

Definitions of Parish Development and Organization Development

A Short Definition of Parish Development

Parish development is an effort to increase a parish's ability to improve its:

- Health as a community and organization
- Capacity to be productive in its primary task of worship and formation
- Ability to both define itself in relation to its heritage and to adapt to new challenges and opportunities that emerge in the church and society
- Strategic, problem-solving and renewal process

By making use of the theory and methods of pastoral and ascetical theology and of applied behavioral science, usually with the assistance of a leader or consultant trained in the field, and carried out in as collaborative and inclusive a manner as possible given the parish's current capacities and requirements.

A Longer Definition of Parish Development

- The development of the parish as a community of faith with a unique identity, purpose and dynamics.
- The development of the parish as an organization that can be understood, assessed, and improved using the knowledge and methods of pastoral and ascetical theology and organization behavior and development.

The goals of congregational development include:

A. Developing the community of faith by enabling a pattern and culture of congregational life that is:

- Rooted in our tradition
- Adapted to the local context
- Appropriate for the particular group(s) of people drawn to the congregation
- Reflective of the unity, holiness, catholicity and apostolicity of the Church.

And that:

1. Renews people in their baptismal identity and purpose and sends them, in Christ, for an apostolate in family, with friends, in work, civic life and church.
2. Nurtures the Christian life of people at all phases of maturity; gives special attention to guiding and equipping those of Apostolic Faith; encourages all toward a more prayerful, disciplined, and compassionate Christian life.
3. Fosters a strong life and ministry of worship, doctrine, action and oversight.
4. Enables people to seek the presence of Jesus Christ in the people, things and circumstances of life, through stability, conversion of life and obedience.

B. Developing the congregation as an organization that:

1. Has established structures, processes and a climate that allow it to effectively manage its important and pressing business (e.g., projects, problems, crises, etc.) while giving adequate attention to strategic issues (e.g., long-term development and renewal, people development, planning and envisioning, relationship building, engaging new

- opportunities, crisis prevention)
2. Has increased its ability to adapt to new conditions, solve problems and learn from experience.
 3. Has an increased ability to engage formation issues such as:
 - A vision that is sacramentally actualized in the parish's culture. That vision includes the defining of identity, purpose, values, organizational culture and related programs and activities
 - Attracting new people (as staff and/or members) who join in living within a healthy culture.
 - Increased competence and commitment in liturgy, spiritual life and discipline, and emotional intelligence.
 - Creating an alignment, an adequate "fit," among the various aspects of the organization's life such as income/expenses, space/program needs and possibilities, vision/resources of leadership, energy and money
 - Establishing relationships with external "public" or constituencies that have a stake in the organization.

Organization Development Definitions

This list of definitions comes from several sources. Most of the first ones are standard text book definitions. Others are from OD practitioners responding to a request to explore how to define OD that came out of the National OD Network Conference in 2003. The last is my own view.

Possibly the Primary Current Definition of OD used by practitioners ---

Organization development is a system-wide application of behavioral science knowledge to the planned development and reinforcement of organizational strategies, structures, and processes for improving an organization's effectiveness.

-- Cummings and Worley, "Organization Development and Change", Sixth Edition, South-Western Publishing, 1997, p.2.

Other definitions ---

Organization Development is an effort

1. planned,
2. organization-wide, and
3. managed from the top
4. to increase organization effectiveness and health through
5. planned interventions in the organization's "processes," using behavioral-science knowledge

-(R. Beckhard,1969)

Organization Development is a response to change, a complex educational strategy intended to change the beliefs, attitudes, values, and structures of organizations so that they can better adapt to new technologies, markets, and challenges, and the dizzying rate of change itself.
(Warren Bennis,1969)

Organization Development is a top-management-supported, long-range effort to improve an organization's problem-solving and renewal process, particularly through a more effective and collaborative diagnosis and management of organization culture-with special emphasis on formal work team, temporary team, and inter-group culture- with the assistance of a consultant-facilitator and the use of theory and technology of applied behavioral science, including Action Research (French & Bell 1990).

"Organization Development is a dynamic values-based approach to systems change in organizations and communities; it strives to build the capacity to achieve and sustain a new desired state that benefits the organization or community and the world around them." -
From OD Network Conference 2003

Organization Development is a dynamic, system-based approach to change in organizations and communities; it provides methods (concepts and tools) to build the capacity to achieve sustainable, beneficial, new desired states as well as the ability to continue to evolve and adapt to a changing environment." - Allon Shevat

"OD is all about ensuring the vibrancy of an organization, including all the members of the organization, it is an inclusive process. OD is a process that helps organization's to become institutions, remain relevant and grow constantly" - Nayana Prabhu

Organization Development is a system-based approach to meeting the challenges of rapidly changing environments in organizations and communities. It provides methods, concepts and tools that encourage effective adaptation and innovative breakthroughs in organization performance. - Stan Herman

OD is a process of guided evolution that enables an organization to become more effective in achieving its mission and in adapting to the changing demands of its environment. It uses both objective and subjective measures of performance, and applies concepts, models and methods from both the system sciences and the social sciences. It seeks to align the three critical dimensions of strategy, people, and systems around the unique proposition for value creation that defines the organization's purpose. - Karl Albrecht

Organization Development (OD) is an effort to increase an organization's ability to improve itself as a humane and effective system. The effort is directed at the transformation of the total system. Elements of OD may include:

1. Finding ways to adapt to the changing context while maintaining and enhancing the organization's integrity and internal integration.
2. Establishing structures, processes and a climate that allow it to effectively manage its important and pressing business (e.g. projects, problems, crises, etc.) while giving adequate attention to strategic issues (e.g., long term development and renewal, planning and envisioning, engaging

new opportunities, crisis prevention, etc.)

3. Increasing the ability to engage formation issues such as:

- vision including the defining of identity, purpose, values, organizational culture and related programs and activities.
- attracting new people (as staff and/or members) who support the vision
- increased competence and commitment
- creating an alignment, an adequate "fit" among the various aspects of the organization's life, e.g.
 - various sub-systems (people, structure, strategy, processes, etc.)
 - vision & resources of leadership, energy and funds
 - income & expenses
 - physical facilities & program needs and possibilities
 - establishing relationships with external "public" or constituencies that have a stake in the organization.

4. Increasing its ability to adapt to new conditions, solve problems and learn from experience. A capacity for self-renewal. OD does involve problem solving, but its most significant contribution to an organization is in creating a culture that focuses on the continuous growth and vitalization of the system. OD is a normal and vital part of a healthy organization.

Robert A. Gallagher, 1997, 2011
