

Assessing Parish Cultural Density

We can build a healthy and faithful parish cultural density through an appreciative stance and a repetitive pattern of engagement around four central factors. *Make notes regarding your parish.*

An appreciative stance toward the parish

“Appreciative thinking and methods can be especially productive. An appreciative approach is about seeing and building upon the parish’s strengths, gifts, and charism. It’s about something that is already present. About patterns of behavior that you can see in the parish’s history and current life.”¹

An appreciative stance toward the people of the parish

“The “people of the parish” certainly includes the members of the Eucharistic Community, the faithful baptized. It also includes people at all stages of the faith journey—Apostolic, Progressing, Stable and Sacramental, uncertain and immature, the occasional and the Vicarious. It includes all those scattered throughout the families and institutions of society as instruments of the Divine Charity.”

An appreciative stance toward the Anglican ethos

“Anglican ethos, our organizational culture, can help us see and live our own deepest corporate self. There are a variety of ways in which that ethos has been described.³⁰ One helpful description is Jim Fenhagen’s, offered in a Forward Movement tract, “The Anglican Way.” He emphasized three elements: comprehensiveness, personal holiness, and holy worldliness.”

An appreciative stance toward Prayer Book spirituality

“The rhythms of the Threefold Rule—Eucharist, Daily Office, and personal devotions, especially reflection—offer us a full spiritual life, grounded in ancient wisdom and useful for life in our modern world. This is a spirituality that offers balance within itself and for our daily life. An apostolic stance here allows us to engage the Rule as adults who accept responsibility for our spiritual lives ... Plus, live the Church Year -- Eucharist on all Sundays and Principal Feasts" and observe the Prayer Book's days of fasting, times of special observance, and other holy days. (see the Calendar)

The layers of the fabric—the seven elements of cultural density

Rate your parish on each element (1 is low – 6 is high) and make notes.

Element	Rating	Notes
1. Leaders who persistently and skillfully act to build, maintain and strengthen the central ethos and practices of the organization. It's what they pay attention to, reward, measure, and allocate resources to. It's also how they respond in times of threat and crisis, drawing on the system's ethos and practices.		
2. Leaders who model in their behavior the ethos and values of the organization.		
3. Clarity regarding beliefs and values supported by training and coaching that equips people to function effectively and in accordance with the organization's values and beliefs.		
4. Stories and myths that help define the organization, expressing the best of the organization's life and values.		
5. Collective rituals that celebrate, observe, or acknowledge the defining moments in the life of the organization and/or its members.		
6. A demanding entry or initiation process. The person has to choose this life and the cost of belonging.		
7. A physical location that is congruent with the organization's ethos and provides a setting in which members come together face-to-face.		

ⁱ All the categories and quotes in this worksheet are from Heyne, Michelle; Gallagher, Robert A.. *A Wonderful and Sacred Mystery: A Practical Theology of the Parish Church*, Chapter 4