Shaping the Parish

Developmental Initiative Report

Initiative Title: Increasing Conflict Competence

Level: A

# YOUR NAME

E-MAIL

DESCRIPTION

This initiative is directed at significantly improving the congregation’s ability to engage in and manage conflict. The project assumes there is not presently a high level of conflict in the parish.

**In the short term:**

1) Rector and lay leaders attend a week long conflict management training workshop

2) Offer a training program for adults in basic related skills (could be “conflict management in the parish and life,” communication and negotiation skills, or trust development skills)

3) Three sermons in a row exploring conflict and spirituality.

4) Plan for the long-term. Integrate the effort into the parish’s routine activities, e.g., as a module in an adult foundations course, something within an orientation evening, budgeting for training funds in the area, information on the parish web site about conflict management and spiritual life.

**In the long term:**

1) Develop a critical mass of people with a moderate level of conflict management skills and several people with high skill.

2) Create a parish policy that the clergy of the parish are expected to have at least five days of training in conflict management and significant training in congregational development. When there is turn over among the clergy, the new clergy are expected to begin such training within 9 months of starting the position.

3) Continue with efforts to integrate competence for conflict management into the parish’s routine activities, e.g., as a module in an adult foundations course, something within an orientation evening, budgeting for training funds in the area, information on the parish web site about conflict management and spiritual life.

**Assumptions**

In the parish and in each person’s life there are always tensions, disagreements, “bones of contention, and resistance about some change or the other.

Increased skills in conflict and negotiation helps both the congregation as a whole as well as the intergroup and interpersonal relationships within. It also offers a peacemaking capacity for the apostolate of the baptized with family and friends, in the work place, and civic life.

Competencies would include most of the following:

* Understanding that conflict is inevitable and can be managed.
* A basic understanding of conflict levels, an awareness of the choice points in a conflict, understanding that you want to involve the smallest group possible (those with emotional energy around the issue)
* Basic skills for listening, communication, negotiation
* An understanding of the issue in terms of spiritual practice; relationship to life in community, the nature of Christian community and the importance of how we treat one another. Connect to teaching on Benedictine spirituality – life in community, the dynamics of Stability – Conversion of Life – Obedience.

Making the stance and skills part of the parish’s culture. That it become a characteristic of the parish.

* Build the training into the parish’s routine formation processes. For example, make a module of the adult foundations course on “Community: Dealing with Disagreements and Conflict.” Might appear every three years in the course rotation of modules.
* Build into the parish’s routine assessments; occasionally have assessment specifically on conflict management. Are we using what we teach? Do we seek opportunities to use conflict management processes as a matter of course?
* Offer opportunities for “The Reconciliation of a Penitent” (confession) and for group or individual spiritual guidance

In a 2005 report on Episcopal congregations – congregations reported

[www.episcopalchurch.org/documents/Episcopal\_Overview\_FACT\_2005.pdf](http://www.episcopalchurch.org/documents/Episcopal_Overview_FACT_2005.pdf)

* No conflict 7%
* Only minor conflict 22%
* At least one moderate conflict, no serious conflict 34%
* At least one serious conflict 37%

Of congregations that had very serious conflict:

* Some members left the church: 91%
* Some members withheld funds: 74%
* A special meeting was called: 73%
* The Bishop intervened: 40%
* A staff member resigned or was fired: 38%
* The congregation split: 6%
* The conflict was resolved: 53%

**Resources**

* Conflict Management training

[www.congregationaldevelopment.com/LTI\_programs.htm](http://www.congregationaldevelopment.com/LTI_programs.htm) [www.NTL.org](http://www.NTL.org)

* Introduction to Type and Conflict, Killen & Murphy , CPP
* Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In (2nd ed), Fisher, Ury, Patton
* Section on conflict; Interventions: Methods and Processes for Building Healthier Parishes, Michelle Heyne & Robert Gallagher, Ascension Press, 2011
* *Moving Your Church Through Conflict*, Speed Leas, Alban Institute
* “Parish Peacemakers Process” at St. Stephen’s Church, [www.ststephensforest.org/Pages/Peacemakers.htm](http://www.ststephensforest.org/Pages/Peacemakers.htm)
* *The Heart of Conflict: A Spirituality of Transformation,* Elinor D. U. Powell, Northstone Publ., 2003. Note: We found part of the book available for reading on the web; suggest you do a search for it.
* “Spirituality, Transformation and Conflict” at [www.pres-outlook.com/blog/Spirituality-Transformation-and-Conflict.html](http://www.pres-outlook.com/blog/Spirituality-Transformation-and-Conflict.html)
* “Conflict in Congregations Public Report”, a PDF, <http://centerforcongregations.org/files/folders/learning/entry657.aspx?gclid=CLyr5Ia8gKYCFQYLbAodJl_rAg>

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? -

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.*

* 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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