Shaping the Parish

Developmental Initiative Report

Initiative Title: Arts & Spirituality Parish Self-Definition

Level: A

# YOUR NAME

E-MAIL

DESCRIPTION

This initiative is directed toward helping the parish deepen or generate a connection to the arts that defines the parish in a healthy and sensible way. There needs to be a kind of critical mass of activity, interest, and marketing for the effort to become part of the parish’s self definition.

This initiative is strategic to the extent it is not simply a discrete addition to “programming,” but is actually related to a sustainable and meaningful parish identity. There is a difference between a parish with a lot of arts programming and a parish seen by itself and the public as partly defined by the arts. Even more valuable is when we develop this as a relationship with the local arts community.

A connection to the arts must arise out of the parish’s existing life—there must be an adequate number of parishioners with skill, knowledge and passion; it must fit the existing culture of the parish; and the local community must be supportive.

The parish’s primary task of the spiritual formation of its members needs to be on firm ground—liturgy must be done well, with beauty and grace, and the parish should have opportunities for building competence in spiritual life. Becoming defines as a center of arts and spirituality needs to enrich not overshadow the core.

“Spirituality is that which gives meaning and harmony to all of human experience.”

Alan Jones & Rachel Hosmer

The same might be said of the arts. Art can be a source of comfort and stability and also of challenge. It may help us reconsider our assumptions about the world, God, and ourselves. It may move and disturb us.

This book is a great starting place for discussing

Examples of what other parishes have done include:

* A jazz ministry -- St. Peter’s Lutheran Church in Manhattan. Its connection to the arts is deep and long-term and is based in a conscious decision in the 60s to stay in the city, “affirm human life amidst the skyscrapers and develop a ministry that would serve more than just a Sunday congregation.” Its connection to the arts includes (1) the design of the building itself, which was the result of an agreement made by the church when it sold its land to Citibank in the 70s; (2) an extensive jazz ministry, including use of jazz in liturgy as well as support of jazz musicians outside of a specifically religious context; (3) visual arts exhibitions; (4) a parish art collection; and (5) an extensive music program in a variety of genres, and including ongoing concert programming.

During the 90’s St. Andrew’s Church in Trenton had jazz masses around 10 times each year as the Sunday Eucharist, conducted a yearly “jazz and children” program, had a local jazz musician as it’s parish musician, and commissioned a new jazz composition as part of its “Soul of Trenton” program. The vicar spent time in local jazz clubs and developed a kind of pastoral ministry with musicians. A significant part of the Vicarious Faith ring of the parish was made up of jazz musicians and people in the theater community.

The relationship with the jazz community was the major component of a somewhat wider arts connection. The parish also involved poets in the Sunday liturgy, had a Sunday liturgy honoring creative freedom when Salman Rushdie was threatened with death, and was a venue for play readings by the city’s Equity Theater Company.

* Forums on arts and spirituality – Sponsoring gatherings in which artists explore the relationship between their work and spirituality. For example a parish in Maine brought together a musician, painter, writer and filmmaker.

A forum might also be more directly related to our religious tradition. Forums can explore the connection in experiential, as well as theological and theoretical, ways. They might also explore the union many artists feel between the spiritual/divine and their creative work.

* Commissioning dramatic works and involving parishioners in the productions
* Providing ongoing exhibit space for professional artists
* Incorporating local musicians into the liturgy
* Providing community theatre space
* Offering experience or instruction in the arts to parishioners and including an opportunity for reflection through art—e.g., writing poetry, painting, working with clay, painting icons.

The initiative needs to reach beyond the congregation toward establishing a relationship with a segment of the arts community in the region. If it is to become a relationship with that community vs. simply “a program” it needs to give expression to a relationship with a particular artistic community. In the case of the churches with a relationship with the jazz community there were friendships developed and a pastoral relationship with musicians seen in conducting or attending funerals and officiating at weddings.

We are seeking a relationship with a community not simple a parish program or an attempt to “minister to” that group. If we make use of a model such as “Shape of the Parish” this opens up options such as developing the arts community as a Vicarious Faith ring of the parish and membership growth possibilities among people wanting to be connected with such a parish.

There may also be activities that engage members in an art and spirituality exploration. Members might themselves be asked to create works of art and to explore what meaning the activity holds for them. A caution needs to be noted: The art of the members has its own integrity in their spiritual life. The arts products that result from the activities of parishioners should not be presumed to become the church’s permanent art collection. Standards about artistic quality need to be maintained if the broader arts community relationship isn’t to be undercut. For example, if there is an exhibit of icons painted by parishioners, it should be clear that the exhibit is temporary and the pieces will be returned once the exhibit is taken down.

**In the Short-Term:**

The short-term aspect of the initiative might make use of one of the ideas below. There is also to be some planning that projects this into the long term – dates placed on next year’s calendar, a working group established for next year’s efforts, and so on.

1. Have an event in which members identify existing, and possible, connections to the arts community in the region. Consider a variety of art forms, such as drama, visual arts, poetry, music in different forms.
2. A session in which members share examples of their own artistic work.
3. Have an experiential event in which members engage the beauty of the liturgical space and/or of the liturgy itself. Provide a reflection process.
4. Identify ways in which existing connections might be deepened and new ones developed.
5. Have an opportunity to promote the personal growth of members, such as through arts-related activities that parishioners engage themselves.
6. Organize events that connect the members with the professional arts community beyond the parish.
7. Consider both explicitly spiritual/religious-based activities and partnerships or support that allow professional artists to do what they do, separate from religious considerations.
8. Be clear about who in the parish actually connects to the broader arts community *as it is*, not as the parish hopes to be in the future. Build on this organic interest.
9. As the parish develops activities and connections, create ongoing internal and external marketing. The parish needs to know what’s available and needs to see the arts connection as an organizational concern, rather than some disparate projects attended to by a few individuals.

**In the Longer Term:**

1. Plans are to be large-scale, and occur year-after-year.
2. To be connected to parish identity, there must be multiple expressions and connections to the arts. This does not mean that the parish needs to find something to connect to in all media, but it does mean that, for example, if the parish focuses on music, that there’s can’t simply be an annual Christmas concert.
3. As the parish’s identity with the arts increases, the parish needs to continue to develop its own internal and external marketing. Are some of your connections, particularly to the broader arts community, newsworthy to secular news outlets? Work to ensure that the parish is identified with the arts by the public, not just by the parish’s members or leadership.

**Resources:**

Sections on brainstorming/prioritizing, and appreciative inquiry: *Interventions: Methods and Processes for Building Healthier Parishes*, Michelle Heyne & Robert Gallagher, Ascension Press 2011.

*Fill All Things*, chapter on the “Shape of the Parish.” In regard to developing the arts community as a Vicarious Faith ring of the parish. That also opens up membership growth possibilities among people wanting to be connected with such a parish.

*Sacred Reading: The Ancient Art of Lectio Divina*, Michael Casey, Liguori/Triumph Publ., 1996

Participant’s additions & changes to the description

If you are revising the above in some manner, note that here. Offer a rationale for the change. Changes may not be so extreme as to change the basic thrust of the initiative description above --

Have you carefully reviewed the above description?

Yes No [ Note: You must have done this review for the DI to be accepted]

ACTION PLANNING

1. What are you planning to do? What is the action plan? First steps. How you will monitor and adjust along the way

2. Theoretical base and strategic assumptions for the project

a. Theoretical Base (connect related theory to the project and the particulars of your parish) -

b. Strategic Assumptions (In your parish as it is now – what were you assuming would happen allowing the project to move forward? A strategic assumption has enough significance that if it turns out to not be true, the project will fail) -

A. Results: What are the initial results are you seeking? Note: we are assuming you are working from the basic DI description. This section is more a brief statement of overall objectives expressed in a way that integrates the description with the particularities of your parish.

Do the same regarding longer-term development goals? Relationship to the parish’s overall health? Relationship to the primary task of a parish church? -

B. Reflection

1. Strategic (pp 12 – 13 *Intervention Considerations*)

*The Developmental Initiatives are by their nature strategic or at least they are in that arena. These elements may help you consider related factors*

* Long term, developmental, likely to have a ripple effect -

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Not likely |  |  |  | Very Likely |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Comment:

* Related to the primary task of a parish church (form people in faith, renewal in baptismal identity and purpose, facilitating the movement between renewal and apostolate) -

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Not related |  |  |  | Very related |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Comment:

* Can anticipate adequate resources of time, money, and energy devoted to the initiative? -

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Anticipate inadequate resources |  |  |  | Anticipate very adequate resources |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Comment:

2. Demand System (pp13 – 14 *Intervention Considerations*)

*What is really developmental is usually also not urgent. It may be important but it is not urgent. How do you establish a new demand system that serves what’s important?*

* How will you cope with all the other demands, expectations and pressures of the parish an your life as you try to focus on the DI? -
* How will you work to create a new “demand system” that will make this initiative part of the parish’s routine business? -

3. Critical Mass (pp. 23 – 29 *Intervention Considerations*)

*In general critical mass theories are about building the overall level of commitment, competence and emotional maturity at the center of the parish so that it grounds the system in a mission orientation and an organizational culture that supports the mission. In relationship to a specific Developmental Initiative there may be two considerations.*

* What will you do to create enough “weight” to support this particular DI? Will there be enough physical and emotional energy to get the work accomplished? This has to do with the social and political process by which you help the parish move forward. (For example, if working on Group Functioning – can you anticipate enough initial support from members of the groups you want to involved?) - Describe it. -

* In most DIs there is a second consideration. Will enough of a critical mass develop in relationship to the *desired results* of the initiative? (For example, if working on Group Functioning – How will you develop a critical mass of competence and commitment in the groups going through the process? What will you do so people become more skilled?) -

* Is there an “emotional inversion” in the parish, either broadly in the parish in general or in regard to this particular DI? (See bottom p. 26 *Intervention Considerations*) -

4. Internal Commitment (pp. 29 – 31 *Intervention Considerations*)

*This is often interrelated with critical mass considerations. You want as many people as possible, at least a critical mass, to have a high level of commitment to the direction or action that was chosen. This makes it more likely that the intervention will continue to have its benefits for the parish over time and under stress. The assumption is that commitment is built upon a base of valid and useful information and free choice. One element builds on the other. The more the information is valid and useful, the more likely the free choice, the more there is truly free choice, the more likely there will be internal commitment.*

How will you help people engage an adequate amount of valid and useful information? --

How will you design the process so that people have an adequate degree of free choice vs. acting from habit or emotional pressure)? --

5. Your influence (pp. 31 - 34 *Intervention Considerations*; take note of “OD Roles” and “Circles of Influence”)

Assess your influence in relationship to this specific DI? -

6. Readiness (pp. 34 - 38 *Intervention Considerations)*

* Adequate dissatisfaction – Is there dissatisfaction with the way things are in relationship to the DIs field of interest? -
* Favorable stance of people – Is there a person, or more than one person, who wants this to happen and is willing to spend energy making it happen? A person with enough influence with people who would need to cooperate in order for it to happen? -
* Competence for change – Did you have the skills and knowledge needed for this particular intervention? -
* How does it fit with the parish’s current culture? -
* Resources available – Are there adequate resources of people, money, facilities and such to implement the project/change? Any concerns? -
* Energy and attention – What are the likely problems around having the needed amount of energy? -
* Formal authorization – Most of the efforts that can shape a parish only require the

investment of the parish priest. That role assumes the authority to initiate efforts to improve the faithfulness and health of the parish. But there are situations requiring vestry action. Is formal authorization needed from some group within the parish or diocese? -

7. Intervention Choices (pp. 39 - 41 *Intervention Considerations)*

*We are constantly making choices about interventions. Who to involve - just the leadership, a working group, everyone in the organization? What to focus on - the issue it would be easiest to make headway on or the most strategic opportunity? The style of work - do we take a problem solving approach or use some appreciative process? How deep shall we go - are we working on deep underlying assumptions about how we work and relate with one another or are we simply trying to get this problem behind us?*

* What is the unit focus of the intervention? Is there a need to engage at several levels? Rationale for this -
* What is the opportunity, problem, or issue to address? Not simply the title of the DI but in relation to those listed on p 39 -
* What is the intervention method? (for example those listed on p. 39)-

8. Your stance (pp. 42 – 43 *Intervention Considerations)*

* What leadership style do you see yourself taking in doing the intervention (p 42)? How does that match with your preferred leadership style? Do you find yourself needing a broader range of styles? -
* What is your usual stance in relationship to the parish and its leaders (loving critic, unloving critic, uncritical lover)? How might that impact the intervention? -

RESULTS & LEARNINGS

A. Results: What happened? What are the initial results you’re seeing? Also look at it in terms of the project goal/objectives. Is there anything to report in regard to longer-term development goals? Any initial sense about sustainability over the long-term and under pressure? Relationship to the parish’s overall health? Relationship to the primary task of a parish church? Experience regarding your strategic assumptions -

B. Theoretical base and strategic assumptions for the project

a. Theoretical Base (connect related theory to the project and the particulars of your parish) -

*Mark one*

-As expected (in action planning) -

-Differed from what we expected -

If different, please comment -

b. Strategic Assumptions -rate and comment in relationship to strategic assumptions as noted in action planning -

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Not on target |  |  |  | Very much on target |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Comment -

C. Reflection

*Make comments connecting what happened with the area of reflection.*

1. Strategic (pp 12 – 13 *Intervention Considerations*)

*The Developmental Initiatives are by their nature strategic or at least they are in that arena. These elements may help you consider related factors*

* Long term, developmental, likely to have a ripple effect; rate and describe -

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| None |  |  |  | Strong effect |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

* Related to the primary task of a parish church (form people in faith, renewal in baptismal identity and purpose, facilitating the movement between renewal and apostolate); rate and describe -

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| No noticeable relationship |  |  |  | Strong relationship |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

* Were adequate resources of time, money, and energy devoted to the initiative?; rate and describe -

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Not adequate |  |  |  | Very adequate |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

2. Demand System (pp13 – 14 *Intervention Considerations*)

*What is really developmental is usually also not urgent. It may be important but it is not urgent. How do you establish a new demand system that serves what’s important?*

* How did you cope with all the other demands, expectations and pressures of the parish an your life as you tried to focus on the DI? -
* How have you worked to create a new “demand system” that will make this initiative part of the parish’s routine business? -

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*In general critical mass theories are about building the overall level of commitment, competence and emotional maturity at the center of the parish so that it grounds the system in a mission orientation and an organizational culture that supports the mission. In relationship to a specific Developmental Initiative there may be two considerations.*

* Was there enough “weight” to support this particular DI? Enough energy to get the work

accomplished? This has to do with the social and political process by which you help the parish move forward. (For example, if working on Group Functioning – was there enough initial support from members of the groups you wanted involved?) - Rate and Describe -

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Not enough |  |  |  | Enough weight |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

* In most DIs there is another consideration. Is enough of a critical mass developing in relationship to the desired results of the initiative? Rate and Describe (For example, if working on Group Functioning – Is a critical mass of competence and commitment beginning to develop in the groups going through the process? Are people becoming more skilled?) -

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Not enough |  |  |  | Enough |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

* Was there an “emotional inversion” in the parish, either broadly in the parish in general or in regard to this particular DI? (See bottom p. 26 *Intervention Considerations*) -

Yes No unsure

Comment -

4. Internal Commitment (pp. 29 – 31 *Intervention Considerations*)

*This is often interrelated with critical mass considerations. You want as many people as possible, at least a critical mass, to have a high level of commitment to the direction or action that was chosen. This makes it more likely that the intervention will continue to have its benefits for the parish over time and under stress. The assumption is that commitment is built upon a base of valid and useful information and free choice. One element builds on the other. The more the information is valid and useful, the more likely the free choice, the more there is truly free choice, the more likely there will be internal commitment.*

a. What did you do to build internal commitment as seen is this approach? -

b. Assess

Enough internal commitment for what was needed in this case -

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Not enough |  |  |  | Enough |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Base of free choice and valid and useful information to build the internal commitment -

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Not enough |  |  |  | Enough |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Comment -

5. Your influence (pp. 31 - 34 *Intervention Considerations*; take note of “OD Roles” and “Circles of Influence”)

Was your influence adequate to manage the intervention?

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Not at all |  |  |  | Adequate |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Comment -

6. Readiness (pp. 34 - 38 *Intervention Considerations)*

* Adequate dissatisfaction – Was there dissatisfaction with the way things were in relationship to the change projects field of interests? -

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Not at all |  |  |  | Adequate |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Comment -

* Favorable stance of people – Was there a person, or more, who wants this to happen and is willing to spend energy making it happen? A person with enough influence with people who would need to cooperate in order for it to happen? -

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Not at all |  |  |  | Adequate |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Comment -

* Competence for change – Did we have the skills and knowledge we need for this particular intervention? -

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Not at all |  |  |  | Adequate |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Comment -

* It fit with the parish’s current culture -

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Not at all |  |  |  | Adequate |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Comment -

* Resources available – the people, money, facilities and such needed to implement the project/change. -

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Not at all |  |  |  | Adequate |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Comment -

* Energy and attention – The needed amount of energy was available -

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Not at all |  |  |  | Adequate |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Comment -

* Formal authorization – Most of the efforts that can shape a parish only require the

investment of the parish priest. That role assumes the authority to initiate efforts to improve the faithfulness and health of the parish. But there are situations requiring vestry action. Was there the needed authorization? -

Yes No Uncertain

Comment -

7. Intervention Choices (pp. 39 - 41 *Intervention Considerations)*

*We are constantly making choices about interventions. Who to involve - just the leadership, a working group, everyone in the organization? What to focus on - the issue it would be easiest to make headway on or the most strategic opportunity? The style of work - do we take a problem solving approach or use some appreciative process? How deep shall we go - are we working on deep underlying assumptions about how we work and relate with one another or are we simply trying to get this problem behind us?*

* What was the unit focus of the intervention? Did that end up being appropriate? Was there (or is there) a need to engage at several levels of units? -
* What was the opportunity, problem, or issue to address? Not simply the title of the DI but in relation to those listed on p 39 -
* What was the intervention method? (for example those listed on p. 39)-

8. Your stance (pp. 42 – 43 *Intervention Considerations)*

* What leadership style did you take in doing the intervention (p 42)? Was that effective? Did you find yourself needing a broader range of styles? -
* What is your usual stance in relationship to the parish and its leaders (loving critic, unloving critic, uncritical lover)? How did that effect the intervention? -

C. Learnings

1. About change theory and methods -

2. About spiritual practices in shaping the parish -

3. About emotional & social intelligence in shaping the parish -

4. About yourself as a person and leader

D. Next Steps

1. Thoughts on long-term goals -

2. Next steps in the short term -

3. Comments -

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