Shaping the Parish

Developmental Initiative Report

Initiative Title: Culture Change

Level: A

# YOUR NAME

E-MAIL

DESCRIPTION

This initiative is a broad ranging effort at significant culture change to include the parish’s way of being and doing around spiritual practices, primary task, emotional & social intelligence, and dealing with change.

Some parishes face the most difficult choice—change or die. Others find themselves increasingly aware of how much better and healthier the parish could be.

Very few parishes have any idea of the magnitude of change that will be required.

The change assumption in Shaping the Parish is that we need to shape a healthy parish culture in a manner that:

* Roots spiritual practice in ancient ways made new for contemporary life
* The best of what the parish is and has been
* Grounded in the ethos of the broader Episcopal/Anglican tradition
* Ending practices that are “out of whack” and amount to ways of shooting ourselves in the foot.
* Increased emotional and social intelligence.

A systemic, parish-wide culture change is a long term, complex and difficult task. It will call for persistence and courage, wise leadership, and a capacity for strategic thinking and management.

There will be stages the parish moves through. It will vary from parish to parish but may look something like this:

* Pockets of the parish embrace the change. The parish as a whole tolerates the different ways of these segments of the parish, but has little investment in to parish-wide change.
* An increasing sense in the parish that there is a need for significant change.
* A transition period that may feel chaotic. The changes in place may seem fragile. Some will press to return to what had been, others will be anxious because we’re “moving too fast” and still others will think we are moving much too slowly. There is at least a low to moderate level of conflict occurring.
* A shift can be seen. More people have learned the competencies to be effective and comfortable in the emerging culture. There are more people who can articulate the elements of the new culture – ways of being and working, espoused values, and the deeper assumptions.
* A new parish culture: now our way of being and doing

It may help in culture change to identify a number of specific shifts you desire. *From* what condition *To* what new condition. For example:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **http://www.odnetwork.org/publications/seasonings/images/spacer.gifFrom:** | **http://www.odnetwork.org/publications/seasonings/images/spacer.gifTo:** |
| * Slow and/or resistant to change
 | * Adaptable to need changes
 |
| * Stuck in gear - either stability or change driven
 | * Aware of and responsive to the need for balancing change and stability
 |
| * Unclear idea of the primary task of a parish church (or operating as though the P.T. was membership growth, many programs and a lit of activity, happy and comfortable members, and so on)
 | * Act on an understanding of the primary task as the formation of the baptized. Renewal in baptismal identity and purpose so the person may better serve in the apostolate of daily life.
 |
| * Stuck in a particular approach to leadership (seen in operation of vestry and/or clergy) – in control, centralized, collaborative
 | * Approach to leadership is appropriate to parish life cycle and the immediate circumstances. Flexibly, while being clear, in leadership style.
 |
| * Information top-down and/or on a need-to-know basis
 | * Two-way information flow in the parish. There are reliable processes in place for a collective voice – community meetings, testing processes.
 |
| * Turf/silos structures
 | * Collaboration throughout the parish. Individuals and sub groups accountable to the parish’s agreed direction, vision, way of being.
 |
| * Variety of viewpoints seen as disturbing, upsetting
 | * Diversity of perspectives and experience valued.
 |
| * No or little acknowledgment that those connected to the parish have a range of maturity in spiritual practice. Little effort to ground people in spiritual practices.
 | * There is a focus on the development of basic spiritual practice proficiency among many members and a high level of competence among a core.
 |

See the material at the end of this document on ethos and spiritual life for additional ideas about shifts that may be useful.

**In the Short-Term (within the time frame of this initiative, 2 to 3 months):**

1. Complete exercises with people most likely to see the value, be interested – Schein’s culture exploration around some specific concern/opportunity (looking at espoused values and artifacts, using the that to explore deeper underling assumptions), From – To description (as above)

2. Have a working group read and discuss Schein’s *The Corporate Culture: Survival Guide*

3. Working group develop an action-plan for the mid-term

4. Identify the on-going group responsible (needs to include rector) and schedule meetings for the coming 6 months.

**In the mid term (6 – 12 months)**

1. Expand those completing the exercises (see above)

2. Implement the action plan. Adjust as needed along the way.

3. Engage in a disciplined reflection process to learn from the experience and use those learnings in future action.

**In the Longer Term:**

1. Expand those completing the exercises (see above)

2. Continue process of planned change.

**Resources:**

*-The Corporate Culture: Survival Guide*, Edgar Schein, Jossey – Bass, San Francisco, 1999. *Fill -All Things*: *The Spiritual Dynamics of the Parish Church*

*-In Your Holy Spirit: Shaping the Parish Through Spiritual Practice*

*-Interventions: Methods and Processes for Building Healthier Parishes, Vol. 2*, section on parish culture. Michelle Heyne & Robert Gallagher, Ascension Press, 2011

-Experiential training in conflict management from LTI, NTL or Alban Institute. Additional training in human interaction.

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*

1. Long term, developmental, likely to have a ripple effect -

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

 Comment:

1. 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:

1. 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 -

The Organizational Culture of Anglicanism

Anglicanism has a culture, an ethos. The interest of congregational development is:

1. How that culture shows itself in parish churches

2. How that culture is responsive to the influence of the social culture in which it exists.

What follows is a taste of the organizational culture of Anglicanism. Please understand that these are shortened statements of the writers more complete view. Participants may benefit from reading the full text.

From *The Anglican Way*, James Fenhagen, Forward Movement

1. **Comprehensiveness** -- “rather than doctrinal uniformity ...being able to hold together seeming opposites”

2. **Personal Holiness** -- “emerging from the inter-relationship between liturgical participation, solitude and compassion ... weaves together a concern for personal freedom with an emphasis on beauty and joyfulness and awe”

3. **Holy Worldliness** -- “life affirming rather than pleasure denying...; calls people to faith not out of guilt or fear, but of a vision of God..”

From *A People Called Episcopalians*, John Westerhoff, St. Luke’s, Atlanta.

Describes Anglican Spirituality as having these characteristics:

1. **Liturgical/Biblical** -- “rooted in communal daily prayer ... intended to shape our relationship to God”

2. **Communal** -- “communal prayer always comes before personal prayer, which is to be shaped by communal prayer ... before decisions are made ..the community gathers in the context of

communal prayer and meditation on the Scriptures so that the Holy Spirit might inform and influence our decisions”

3. **Sacramental** -- “outward and visible signs of inward and spiritual grace ...informs our conviction that just as Christ was the sacrament of God, the church is called to be the sacrament of Christ in the world ...implies that our spirituality is political, combining both the

contemplative and the active”

4. **Pastoral** -- “our relationship to God is measured by our relationship to out true self, all people, and the natural world”

5. **Incarnational** -- “emphasis on God’s entry into human life .. has resulted in an earthy spirituality ... affirm life in this world and believe that the body, pleasure, and material reality are fundamentally good”

6. **Mystical** -- “emphasizes a long slow journey into union with God”

Describes Anglican temperament with these characteristics:

7. **Comprehensive** -- “truth is known and guarded by maintaining the tension between counter-opposite statements concerning truth ...personal freedom and communal responsibility, ...sacred and secular”

8. **Ambiguous** -- “living with what may appear to be irreconcilable differences ... tolerate theological and ethical messiness ... wait patiently ... pray with a discerning heart, and to listen with an open mind”

9. **Open-minded** -- “encourage a searching, questioning, reasonable mind always open to new insights and change”

10. **Intuitive** -- “prefer art to philosophy and are more at home in the world of symbol, myth and ritual than systematic theology”

11. **Aesthetic** -- “Truth, goodness, and beauty are related to each other in that the presence of one is judged by the presence of the other two”

12. **Moderate** -- “model a temperate, balanced, reasonable approach to life. It is a life in which prayer, work, study and play have a rhythm”

13. **Naturalistic** -- “reverence for and take delight in the natural earthy rhythm of life ... contributions of natural sciences... using live flowers, real candles”

14. **Historical** -- “learn from a careful reflection on the past ... strive to maintain our roots”

15. **Political** -- “affirm free, peaceful, public debate as a basis for political unity ... church should influence social, political, and economic life”

From *What is Anglicanism?*, Urban Holmes, Morehouse Publ.

Holmes sees Anglicanism as “a unique way of looking, making sense and acting in the experience of God .. At its best in liturgy, poetry, music and its life” not in writing great theology. Note characteristics such as:

**Sensibility** -- taking into account the whole of experience, ambiguity and all

**Mystery of the ordinary** -- in that the extraordinary shines through in the ordinary

**Feminine** -- comprehensiveness, darkness and light

In *The Anglican Vision*, James Griffiss, Cowley

He speaks of -

1. **Tension of continuity and change**
2. **Incarnational**
3. **Roomiest church** -- tolerant of doctrinal differences and a diversity of practice

In *The Future of Anglicanism*, Robert Hannaford, ed., Gracewing, Leominster, Herefordshire Paul Avis notes -

1. **Affirmation (of central truths) and restraint**
2. **Practical not speculative faith**
3. **Liturgical rehearsing of faith**

In *The Renewal of Anglicanism*, Alister McGrath, Morehouse He notes -

1. **Live with differences**
2. **Dynamics among:**

  **Mainline: Apologetics** -- to make Christianity credible and relevant

 **Evangelical: Evangelism** -- vitality of the Gospel

  **Catholic: Spirituality** -- resources needed to grow in faith

Robert A. Gallagher, 1999

 Episcopal Spirituality

The Episcopal Church has developed a particular form of Christian spirituality that has emerged from its roots in Anglicanism and in the American experience. That spirit can be found in most parishes and dioceses of the church (but not all). What follows is just one attempt to describe that spirituality.

A Christian Spirituality

Grounded in the love of God for humanity as seen in the incarnation of Jesus Christ. Christian Life is life lived in Christ: "Christ in us and we in him." Worship, doctrine and action are the means by which we participate in the life of Christ's Body, the Church; in her unity, holiness, catholicity and apostolicity. They are the means by which we participate in the Church's mission, "to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ." We are restored to unity as we are drawn into the prayer of Christ, the mind of Christ, and the work of Christ. In prayer, study, and work we become instruments of God's holy mission.

A Spirituality of Beauty

We tend to take delight in the natural rhythm of life. We rejoice in the beauty of creation and have a strong commitment to environmental protection. Our worship strives for good music, a sense of flow and grace, and poetry and drama. We seek beauty in our worship space using artists, live flowers, and real candles in creating an appropriate climate.

A World Embracing Spirituality

1. Our tendency is to **affirm life and this world**. Those things in life that give us pleasure are understood as being fundamentally good. Fun, our bodies, material things, good food are all accepted as part of living a full life. Our call to faith is linked to hope and love rather than fear and guilt.
2. For most of us the **Christian life is lived in the context of our family, work and civic life**. Those are the places in which the love of Christ may flow through us to offer light and hope in the world. We generally see that process as organic rather than planned. To the extent we have been touched by the love of God we will show that love in our daily life.
3. We see Christian faith as **having political implications**. Episcopalians have a long history of involvement in the civic life of communities and the nation. The individual Christian is called to both inform and act on their conscience. The church doesn’t usually ask its members to accept particular political views but it does ask members to consider in their thinking process what might be understood from the Scriptures, what the church has learned over the centuries (as seen in the Tradition and the contemporary councils of the church) and in their own Reason. As a church we take positions on public issues. Those positions are usually on the liberal side of the political spectrum.

An Adult Spirituality

We value **personal responsibility** **and freedom** in the process of shaping and living life as a Christian. Adults are invited to **explore and experiment with** the resources of Christian and Anglican spirituality to discover ways that best nurture them in the Christian life. We understand that what feeds one person may not feed another. We each work out our relationship with God, each other, creation and self in unique ways. The adult Christian shapes a spiritual life that fits his or her own personality and circumstances. Please note -- this isn’t about whether children are included (they are) but about what kind of adults we hope children will become.

A Balanced-Holistic Spirituality

We are moderate, seeking a balanced, reasonable approach to life. It is a life in which prayer, work, study and play have a rhythm, taking into account the whole of experience, ambiguity and all.

An Organic Spirituality

We understand individual spiritual development to be rooted in communal daily prayer that shapes our relationship to God. Decisions are made in the context of communal prayer so the Holy Spirit fills and enfolds us. We are sacramental - "outward and visible signs of inward and spiritual grace" ; as Christ was the sacrament of God, the church is the sacrament of Christ in the world.

An Open–Minded Spirituality

1. Our way has stressed **an open-minded, searching approach** to faith. Engagement with God and the church is intended to open us to the mystery that is God. So doubt, questioning, exploration and openness to new insights is a path to God and wholeness of life. This involves being open to what may be learned: from studying and praying the Scriptures, from the wisdom gained as the church has struggled with life’s issues in the past, from the councils of the church today, from the insights and views of other people, and from the application of our own reason and what we have learned from our experience.
2. We see value in **comprehensiveness and ambiguity**. Our way includes holding opposites in tension, appreciating paradoxical thinking, assuming that what appears to be irreconcilable differences may contain a balanced truth, allowing a certain messiness and grayness in our theological and ethical thinking. Living in this way means developing a tolerance of differences in thinking and practice. It also calls for a capacity to listen deeply and respectfully, to have courage in expressing one’s own understanding, to wait on God in silence and with patience. Our unity is not the unity of sameness of thought but a unity of trust in God and God’s wisdom. This makes for a roomy church with space for many (as long as they will accept allowing space for others).

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CONGREGATIONAL CULTURE:

TENSIONS IN SOME CONGREGATIONS

These tensions have been observed in congregations by participants in the Church Development Institute.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **A spirit of abundance & generosity**  | 🡨-------🡪 | **Do with little, save,** **the less expensive way** |
| **Hospitality** | 🡨-------🡪 | **“Take care of me”** |
| **Hospitality** | 🡨-------🡪 | **Anger, rage toward** **each other, hostility** |
| **Complex, rich culture** -**smells, sound, silences, sights; beauty**  | 🡨-------🡪 | **Nothing that is offensive** |
| **Adult - people make choices** | 🡨-------🡪 | **People are** **protected from what**  **makes them anxious** |
| **Widely owned** | 🡨-------🡪 | **Turf** |
| **Long term health**  | 🡨-------🡪 | **Short term** **satisfaction** |

Note: even the “healthier” cultural characteristics can become harmful if they do not continue to adapt over time. Therefore, it is important that adaptability and flexibility become characteristics of the culture. Otherwise this year’s “healthy” culture may become next year’s problem.

**THREE MOVEMENTS OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE**

This model is based on the work of Henri Nouwen in *Reaching Out*, Doubleday & Co., 1975

Nouwen writes that “the spiritual life is that constant movement between the poles of loneliness and solitude, hostility and hospitality, illusion and prayer. The more we come to the painful confession of our loneliness, hostility and illusions, the more we are able to see solitude, hospitality and prayer as part of the vision of our life.”

REFLECTION ON THE PARISH

This is an opportunity to contemplate your congregation by using the framework of “the three movements”. Circle phrases or add your own comments in the various categories. Your objective is to see clearly. Try to avoid getting into how to change things.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  LONELINESS |  |  SOLITUDE |
| * Greedy, needy, clinging, exploitative, dependent, sentimental
 |  | * Mutual respect, consideration, for individuality, allows aloneness
 |
| * A place of rivals and competition
 |  | * Capacity to be still and silent
	+ together
 |
| * Seem to be driven by a need for words and events that bring immediate satisfaction
 |  | * Capacity to listen uncomfortable words
 |
| * Seem to assume that togetherness is “the solution"
 |  | * Value those who listen to their inner voice
 |
| * See parish as a place to take away our loneliness
 |  |  |
| * Not OK to be “closed” for now, have difficulty honoring and projecting our own inner life
 |  |  |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  HOSTILITY |  |  HOSPITALITY |
| * Impatient, frustrated, busy fearful, aggressive, passive
 |  | * Receptive, safe boundaries, question and experiment without fear; Invites openness while honoring uniqueness
 |
| * Parish life if crowded with things to do, events, expectations, pressure
 |  | * Touches pain and death with compassion
 |
| * Running from pain and death
 |  | * Sees the parish as a space in which people might be changed
 |
| * Sees new people as a danger to the way are; or to be used for parish needs
 |  | * Children are valued
 |
|  |  | * There is a “defined” culture, a sense of who we are as a community of faith; there are limits and boundaries with flexibility
 |
|  |  | * Receptivity and challenge
 |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  ILLUSION |  |  PRAYER |
| * Discussion and prayer seems trivial, full of platitudes
 |  | * Longing for “reality”
 |
| * Illusion of immortality; sentimentality, violence, overly serious
 |  | * Acceptance of our own and life’s complexities; humor, life as fragile gift
 |
| * Making idols of our dreams
 |  | * Community provides training and support for prayer and spiritual life
 |
| * Seeking quick healing; sense of desperation for fulfillment
 |  | * Patient, a waiting community, acceptance of God’s presence and absence
 |
| * Illusion of control of self and others; church (parish) the result of human efforts
 |  | * Parish’s depth is by God’
	+ Initiative
 |
| * Prayer is an “add on” to our togetherness
 |  | * Prayer is at heart of parish life
 |