

Participants find help for parish development at summer institute

Participants in the 1986 Parish Development Institute were enthusiastic: "I have a new lease on life in my parish." "I found an Anglican framework for parish development tasks." "There was a consistent, broad theoretical/theological overview and clear structure."

The Institute, co-sponsored by General Theological Seminary and the Order of the Ascension, attracted 27 participants—both lay and clerical—from 20 dioceses ranging from Los Angeles to Maine and Arkansas to Milwaukee during its second summer of operation. They represented large urban congregations and small rural missions. People came for a variety of reasons.

The Rev. Nancy Hatch-Wittig, rector of Church of St. John the Divine, Hasbrouck Heights, N.J., came "to find ways to make parish life healthy and whole and faithful. I wanted to sharpen my skills, be with other people who think parish ministry is important, and step back from the frenzy of programming to see the point of it all. I think small, struggling parishes are the new mission field. This program is the only thing I've seen anywhere that addresses my questions."

The Rev. James Lemler, rector of Trinity Church, Indianapolis, Ind., returned for his second session because the Institute "combines a strong theological base with developmental

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Faculty and staff of this year's Parish Development Institute, held at General Theological Seminary, were, back row, left to right, Mary Anne Mann, James Fenhagen; front row, Robert Gallagher, Mary Laney, and Alice Mann.

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skills in a way that's unique in the Church. It gave me time to reflect in a systematic way on the parish and increase my leadership abilities."

Lay leader Lynn Headley Moore came because her parish in Towaco, N.J., a "rural village becoming suburban, . . . needs help for development that doesn't just focus on getting more money and members so we can get off aid. We want to see stewardship and evangelization as part of a broader framework of growing in the Christian life. This program helps me do that."

While most participants will use their new skills in parish leadership, others were seeking to strengthen their dioceses' parish development training and consulting resources.

The full program consists of two weeks in residence at the Seminary for two consecutive summers with reading and field work reports through the year. Some participants take part in one summer session that fits their special interests without planning to register for the second year.

The Institute's work and learning are anchored in a rhythm of worship that includes the daily office and the

Holy Eucharist. Participants and some visiting spouses took advantage of the New York City location to attend local parishes, visit museums, shop, and enjoy the city's restaurants.

This recent session focused on basic understandings of the dynamics of parish life and revitalization, mission strategy, parish-based evangelization, conflict, the internal dynamics of the parish as a system and its relationship to its social and cultural context. General's Dean James Fenhagen, the faculty staff member, shared his current work on power in the local congregation and blocks in the development of the parish church.

Other staff members included the Rev. Mary Anne Mann, OA, vicar of St. John's Church, North Guilford, Conn.; the Rev. Bruce Montgomery, AOA, rector of St. Martin's Church, Bridgewater, N.J.; the Rev. Alice B. Mann, OA, vicar of St. John's Church, Yalesville, Conn.; the Rev. Robert Gallagher, OA, congregational development officer of the Diocese of Connecticut; and the Rev. Mary Laney, OA, assistant, St. Thomas' Church, Whitemarsh, Pa.

The Order of the Ascension and General Theological Seminary co-sponsored workshops in parish development and evangelization in 1984. "I treasure the relationship be-

tween the Parish Development Institute and GTS because it helps to reinforce the seminary's commitment to the parish church," says Fenhagen. "This program works seriously with theological issues and integrates this reflection with practical organizational skills and matters of spiritual formation. We are glad to have a part in making this available."

The Order of the Ascension was founded in January, 1983, as a dispersed Christian community of priests who receive training in parish development and oversight and serve congregations with a special need for development. Their work is espe-

cially concerned with ministry in parishes that tend to be small, sometimes troubled, in need of revitalization, usually urban or rural.

The 1987 program, August 17-28, will give special attention to the parish's role in Christian formation, vocation, gifts and personality, discernment and planning, parish oversight, and images of the Church in the Scriptures, tradition, and modern culture. Dr. Elisabeth Koenig, assistant professor of ascetical theology, will be participating GTS faculty member. For more information, write the Parish Development Institute, 175 Ninth Ave., New York, N.Y. 10011.