

Publishing Norms

Part I

Ascension Press is a ministry of the Order of the Ascension, producing tools for congregational development and oversight consistent with the mission and general orientation of the Order. Books or other material published by Ascension Press will share the following characteristics and will evidence integration among these areas:

- Intended to further congregational development
- Grounded in Anglican approaches to pastoral and ascetical theology
- Consistent with OD approaches to systems, including an ongoing focus on broad organizational improvement, attention to structures and processes, and avoidance of the “quick fix” or single solution.

Part II

A Definition of Congregational 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.

A Definition of Pastoral Theology

Pastoral or practical theology reflects on and informs the pastoral oversight and functional tasks of the Christian community, especially the parish church. It is interested in the functions of leadership, liturgical presiding, preaching, spiritual guidance and so on...

[For our purposes,] we are interested in the theological work that attempts to understand the contemporary society and human need, and shape parish communities in a manner that will effectively address that society and those needs. Our concern is with the relationship between the parish system and its context or external environment. What kind of oversight, structure, and spiritual life do we need in the parish church to effectively form Christians, in our tradition, for this age?

A Definition of Ascetical theology

Ascetical theology is especially about spiritual practice. It is grounded in an understanding of the church’s spiritual teachings as seen in Scriptures and the writings of the early church. It is concerned with the on-going task of living the Christian life and reflecting upon it. What kind of person and human community do we want to form? How might the parish contribute to that task? What are the practices that will best do that in our time? What are the “spiritual life maps” that offer us an integrated and systemic approach?

A Definition of Organization Development

Organization Development, or OD, is about improving an organization’s ability to become more effective in doing what it exists to do. It’s about fulfilling an organization’s mission and primary task by developing the system’s climate, structures, processes, people, and leadership. It’s an ongoing, systematic effort to change an organization.

For the parish church that means improving how we engage the mission of the church “to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ.” That is done in a particular

setting of a congregation and the communities it touches. In the case of a parish we are also concerned with improving how we go about the primary task of a parish church. Diana Butler Bass put it this way “The primary job of church is to be a spiritual community that forms people in faith.”