fusion of worship, doctrine and action; and its base and roots are in the Catholic and Apostolic Faith. This is the best of our life and is what we have to offer the world and the universal Church.

We need to allow what is our best to shape our parish life. The need is to see and develop the full strength of each element of the Christian Life; to move toward a deeper, more integrated, and more comprehensive expression of that life.

It is a mistake to put parts of the truth and the Christian life over and against each other or to submerge one element in another. The Body needs wholeness. Each part of the Christian life is interrelated and interdependent with the others.

In the pattern of life Christ meets us, and we may come to know, love and serve him. Our task is to place ourselves, as a parish, and as individuals, within the context of this life. We are to put ourselves in the place where Christ has promised the power from on high.

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE



VII. APPENDIX: Forms for Parish Assessment

The following forms may be used by a parish as it attempts to maintain a focus on the essential elements of its life. Items may be added to the forms if there are matters of specific concern that parish leaders want included.

Based on the assessment, parish leaders can develop a written plan. Leaders need to remember that surveys are not votes but are for the purpose of gathering information that they can use in the process of parish revitalization and development. Working with the results of an assessment and planning require a sense of Christian discernment.

From time to time the parish should bring in an outside resource person such as a third party consultant to help facilitate the task; or the Bishop, a diocesan staff person or laity and clergy from another parish to help them analyze the information and plan for the future.

ASSESSMENT OF PARISH LIFE AND MINISTRY #1

1. Overall satisfaction with Parish Life and Ministry

I am very / / / / / / / I am very
dissatisfied / 1 / 2 / 3 / 4 / 5 / 6 / satisfied

2. *Worship* (Climate; appropriate use of the Holy Eucharist and Daily Office; teaching for prayer life and participation in liturgy; functioning of guilds and individuals that play special roles—altar, chalice bearers, greeters, acolytes; schedule; participation, etc.)

a. *Overall satisfaction*

I am very / / / / / / / I am very
dissatisfied / 1 / 2 / 3 / 4 / 5 / 6 / satisfied

b. *Weaknesses*

c. *Strengths*

3. *Doctrine* (The Christian formation of adults and children; providing the necessary offerings and support structures—lay catechists, a basic adult course, library, tracts, church school, etc.; the parish's awareness of what has authority in the Christian Life; how well we know the teachings of the Faith, etc.)

a. *Overall satisfaction*

I am very / / / / / / / I am very
dissatisfied / 1 / 2 / 3 / 4 / 5 / 6 / satisfied

b. *Weaknesses*

c. *Strengths*

4. *Action* (Corporate action of service, evangelization, stewardship; lay members' awareness of their ministry in the Church and world, etc.)

a. *Overall satisfaction*

I am very / / / / / / / / I am very
dissatisfied / 1 / 2 / 3 / 4 / 5 / 6 / satisfied

b. *Weaknesses*

c. *Strengths*

5. *Oversight* (Clergy and lay leaders serving, guiding, leading and managing the parish into an appropriate and full living of the Christian Life; bringing and preserving a proper order/shape in the parish's life; methods for reflecting, discerning and planning in parish life; lay-clergy relationships; sense of direction, etc.)

a. *Overall satisfaction*

I am very / / / / / / / / I am very
dissatisfied / 1 / 2 / 3 / 4 / 5 / 6 / satisfied

b. *Weaknesses*

c. *Strengths*

6. *Other comments*

ASSESSMENT OF PARISH LIFE AND MINISTRY #2

This form is best used for individual preparation for a group discussion.

1. What is happening in the parish in the three primary elements of the Christian Life — worship, doctrine, action?

2. Are some of the elements given more weight than others? Is there an adequate balance of elements? Is there sufficient richness/depth/strength to each element? Describe how the parish is affected. How is this current arrangement maintained?

3. What is your parish's history in regard to the elements of the Christian Life? Is the parish known by others for any particular element? What effect does this have?

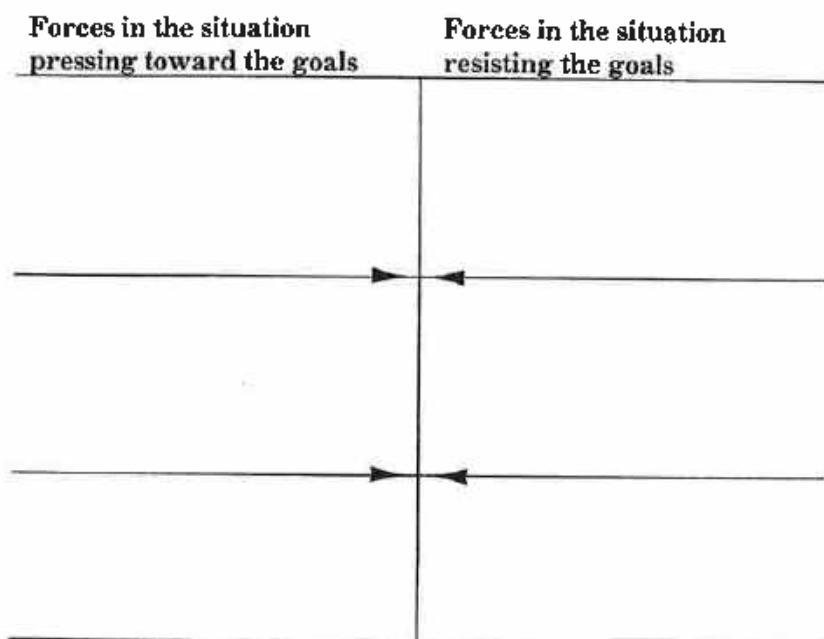
4. How appropriate is the parish's present expression of the Christian Life for members, potential members, the neighborhood, as an expression of the faith and life of the larger Church?

ASSESSMENT OF PARISH LIFE AND MINISTRY #3

A. Worship

1. *List major goals and objectives:*

2. *Forces* (trends, people, habits, norms, etc.)

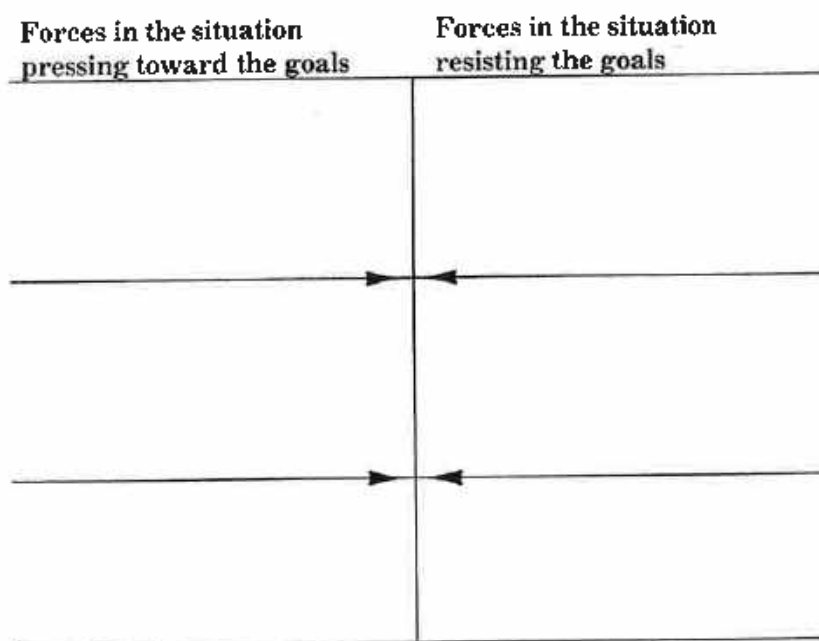


3. *Identify ways to reduce the impact of resisting forces*

B. Doctrine

1. *List major goals and objectives:*

2. *Forces (trends, people, habits, norms, etc.)*

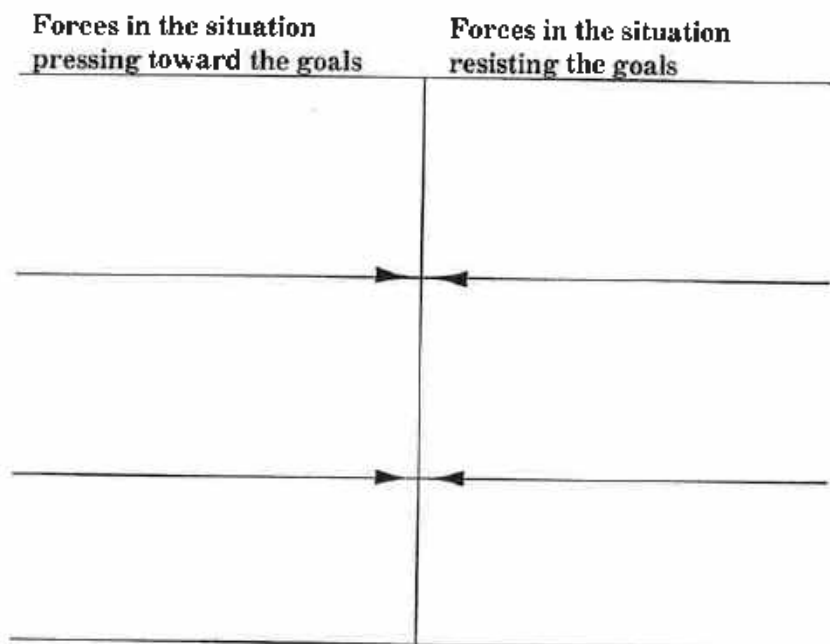


3. *Identify ways to reduce the impact of resisting forces*

C. Action

1. *List major goals and objectives:*

2. *Forces (trends, people, habits, norms, etc.)*

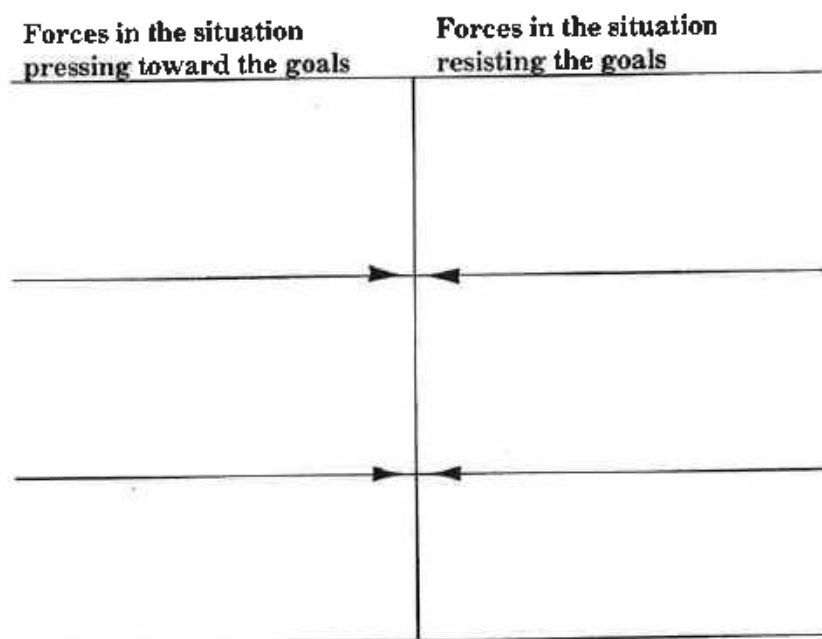


3. *Identify ways to reduce the impact of resisting forces*

D. Oversight

1. *List major goals and objectives:*

2. *Forces (trends, people, habits, norms, etc.)*



3. *Identify ways to reduce the impact of resisting forces*

CLERGY ASSESSMENT

A. Steps

1. For use after an overall parish assessment based on the same model.
2. Members of vestry complete assessment form. Priest fills out form for self-assessment.
3. All forms are returned to the Rector or Vicar for review and reflection. (If desired by the priest, this could be done with the Wardens.)
4. Rector or Vicar makes a brief response to the Vestry, i.e., "You seem pleased with..."; "Some concern was expressed about..."; "I see myself giving special attention to..."

B. Please write comments in each of the following areas.

	Areas of Strength	I wish our priest would give some attention to
1. <i>Worship</i>		
2. <i>Doctrine</i>		
3. <i>Action</i>		
4. <i>Oversight</i>		

C. Other Comments

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