BUILDING HEALTHY, HOPEFUL, AMERICAN ORTHODOX PARISH COMMUNITIES

A PARISH HEALTH INVENTORY MODEL

PARISH HEALTH MINISTRY

DIOCESE OF EASTERN PENNSYLVANIA

ORTHODOX CHURCH IN AMERICA

COMMENTS, QUESTIONS, FEEDBACK?

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BACKGROUND

THE 2010 DIOCESAN ASSEMBLY

At the 2010 Diocesan Assembly, held on November 19-20 in Bethlehem, the clergy and faithful of the Diocese of Eastern Pennsylvania engaged in an extensive discussion of the spiritual health of their parishes. The spiritual challenges of declining health, declining membership and financial instability had been a topic of discussion for many years, but each passing year brought with it an increasing urgency to deal with the problems in a definitive and proactive way. Prior to the Assembly, a concrete proposal to address the crisis facing our parishes had been considered by the clergy and by the Diocesan Council. Although that particular proposal was not adopted, the discussion that it engendered led to the Assembly's passing of a resolution to form a Parish Revitalization Committee. The Assembly established following goals for the Revitalization Committee:

- to pursue a method of revitalization of parishes within the diocese;
- to present that method to the Diocesan Council;
- to implement that method in at least one parish;
- to report the results at the 2011 Diocesan Assembly.

THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE

On May 31, 2011, His Grace, Bishop Tikhon appointed the members of the Revitalization Committee and called for an initial meeting which was held on June 25, 2011 in Bethlehem. The committee meets on a regular basis via numerous conference calls and occasional in-person meetings and has accomplished the following:

1. The adoption of a mission statement: To identify and share the proven approaches, practices and principles for achieving parish health, growth and vibrancy.

2. The selection of Saint Alexis of Wilkes-Barre, Confessor and Defender of Orthodoxy in North America as a patron saint for the committee and as an intercessor for the entire diocese as it engages in the work of revitalization. The Committee has commissioned special icon cards of St. Alexis to be distributed to all the faithful in the diocese and to be used as a means of outreach and sharing our zeal to see our parishes grow spiritually.

3. The creation of a dedicated page on the diocesan website where information relating to the work of the Committee can be found. Under the special tab on the navigation bar labeled "Revitalization," the clergy and faithful of the diocese can find the names of the committee members, the minutes of all committee meetings, and regular updates on the committee's work.

4. The call for the prayers of everyone in the diocese, first, by the offering personal prayers for revitalization and, more specifically, by daily offering a special prayer of intersession to St. Alexis of Wilkes-Barre which can be found on the diocesan website. In addition, His Grace, Bishop Tikhon has asked every parish to offer an Akathist to Saint Alexis on a monthly basis.

5. The adoption of the Parish Health Inventory Model from the Diocese of the Midwest as a template and springboard for the work of revitalization within the Diocese of Eastern Pennsylvania.

THE PARISH HEALTH INVENTORY MODEL

The adaptation of the *Parish Health Inventory Model* (PHIM) is the first-fruit of the Committee's labors. After considering several possible models by which to proceed, the Committee selected the *Parish Health Inventory Model* of the OCA's Diocese of the Midwest as a working document that could be adapted for use within our own diocese. The Committee spent many hours analyzing this document and considering its applicability to Eastern Pennsylvania. The committee recognized the excellent work of Mr, Joe Kormos, the Midwest's Parish Health Ministry Facilitator and all those in the Diocese of the Midwest who assisted him in the preparation of the PHIM. It is a very thorough and balanced method of parish assessment and the Revitalization Committee felt that it could easily be adapted with a relatively small number of changes. The Committee reviewed the entire document literally line-by-line and wrestled with many specific issues that are addressed in the PHIM.

In the course of its review of the PHIM, the committee decided to meet with Mr. Joe Kormos in order to get a better understanding of the document as well as to answer questions that arose in its review. This was done in a conference call in which Joe offered much insight to the committee. To continue the dialogue, the Committee resolved to ask him to make a presentation to the clergy of the diocese. This was done on September 20, 2011 at Holy Trinity Orthodox Church in Stroudsburg. Both of Joe's presentations offered not only insights into the development and substance of the model, but also reflections and feedback based on the experience of the Diocese of the Midwest in its implementation over the past three years. Both groups who heard these presentations were impressed by the realism behind it, that it is based on consultations with parishes, and that it is designed for real parishes. In addition, it is not predicated on particular types of parishes (old or young, so-called cradle or ethnic or convert) but parishes of varied identities and conditions that share a common desire and experience to achieve parish health and are willing to honestly look at and implement practices that have demonstrable success, but no magic bullets.

It is hoped that this document will provide a concrete tool by which our parishes might honestly evaluate themselves, isolating those areas that require growth and development and focusing their energies on making that growth happen, by the grace of God.

EIGHT FOCUS AREAS

The model consists of eight focus areas each of which is subdivided into three to five subareas. Each subarea is then described by a set of suggested behaviors, attitudes and good practices and amplified with a set of results metrics and potential leading indicators for each area. Discussion questions are also posed.

1. GOSPEL CENTERED VISION

> *Clear sense of purpose; Parish self awareness; Atmosphere of excellence; Growth & replication*

2. VIBRANT WORSHIP

> *Liturgical Preparedness; Congregational participation; Effective preaching;*

3. SHARED LEADERSHIP

> *Sharing and delegating responsibility; Leading change; Functional structures; Open financial practice & reporting*

4. OPEN COMMUNICATION

> *Consensus and dialogue; Dealing with conflict; Internal communication methods*

5. AUTHENTIC COMMUNITY

> *Loving atmosphere & honest fellowship; Entry and incorporation mechanisms; Connectedness to larger church; Appropriate facilities*

6. CHRISTIAN FORMATION

> *Orthodox Spirituality; Whole Parish Education; Financial Generosity*

7. ACTIVE SERVICE

> *Discernment of gifts; Effective ministries*

8. SPREADING THE GOSPEL

> *Parish & Personal Evangelization; Sensitivity to spiritual needs of others; External Communication*

While time and further discussion will improve this model, in the end no model — regardless of how effective it may be -- will *cause* a parish to grow or become more vibrant. The parish and its members have to act. This or any other tool will have no value if it is not used and put into action by parishes.

APPLICATION AREAS

We believe this inventory can have utility for any parish that desires to strengthen itself. Here are some situations:

HEALTHY PARISHES

...may use the model to assess or inventory strengths and weaknesses — and to identify and focus improvements efforts.

PLATEAU PARISHES"

Bodies at rest are in that state because there is nothing propelling them forward. The model can hopefully describe a better state for the parish and stimulate ideas about how to move forward.

PARISHES IN EARLY DECLINE

Some in the parish can probably see the need for change but the decline is often slow enough that the symptoms are not always noticed. This model attempts to describe one version of a stronger future.

"PARISHES IN PERIL"

Parishes stuck in yesterday without a vision of a brighter future or in a state of denial may receive a useful nudge by simply discussing one or two portions of the model. It can hopefully allow the parish to *face facts* and to develop a sense of urgency about its future.

PASTORAL TRANSITIONS

Prior to placing/receiving new pastors, parishes may want to assess their status, where they desire to head and to openly share these ideas with new clergy.

COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW -- OR ONE AREA AT A TIME?

There are numerous approaches that parishes can use to apply this model as an inventory of good parish practice.

One approach would be to conduct a comprehensive review of all eight dimensions/"focus areas" in order to identify a *comprehensive inventory* of the parish's strengths and challenges and a related set of improvement actions.

An alternative approach would be to decide to explore one of the eight focus area at a time – perhaps as part of successive parish council meetings – one area per month or quarter. Appendix A offers suggestions as to how to make this work effectively in your parish.

ONE VIEW NOT THE VIEW

The inventory in this document is *descriptive* – and even *prescriptive* - of a parish which is driven to improve – continually dissatisfied with itself and desiring to become well. It offers the view of an "intentional", high structure, parish in which all are encouraged to find an active role to contribute to the up-building of the community and to help that community shine its light to the world.

Figure 1 A primary value of the inventory may be as a framework for conversation and dialogue.

We anticipate that some, perhaps many, priests and communities will find the *personality* of the model to *not* be a good fit for them. "*We could never be like that!*" Certainly every parish is different –size, demographics, heritage, core values, culture, and personality. There can be no single universal set of correct practices in all of the areas covered by the model.

In these cases, the model's greatest value may be in helping the community to express, with the guidance of their priest, the atmosphere of healthiness and vibrancy that *is* appropriate to the parish.

While the essential points of the eight focus areas were heartily endorsed by attendees at the Parish Health Summit, the detailed practices behaviors and attitudes described in the model are not applied consistently at all parishes. No parish represented at the Summit exhibits all of these qualities in the model.

The model then is *one view* but far from *the only view* of healthy Orthodox parish life. It is, we hope, a starting point for a valuable parish conversation.

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FOCUS AREA 1

GOSPEL CENTERED VISION

CLEAR SENSE OF PURPOSE

PARISH SELF AWARENESS

ATMOSPHERE OF EXCELLENCE

GROWTH AND REPLICATION

1. GOSPEL CENTERED VISION

A HEALTHY PARISH CLEARLY UNDERSTANDS THAT ITS REASON FOR EXISTENCE IS TO SERVE THE LIVING GOD AND TO SHARE ITS LOVE OF GOD WITH OTHERS. THIS VISION PROVIDES A FOUNDATION FOR HOW IT BEHAVES, HOW IT PRESENTS ITSELF TO ITS NEIGHBORS AND WHAT IT TRULY VALUES. THE VISION IS BASED ON A REALISTIC CONTEXT THAT INTEGRATES ITS PAST, ITS ASSETS, STRENGTHS, LIMITATIONS AND ENVIRONMENT.

Clear sense of purpose

Parish self awareness

Atmosphere of excellence

Growth and replication

Check those which are performed well and with appropriate regularity.

Circle those practices/behaviors which are performed inconsistently or ineffectively; need attention

CLEAR SENSE OF PURPOSE

1. As a parish we clearly understand that our reason for existence is to serve the Living God and to share our love of God with others. Christ Himself provides us with our identity. We are, as a parish, in a sense, what He is - a part of Him.

> *For if the trumpet makes an uncertain sound who will prepare for battle?*
> *I Cor 14:8*

2. We ask questions like: "What does God want our community to look/be like in future years?" What is He calling us to become?

3. Our parish vision is active... running water...our community is striving to be something greater than itself and we understand what that is. Our parish is on the way to somewhere. The journey is challenging.

4. Our parish is NOT a club or cultural center, a museum, self absorbed or passive. The vision is not about reliving the golden years, yesterday or past successes. We are not dominated by nostalgia.

5. Parishioners *understand* the parish's vision for serving God *and are connecting with it.* It is broadly owned. It has been arrived at over time – certainly not from a single session or discussion.

6. The priest, parish leaders and parishioners are generally on the "same page". They have arrived at a vision *together* with neither dominating the conversation. This vision is NOT the vision of the priest alone - nor of a few parishioners or lay leaders.

> *In a past OCA survey on parish life one respondent captured the consensus of many by describing his parish's key challenge as:*
>
> *"Acquiring a vision of life as a vibrant Orthodox Parish -- rather than a recycle of previous experiences. Getting out of the old paradigm. Overcoming old attitudes about why we exist and getting into a forward thinking vision."*

7. The mission and vision are re-evaluated at regular intervals. They are actively discussed and honed by parish leaders and the parish.

8. Some parishes will commit missions and visions to writing. In these cases, the written words are not collecting dust but rather act as a framework. They are consulted often and used in defining parish goals and priorities and making parish decisions.

9. Our vision is made concrete with a set of specific tailored ministries (formal or informal) that bring the vision to life. The parish budget enables these ministries.

PARISH SELF-AWARENESS

1. We have a clear understanding of the primary geographic area that we serve and are willing to serve *all* in that geographic area.
2. Our parish is aware of where we fit in the religious landscape of our town/city/region - what we distinctively offers to a religiously pluralistic society. How we are the same -- and how we are different.
3. We have a realistic understanding of how our neighbors see our parish. We care about delivering our light to the neighborhood/community. As a result we are NOT treated by the community (and media) as an ethnic oddity.
4. We have a realistic understanding of our assets (beyond financial), limitations and environment. We understand and appreciate what we, as a parish, do well. As these change they are re-examined. These changes are factored into our parish vision and goals and into updated ministry activities.
5. We are aware of our roots/heritage. We build on it – but are not enslaved by it
6. As a parish we are not in denial of some important issue or dysfunction. The parish seeks and accepts help from others.
7. Our parish vision is particular to the circumstances of our parish as the local community in its neighborhood/ geography. We are NOT trying to be identical to or imitate other parishes. We are able to identify good behaviors and practices present in other parishes – and discern their applicability to us.
8. The parish can answer the question: "Who would come to this church and why?"

ATMOSPHERE OF EXCELLENCE

1. An atmosphere of striving and humbly offering our *best* to God pervades our parish community.
2. We take reasonable risks to improve our ability to serve God.
3. Our parish is not satisfied with itself. We inevitably settle for 'less than the best' in various situations – but we are not satisfied with that. *We have a relentless discomfort of the status quo.*
4. While, conversely, our parish is <u>not</u> striving for perfection, we consistently look for new and better ways to do things.
5. The parish budget reflects an orientation of improvement, development and excellence.
6. As a community we learn from our mistakes.

GROWTH & REPLICATION

1. Our parish sees itself as growing. We believe our can become "healthier "-- and as a result grow.
2. Our parish has a clear understanding of its appropriate size.
3. As our parish grows and achieves its appropriate size we foresee spawning new Orthodox Christian communities.
4. We are prepared to nurture and assist those new communities to grow.

PARISH DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Who in the parish should be involved in defining a vision?
- What are the elements of a useful vision for our parish?
- What questions should it answer?
- How do we keep discussions and efforts about visions and purpose from being hopelessly general or overly specific? How is a "parish vision" different from a "dream"? From a "plan"?
- Do we have multiple competing visions in our parish? If so why?
- Are we as a community "on the way to somewhere"? Is it where we want to go? Where God wants us to go?
- How essential is "planning" and setting priorities as part of God's church?

METRICS

What are some leading or lagging indicators of progress in this area of focus?

- # of times/ways the vision is preached, taught and reinforced.
- % of parishioners who could accurately describe the parish's vision? Accurately list parish priorities?
- # of parishes asking our parish for advice and insight? #who actively imitate or borrow from us.
- # of new parishes spawned by our parish?
- % of parishioners whose lives have been/ are being positively changed by participation in our parish.
- # of times we, as a parish, make the same mistakes annually, quarterly, monthly, weekly, daily.
- #/% of people living within (e.g.) a three block radius of the parish that could say at least something accurate about the parish.
- % of people who know our parish for our food, rummage sales craft fair etc. as opposed to our Gospel centered ministries.

HOW DO WE RATE OUR PARISH ON THIS FOCUS AREA[1]?

For each subcategory place an X in the column that best expresses your view of our parish's maturity level.

Focus Area/ Subarea	Level 0 **UNCONSCIOUSLY INCOMPETENT** *As a parish we're virtually unaware of this area as important to building a healthy parish*	Level 1 **CONSCIOUSLY INCOMPETENT** *We're aware of this area -- but haven't made much progress on improving*	Level 2 **CONSCIOUSLY SEMI-COMPETENT** *We've worked at this & are showing signs of clear commitment & improvement*	Level 3 **CONSCIOUSLY COMPETENT** *Good behaviors & practices prevail – but we need to continually remind ourselves & avoid bad habits.*	Level 4 **UNCONSCIOUSLY COMPETENT** *Good behaviors and practices in this area have been 'baked in' to the life of the parish*
Gospel Centered Vision	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Mission, vision & identity	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Parish self awareness	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Excellence based approach	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Growth and replication	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

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[1] This rating sheet will follow each of the sections. It is hoped that it may provide parish groups that are working with the inventory a structure for drawing conclusions about what they see as strengths and weaknesses and where they disagree. There is a composite rating for all subareas at the end of the document

FOCUS AREA 2

VIBRANT WORSHIP

LITURGICAL PREPAREDNESS

CONGREGATION PARTICIPATION AND ATMOSPHERE

EFFECTIVE PREACHING

2 VIBRANT WORSHIP

HEALTHY PARISH COMMUNITIES VIEW THE DIVINE LITURGY AS THE HIGHEST ORDER OF HUMAN ACTIVITY. THEY SEE LITURGICAL WORSHIP AS A FOUNDATION FOR ALL OTHER PARISH ENDEAVORS. THROUGH ITS LITURGICAL WORSHIP WORSHIPPERS STRIVE TO PLEASE GOD, NOT THEMSELVES. THEY CONSISTENTLY OFFER THEIR BEST THROUGH LITURGICAL WORSHIP THAT IS HOLY, JOYOUS, PEACEFUL, THANKFUL AND ENLIVENING.

Liturgical preparedness

Congregation participation and atmosphere

Effective preaching

Check those which are performed well and with appropriate regularity.

Circle those practices which are performed inconsistently or ineffectively

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LITURGICAL PREPAREDNESS

1. Worship is conducted in the best possible manner. All involved in worship use appropriate care to consistently deliver their best efforts to offer worship pleasing to God.
2. As a parish we view Divine Liturgy as the foundation for all other parish activities.
3. Priests and deacons serve with enthusiasm and prayerful energy.
4. Choir/singers are prepared and rehearse and strive for clarity and dynamic movement. Music is organized, familiar and yet fresh. Music is chosen to enhance the text of services – not to be a concert.
5. Readers are trained, knowledgeable and prepared to read clearly and with intelligence.
6. Servers arrive early and are prepared, knowledgeable and mentored. They serve with crisp efficiency and do not bring attention to themselves.
7. The church and vestments are clean and neat.
8. Services are conducted with a sense of rubrical correctness appropriate to the OCA practices and in accordance with the Diocesan bishop's guidelines, and with a pace that delivers a sense of flow, movement and energy.
9. Communicants have fasted and the importance of confession is cultivated.
10. The parish budget supports appropriate training" for worship leaders. (Tuition/travel for workshops, continuing education etc.) The budget provides funds for maintaining and enhancing the beauty of the worship space, vestments, liturgical articles, service books, music etc.
11. Errors and mistakes in the liturgy are not dwelt upon.
12. Sources/root causes of continued mediocrity are occasionally reviewed and examined. However rebukes are seldom.

CONGREGATION PARTICIPATION AND ATMOSPHERE

1. We understand that the fundamental purpose of church services is to worship God. We see worship of God as the highest order of human activity – the greatest thing that men and women can do. In our worship we strive to please

God, not ourselves -- and see this as a great honor. We expect to get nothing other than communion with God and his people.

2. As members of the body we seek every opportunity to place ourselves in the presence of God though worship. We come to church often.
3. Worshippers assemble promptly to do the *work* of the people. They are attentive, active participants in Divine Liturgy. They are NOT the audience – they are co-celebrants with the clergy. They are the Church manifesting, confessing and proclaiming His presence and Kingdom in the world.
4. Worship is ascendant, contagious yet dignified, enlivening, holy, joyous, peaceful, and thankful. It is sober, not emotion filled, pandemonium or even spontaneous. It engages the mind and the heart.
5. We do not wander around, enter and leave unnecessarily, disrupt others through conversation or inattentive behavior or regularly neglect services in order to attend to other activities such as cooking, accounting, church school, etc.
6. We tolerate children and their behavior within reasonable limits.
7. The atmosphere of worship is seasonally appropriate. (Decorations, Colors, music/chanting, liturgical actions.)
8. As a parish we make serious efforts to underscore the importance of our annual festal cycle. Members make serious effort to participate in feast day services and fasting seasons.
9. The weekly cycle of worship offers more than Sunday morning – and people make a true effort to participate.
10. We make extra effort to find roles for youth in our worship.

EFFECTIVE PREACHING

1. Preaching is edifying, uplifting nourishing and challenging.
2. Preaching enhances what is already taught in worship services.
3. Preaching enlivens the worshipper's understanding of the Gospel and Holy Tradition.
4. People can integrate the message of sermons to their lives.
5. Preaching is scriptural & patristic (timeless)

PARISH DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Do these items properly describe "Vibrant Worship"? How would we adapt this? What might we add? With what do we disagree?
- In what ways can worship in our parish become more vibrant?
- Consider a liturgical service in our parish (or another parish) that was particularly vibrant. What made it that way? What are we like when worship in our parish is at its best?
- When we arrive late for services what does that say to others about how we view worship? Is (regularly) arriving at worship late really just *our own business*? Or does it affect others? If we maintain our individuality and freedom on appropriate arrival and departure into and from the temple have we really understood the essence of assembling for the eucharist?

POTENTIAL METRICS

What are some leading or lagging indicators of progress in this area of focus?

- average attendance at Sunday Liturgy, feast days, vespers. (% or #)
- % of worshippers /servers/ singers/ greeters etc. arriving on time.
- % of budget for worship.
- # people directly involved in worship: choir, servers, readers, greeters, etc.
- % of people who could remember something nourishing from the day's sermon 2 hours after conclusion of the service.
- # of services that are held weekly/annually.

HOW DO WE RATE OUR PARISH ON THIS FOCUS AREA?

For each subcategory place an X in the column that best expresses your view of our parish's maturity level.

	Level 0 **UNCONSCIOUSLY INCOMPETENT** *As a parish we're virtually unaware of this area as important to building a healthy parish*	Level 1 **CONSCIOUSLY INCOMPETENT** *We're aware of this area -- but haven't made much progress on improving*	Level 2 **CONSCIOUSLY SEMI-COMPETENT** *We've worked at this & are showing signs of clear commitment & improvement*	Level 3 **CONSCIOUSLY COMPETENT** *Good behaviors & practices prevail – but we need to continually remind ourselves & avoid bad habits.*	Level 4 **UNCONSCIOUSLY COMPETENT** *Good behaviors and practices in this area have been 'baked in' to the life of the parish*
Vibrant Worship	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Liturgical preparedness	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Congregation Participation	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Effective Preaching	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

FOCUS AREA 3

SHARED LEADERSHIP

SHARING AND DELEGATING RESPONSIBILITY

FLUENCY IN LEADING AND EFFECTING CHANGE

FUNCTIONAL STRUCTURES AND ADMINISTRATION

EFFECTIVE, OPEN FINANCIAL PRACTICE AND REPORTING

3. SHARED LEADERSHIP

HEALTHY PARISHES CRAFT ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURES THAT ARE APPROPRIATE TO THE SIZE AND VISION OF THE COMMUNITY. MINISTRIES ARE DEFINED, FUNDED AND EQUIPPED. PARISH LAY LEADERS SEE THEMSELVES AS STEWARDS OF A CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY COLLABORATING WITH THE RECTOR TO BUILD HEALTH AND VIBRANCY OF THE PARISH.

Sharing and delegating responsibility

Fluency in leading and effecting change

Functional structures and administration

Effective, open financial practice and reporting

Check those which are performed well and with appropriate regularity.

Circle those practices which are performed inconsistently or ineffectively.

SHARING AND DELEGATING RESPONSIBILITY

1. Our parish recognizes that the priest does not serve at the discretion of the parish council but, rather, is appointed by the diocesan Bishop, to preside over and lead the parish in all aspects of parish life.

2. Our parish works to develop a sense of personal accountability of leaders. Those accepting a job/role attempt to execute the job with a sense of duty and excellence.

3. Parish lay leaders see themselves as leaders/elders of a Christian community co-responsible, under the rector's guidance, for the health and vibrancy of the parish. They are NOT the parish business managers, trustees, owners, disinterested commentators and/or critics.

4. Work is done by those best prepared and equipped to do the work. Ministries, activities, projects NOT requiring a clerical collar are assigned to/undertaken by lay persons.

   Since every parish has more laity - and the laity invariably have more & varied experience bases - the parish gets more done -- and done more effectively -- by actively, appropriately empowering talents of the laity.

5. Decisions are made at the most appropriate level/role.

6. The priest trusts parishioners and delegates responsibility. He actively works to build personal initiative among parishioners. He works hard not to overly control. He is 'working himself <u>out</u> of' most jobs. He is a coach, catalyst, mentor, teacher and role model and much less so a doer, manager or gatekeeper.

   > *Leadership is the capacity for transformation --to initiate a future distinct from the past. Management is the capacity to give order and structure in service of high performance.*
   >
   > Alban Institute

7. Leaders lead. Parish leaders pledge/offer first and model good stewardship

8. Parish leaders willingly seek and receive outside assistance. (*"The doctor who treats himself has a fool for a patient."*)

9. The parish effectively balances the importance of engaging new persons and fresh perspectives with the need for consistency and continuity in parish leadership.

LEADING CHANGE

1. As a parish we are capable of change and growth. Like the man at the pool of Bethesda in John 5 – we want to be made well.
2. We've "always done it this way" and other idea killing bromides are recognized as potential inhibitors of positive movement by the parish.

   A more complete list could include: "A good idea but..", "Against policy.", "All right in theory." , "Be practical"; "Costs too much"; Don't start anything yet"; "It needs more study"; "Not in the budget"; "We've never done it that way";" It's not your job". Insert your favorite here _____.

3. Parish leaders actively think through a desired change and evaluate approaches for effecting and implementing changes. They attempt to learn from right and wrong ways to effect change.

   For example:

   Figure 2 A parish ministry group develops plans for upcoming year.

   - *We… establish the need/urgency for the change*
   - *establish buy in from a set of appropriate leaders or parishioners;*
   - *make the case for recommended changes;*
   - *understand key obstacles to various changes;*
   - *provide models and experiences that help people envision positive outcomes from changes.*
   - *help to involve parishioners with the change and consider appropriate timing for changes.*
   - *consider ways to anchor the change in parish culture.*

4. Inspiring the parish to growth and change is *not* seen as solely the responsibility of the priest.
5. Parish leaders understand that they are often seen as role models by others in our community and try to live up to that role as best they can.
6. The parish celebrates progress and successes.
7. We consistently express appreciation and gratitude to parishioners (and others) for their efforts and generosity.

FUNCTIONAL STRUCTURES & ADMINISTRATION

1. The level of administrative structure is appropriate to the size & personality of our parish as it is today[2] – *not as it was <u>yesterday</u>.* It is not overly constraining and bureaucratic. Likewise structure is NOT overly loose and chaotic. As a result we do not miss opportunities because of too much or too little structure. Likewise we do not waste time due to excessively lax structure or due to bottlenecks or relying on 1-2 people for most everything.
2. Parish leaders realize the balance point (structure vs.ad hoc) will shift in the parish's life. We occasionally explore whether current practice reflects appropriate balance. We are cognizant of changes in structure needed as we mature.
3. We have appropriate volunteers and/or staff (secretary, maintenance personnel, ministry leaders, additional clergy etc.) for the size we are/desire to be. We understand the necessary conditions for adding staff.
4. Significant portions of parish council meetings focus on ministries, witness, and service. There is a clear relationship between the parish council and parish ministries.
5. The parish budget expresses and demonstrates investment in the vision and ministries of the parish.
6. We equip parish leaders to become better leaders, ministers and administrators through appropriate training and continuing education.
7. Clergy compensation is consistent with Diocesan guidelines.
8. We actively work to comply with OCA Misconduct policies.
9. We comply with OCA statute and Diocesan and parish by-laws and our by-laws are published and readily available to parishioners.

EFFECTIVE, OPEN, FINANCIAL PRACTICE AND REPORTING

1. We have an annual parish budget as well as three to five year vision budgets.
2. Regular basic communication on the parish's financial condition is provided monthly, quarterly and annually; varying, appropriate detail for each.
3. These financial reports are clear, sufficiently detailed, factually accurate representations of the parish' financial health. Summary reports can be understood by non-accounting professionals.
4. All parish funds (including bookstores, women's groups, etc.) are included in financial summaries and audits.
5. Tax statements are provided to donors.
6. Information about personal tithes and offerings is maintained confidential.
7. Restricted funds are used consistent with donor intent.
8. We provide the necessary reports to the Diocese in a timely manner as requested.

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[2] It can also be argued that the size and character of how the parish envisions itself *in the future* should *also* be among the criteria for evaluating appropriate levels of structure in the parish.

PARISH DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Is the level of structure in our parish appropriate for us as we are today? As we see ourselves in the future?
- Do we spin our wheels due to lack of organization or dependence on one or two families?
- Does the level of structure overwhelm us – making us feel like a secular institution -- leaving no room for a life in Christ?
- What changes to leadership approach could be valuable to consider?
- Do we see an appropriate level of personal initiative (on parish affairs and ministries) by parishioners or leaders? If not what may be stifling that initiative?
- Do we understand the practical, conceptual and spiritual constraints and "bottlenecks" in our parish? Facilities? Financial resources? Personal initiative? Trust? Ministries? Youth retention? What keeps us from fully harnessing our resources?
- Are we a parish that truly wants to become stronger, more vibrant and "healthy"? In what ways "Yes"? In what ways "No"?
- When new people enter the parish can the question 'who should I talk to about xyz' be answered with reasonable ease. Is the answer is always "the priest". Why?
- Is it time to add paid staff in our parish? What specifically are the conditions for this?
- How can we improve our parish council? It's make-up? Its overall agenda? Its sense of purpose and clarity of role? Its relationship to parish ministries? What do parishioners think of the parish council – if anything?
- Can we name one improvement to financial practice we've made? To consider?

POTENTIAL METRICS

What are some leading or lagging indicators of progress in this area of focus?

- # of people holding active jobs in the parish
- % of time priest spends on tasks that could/should be done by others
- Stability of parish leadership. *Too stable/stale? Lack continuity?*
- % of person initiating ideas and following through. *Does lack of follow through necessarily mean parishioners are disinterested or place the church too low on their priority list? Or could other factors related to parish structure or ministries be at play?*
- Time to fill volunteer leader/ministry openings
- Typical length of time to get a new member to feel/be an active part of the body. What is our desired target?
- # of changes in methods, practices etc in the last two years
- Our batting average for effective changes – those that last and deliver an improvement.
- % of parish budget devoted to particular ministry areas. (e.g charitable; evangelism)
- Budget spent on developing parish ministry leaders
- # weeks grass is not cut; or the window sills not clean.

HOW DO WE RATE OUR PARISH ON THIS FOCUS AREA?					
For each subcategory place an X in the column that best expresses your view of our parish's maturity level.					
Focus Area/ Subarea	**Level 0** **UNCONSCIOUSLY INCOMPETENT** *As a parish we're virtually unaware of this area as important to building a healthy parish*	**Level 1** **CONSCIOUSLY INCOMPETENT** *We're aware of this area -- but haven't made much progress on improving*	**Level 2** **CONSCIOUSLY SEMI-COMPETENT** *We've worked at this & are showing signs of clear commitment & improvement*	**Level 3** **CONSCIOUSLY COMPETENT** *Good behaviors & practices prevail – but we need to continually remind ourselves & avoid bad habits.*	**Level 4** **UNCONSCIOUSLY COMPETENT** *Good behaviors and practices in this area have been 'baked in' to the life of the parish*
Shared Leadership	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Sharing/delegating responsibility	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Fluency in leading change	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Functional Structures	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Effective financial practice	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

FOCUS AREA 4

OPEN COMMUNICATION

CONSENSUS & DIALOGUE

DEALING WITH CONFLICT

EFFECTIVE INTERNAL COMMUNICATION METHODS

4. Open Communication

Establishing a collaborative leadership structure requires an ability to effectively communicate as a body. To do so, healthy communities work to establish a clear competency for consensus and dialogue, listening, and an ability to humbly speak the truth to one another. They seek and integrate multiple perspectives and marginal views. Then they consistently reinforce communication by appropriately harnessing multiple forms of spoken, written, visual and electronic communications forms.

Consensus & dialogue
Dealing with conflict
Effective internal communication methods

Check those which are performed well and with appropriate regularity.
Circle those practices which are performed inconsistently or ineffectively.

Consensus and Dialogue

1. We work to develop a culture of consensus – a competency to "find the center" about matters important to parish life. We develop our ability to find solutions best for the body NOT for us personally. We minimize a feeling of winning and losing. Votes are rare.
2. As much as possible consensus approaches are followed in the way in which decisions are made throughout the community – in committees, small ministry groups, parish council and even parish meetings.
3. We understand that consensus building requires discussion, debate, and a willingness to accept and deal with disagreement and a membership working for authentic community. (See next section.)
4. Consensus building requires that all points of view are given serious consideration and treatment. We value not only the decision reached but the community which must live by the decision. As a result we seek multiple perspectives, explore multiple options and seek out marginal views.
5. Important decisions in the life of the parish are communicated clearly and appropriately. Clarifying questions are sought and dealt with promptly and appropriately.
6. Few topics are beyond discussion or question. Persons who disagree with decisions or methods are encouraged to speak up, they are listened to and their ideas are used to improve decisions. Mature criticism is possible and welcomed.
7. The priest and parishioners trust and learn from one another.

Dealing with Conflict

1. Compassion, humility, and love are the foundation of any approach to resolution. … "By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for each other."
2. Clergy and parishioners make serious efforts to make effective communication a priority. Communication is as direct and personal as possible and appropriate.
3. We are continually striving to become better listeners and to see things from the point of view of others.
4. People are treated with respect & dignity.

5. As issues arise we attempt to respond quickly – to avoid allowing issues to ferment and become larger or more potent. Apologies are free and the cost is larger if the issue or action remains unresolved.

6. Communication in a parish community sometimes requires dealing with difficult people. We realize that when dealing with difficult people it is usually more effective to change our behavior than to attempt to change theirs.[34]

EFFECTIVE INTERNAL COMMUNICATION METHODS

1. Multiple forms of communication are used as appropriate to keep people informed and reminded of the work and activities of the parish and parishioner's responsibilities as members of the body of Christ.

   These might include sermons, announcements by clergy &/or laity, written hardcopy, bulletin boards, displays, photo boards, signs, parish calendars, individual and group email, web sites, blogs, videos, parish meetings/retreats/forums, electronic surveys, phone trees etc.

2. Written communication vehicles (bulletins newsletters, websites) are dignified, well written, neat, attractively formatted, avoid clutter, utilize photos, and avoid jargon. They convey a look and feel of a well run church – but not a business or club.

3. Parish council minutes/summaries are readily available. We try to engage the parish in the administrative life of the community. We seek input and feedback.

4. We have an up to date email list for parishioners and inquirers.

5. Email is used to deliver rapid, low cost contact with parishioners on ministry plans, announcements, issues, and events.

6. Important messages are repeated and reviewed often.

7. Parish communication teaches and reinforces as well as informs.

8. Small groups are harnessed effectively as communication vehicles. They are used as a tool for seeking multiple perspectives and for dialoguing on approaches and solutions to problems.

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[3] According to one model for dealing with difficult people, behaviors fall into generally four quadrants based on whether people are motivated by task accomplishment or people contact on one axis, and whether they demonstrate a passive or active level of assertiveness on the other axis.

The normal zones (quadrants) of behavior are generally identified as "Get it done". "Get appreciation", "Get it right", or "Get along"

Some extreme examples of the outer extensions to normal behavior become hard to deal with and by simply modifying your behavior you may be able to deal with them.

[4] Some suggest that when confronted with difficult behavior we should us the STOP method.
   a. **S**pecify the behavior to the individual
   b. **T**ell the effect of the behavior on you or the group.
   c. **O**utline the consequences of continuing this behavior.
   d. **P**rovide suggestions of alternative behavior(s).

[4] Practices might include: Agendas, facilitators, isolate info from decision topics: differentiate between "urgent" and "important"; visual aids; preparatory material; appropriate attendance for subject matter; cancel when unnecessary; avoid multiple/too many topics/ problems/ issues in one meeting.

9. We understand the role of meetings. We avoid excessive meetings. We work to

PARISH DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What is the proper character of "Open Communication" in a Christian community?
- What are the barriers to achieving reasonably broad consensus on important matters in our parish? Is this a worthy goal? Are we getting better at this – or worse?
- Does consensus necessarily imply democracy & congregationalism? What is the role of obedience?
- Can we actually identify instances where people in our parish have been known to change their mind or meet others half way?
- How have we dealt with conflict in the past? What worked? What didn't? Are we even able to discuss this?
- Have efforts toward improved communication paid off for the parish in fewer squabbles, better personal relationships, fewer sensitive or untouchable topics, less second guessing, greater motivation and increased energy and creativity?
- How do we make decisions in our parish? (Consider various types/situations of decisions)
- What needs to be communicated, how often, by whom, to whom in our parish?
- What are some common sense rules for use of email in a parish?
- Should all parish wide communication come from the priest?
- Does our parish website play a role in internal parish communications? Should it?
- Can we identify one improvement to our communication practice in our parish?

POTENTIAL METRICS

What are some leading or lagging indicators of progress in this area of focus?

- The number of untouchable topics?
- The number of parish communications received by parishioners per month? How much is "too many"? Too few?
- The number of persons who unconstructively delay decisions or work to "get their way" through foot dragging, obfuscation or intimidation has been reduced.
- Our efforts to improve our competency for consensus and dialogue, despite taking additional time and effort,
- Parish budget $ associated with communication
- # of ways/methods/tools we use to communicate internally.

make necessary meetings to be more effective and useful.[5]

	How do we rate our parish on this focus area? For each subcategory place an X in the column that best expresses your view of our parish's maturity level.				
Focus Area/ Subarea	**Level 0** UNCONSCIOUSLY INCOMPETENT *As a parish we're virtually unaware of this area as important to building a healthy parish*	**Level 1** CONSCIOUSLY INCOMPETENT *We're aware of this area -- but haven't made much progress on improving*	**Level 2** CONSCIOUSLY SEMI-COMPETENT *We've worked at this & are showing signs of clear commitment & improvement*	**Level 3** CONSCIOUSLY COMPETENT *Good behaviors & practices prevail – but we need to continually remind ourselves & avoid bad habits.*	**Level 4** UNCONSCIOUSLY COMPETENT *Good behaviors and practices in this area have been 'baked in' to the life of the parish*
Open Communication	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Consensus and Dialogue	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Dealing with Conflicts	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Effective Internal Communication Methods	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

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FOCUS AREA 5

AUTHENTIC COMMUNITY

ATMOSPHERE OF LOVE & HONEST FELLOWSHIP

ENTRY & INCORPORATION MECHANISMS

CONNECTEDNESS TO LARGER CHURCH

APPROPRIATE FACILITIES

5. Authentic Community

Enabled by an ability to dialogue openly, healthy parishes work hard to establish a culture where their identity as Orthodox Christians is lived out in such a manner that anyone who enters can see the hallmarks of Christian community: love, selfless giving, mutual encouragement, forgiveness, kindness, patience, hospitality and compassion. Christ can be recognized in their midst. People linger, smile and laugh. Healthy parishes think through assimilation paths for new members -- they make room. They see themselves not as independent congregations but as interdependent with other Orthodox communities.

Atmosphere of love & honest fellowship
Entry & incorporation mechanisms
Connectedness to larger church
Appropriate facilities

Check those which are performed well and with appropriate regularity.
Circle those practices which are performed inconsistently or ineffectively

Atmosphere of Love & Honest Fellowship

1. A sense of effort, energy and journey is apparent in the parish. We're NOT just "surviving".
2. We work to establish a culture where our identity as Orthodox Christians is lived out in such a manner that anyone who enters can see the hallmarks of Christian community: love, selfless giving, mutual encouragement, forgiveness, kindness, patience, personal initiative and responsibility and compassion. Christ is recognized in our midst.

> *A new commandment I give to you: that you love one another, as I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."* John 13:34-35

3. The church matters in our everyday lives.
4. While we have many members we have one body and are "members of one another". We "bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ" (Gal 6:2). We fill in where others are lacking.
5. Our parish is a place where rendering kindness to another is the rule, not the exception. Forgiveness reigns and not judgment.
6. We strive to create a parish community where a wide range of experiences is not cause for exclusion but, rather, is cherished and valued.
7. Parishioners consider the relationships with other parishioners and with parish clergy and lay leaders to be important. They invest time to nurture those relationships. There is a discernible spirit of concern for fellow parishioners. When parish members are in need we actively work to help them.

Figure 3 Healthy parishes socialize and celebrate.

8. Correction is possible. Parishioners are taught and, when

necessary, corrected. We encourage, exhort and nurture one another. Parishioners hear "Thank you" much more often than scolding or rebukes.

9. Parish leaders and clergy see our coffee hour as a significant opportunity to build community. They take an active role in this time for good fellowship.

10. Social events are an important part of the parish calendar. We enjoy food. We find many reasons to celebrate together.

11. The primacy of Traditions over cultural and local parish practices is clear to all and continually reinforced. Yet, we are sensitive to little cultural and local parish and their place in the heritage of our parish and our parishioners. As appropriate, cultural and local parish practices are celebrated and enjoyed. While we understand and respect the stories & heritage of the parish, they are not worshipped or sentimentalized.

12. The parish and its leaders have a sense of humor and enjoy each other's company.

13. Parish youth are treated as valid important members of our community. We expend serious effort to help them find a role, to be heard, and to be appreciated. An appropriate portion of our parish budget supports youth related events and programming.

ENTRY & INCORPORATION ATTITUDES & MECHANISMS

1. The parish sees an infusion of new people as delivering new life, energy and renewal. New people start asking questions that make us think about our own commitment and accountability. We see this as good.

2. We are NOT a closed community available only by birth, blood relationship or ethnicity.

3. We welcome newcomers readily. There is a culture of acceptance and connection in our community. Members understand that it is their responsibility not just to be friendly, but also to build relationships with new people.

4. We consistently share appropriate information about newcomers -- to help them get to know us and us to know them.

5. Our parish offers a variety of events and entry points where new relationships can happen.

6. We have an established assimilation & integration process/ministry for visitors/newcomers. We have thought through the potential assimilation paths for people of different ages, genders, marital status and life stages.

7. We understand the need to adapt structures and culture as new people are added. New people may have different needs and visions.

8. Information on how to become a member of the parish is readily available.

9. Small groups are used as entry mechanisms for new people.

10. The role of Godparents as mentors and sponsors is taken seriously and is an important incorporation mechanism for newcomers who are embracing the faith.

11. Photo directories and photo bulletin boards are used to help people put names with faces.

Members of One Body

1. We pray for the larger church its leaders and for other parishes.
2. We do NOT see ourselves as an independent "congregation". *One parish is no parish.* We are interdependent with other parishes in our deanery/Diocese/OCA as well as other Orthodox jurisdictions.
3. Actions taken in our parish consider the larger church. Our attitude is NOT "our parish first."
4. We contribute to discussions on the well being of the church in a spirit of up-building the Church NOT tearing it down.
5. We meet our financial responsibilities to the deanery, Diocese and OCA in a timely manner.
6. We hold the deanery, diocese and OCA to the same standards of stewardship and transparency that we strive for in our own parish. Not higher; not lower.
7. We willingly share and export our good ideas and practices to other parishes that desire to learn from us.
8. We are willing to ask for and receive help from others in our Deanery/Diocese/OCA.

> *"One Christian is No Christian"- St. Cyprian of Carthage c.+243 AD*

Facilities

1. Our facilities fit our needs and help us to *be* the church.
2. Our facilities are the best we can afford in the context of our size, demographics and the collection of ministry needs embraced by our parish.
3. We understand our needs. We maintain an active list of priorities for improvements to worship space, social space, meeting space, education space and equipment, storage, rest rooms etc.
4. Our sign outside our church is modern and attractive and accurately, effectively expresses who we are.
5. We keep our church and buildings clean and well maintained. The lawn is cut consistently. Landscaping is attractive and well maintained. Walks are shoveled in the winter.
6. Our facilities help to express our parish vision. We are not trapped by our facilities.

PARISH DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Do we really want/welcome new people in our parish?
- Do we have practices, behaviors or traditions that get in the way of building a loving Christian community?
- How do we incorporate members into the life of the parish? Do we make room for them? How well do we do this? (Ask 1-2 new members how it was for them.)
- Do we agree with the item that describes 'not trying to create a parish where everybody looks or thinks the same or has similar background.' Is diversity really important? In what ways?
- In what ways are we connected with other parishes in our Diocese, deanery OCA, other Orthodox jurisdictions? What have we done in the last six months to strengthen that connection? Is it important to develop connections among laity — or just clergy?
- In what ways do our parish physical facilities assist or hinder developing a sense of community.
- Can we identify one improvement to our practice in this area?

POTENTIAL METRICS

What are some leading or lagging indicators of progress in this area of focus?

- # of parish social/relationship building events per quarter. % of parish evolved in each.
- People smile, laugh & linger. A sense of joy is noticeable in parish activities.
- # of parishioners with meaningful relationships outside of church; # who would count other parishioners among their most trusted friends.
- Drop-outs -- # of parishioners who have left our parish (other than job/residence transfer) in the past three years? *Do we understand why?*
- # of parishioners who know people in other parishes --Deanery/Diocesan etc. by name.
- Median age of parish.
- Ratio of parishioners above 65/below 30

HOW DO WE RATE OUR PARISH ON THIS FOCUS AREA?

For each subcategory place an X in the column that best expresses your view of our parish's maturity level.

Focus Area/ Subarea	Level 0 **UNCONSCIOUSLY INCOMPETENT** *As a parish we're virtually unaware of this area as important to building a healthy parish*	Level 1 **CONSCIOUSLY INCOMPETENT** *We're aware of this area -- but haven't made much progress on improving*	Level 2 **CONSCIOUSLY SEMI-COMPETENT** *We've worked at this & are showing signs of clear commitment & improvement*	Level 3 **CONSCIOUSLY COMPETENT** *Good behaviors & practices prevail – but we need to continually remind ourselves & avoid bad habits.*	Level 4 **UNCONSCIOUSLY COMPETENT** *Good behaviors and practices in this area have been 'baked in' to the life of the parish*
Authentic Community	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Atmosphere of love & honest fellowship	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Entry & incorporation mechanisms	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Connectedness to larger church	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Appropriate facilities	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

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FOCUS AREA 6

CHRISTIAN FORMATION

ORTHODOX SPIRITUALITY

WHOLE PARISH EDUCATION

FINANCIAL GENEROSITY

6. Christian Formation

Supported by an appropriately comprehensive parish wide education effort, vibrant parish communities develop a commitment to lifelong learning and personal spiritual growth and change. Educational efforts are informational, formational and transformational - incorporating self study, experience events and mentoring in addition to books and classes. There is a clear focus on understanding and applying Orthodox spirituality. Stewardship is taught in the particular context of gratitude, generosity and love of neighbor.

Orthodox spirituality

Whole parish education

Financial generosity

Check those which are performed well and with appropriate regularity.
Circle those practices which are performed inconsistently or ineffectively

ORTHODOX SPIRITUALITY

1. We attempt to lead purposeful and well examined lives and work to strengthen our spiritual lives.
2. Fasting is kept in a purposeful manner. Fasting goes beyond rules and embraces goals for (e.g.) spiritual growth, repentance, humility etc. We do not judge others on their fasting practices and we are discreet in our own fasting practices.
3. Guidelines for frequency of confession are followed. Confession results in heartfelt repentance and incorporates asking forgiveness of others, apologizing, forgiving others/reconciliation.
4. Communicants have fasted, confessed, examined their conscience and heart -- prepared themselves.
5. Members consistently attend church services- Sunday morning & more.
6. Members have and follow a personal prayer discipline.
7. Members practice acts of personal charity and love.
8. Lenten seasons are kept in a meaningful manner personally and as a community.
9. Members sanctify time by shaping and prioritizing their day, week, year & life around Christ
10. Members participate in midweek services, bible studies, adult education
11. Members search for ways to practice self denial and restraint in personal spending. [Add box to include a scriptural quote.]
12. Members practice personal charity and offer a generous, serious, proportional financial and time commitment to support the parish and to charitable causes.
13. Members observe times of personal silence or silent meditation. They participate in retreats and visits to monasteries.
14. Members seek spiritual advice. They establish spiritual goals for themselves.
15. We nurture a grateful and thankful heart.
16. Members understand the hierarchical nature of the Orthodox Church and their relationship to the Diocese, the Orthodox Church in America, and the global Orthodox community.

WHOLE PARISH EDUCATION

1. We have a commitment to lifelong learning and personal spiritual growth and change. This is supported by an appropriately comprehensive parish wide education effort.
2. The education activities of our parish are NOT limited to children only but also provide adult, age appropriate opportunities for learning.
3. Lay catechists work under the guidance of the priest to teach many classes.
4. Teachers/class leaders - church school and adult education- are well prepared and take their jobs seriously. We invest in training and development efforts for teachers.
5. Our educational efforts benefit from outside speakers.
6. Inquirers classes are scheduled regularly/as appropriate.
7. A clear yet adaptable approach for catechesis has been defined.
8. Parishioners regularly read the bible and books about the Orthodox faith.
9. Education in our parish is informational, formational, and transformational. Education opportunities involve more than intellectual efforts - books and classes. They also incorporate self study, experience events, mentoring. We learn by doing. [Add footnote to define "formation".]
10. Our facilities for education are appropriate in terms of space, accessibility, temperature, balance of formal and informal settings. Whiteboards, LCD projectors, internet access, computer availability etc are available and continuously improving.
11. Education is a normal part of parish council meetings and activities and educational goals are a part of the vision of every parish organization and the parish itself.
12. Teachers have had appropriate screenings and briefings to comply with OCA Misconduct policies. As a parish we are in compliance with Diocesan and OCA requirements and have submitted the necessary documentation.

FINANCIAL GENEROSITY

1. We teach people that stewardship (financial and otherwise) is a foundational quality of being an Orthodox Christian.
2. Parishioners are taught/reminded that every asset financial, human etc they have is a gift from God to be managed as a steward on the Master's behalf. We are not the owners, we are the borrowers.
3. Proportional giving is a basic quality of our stewardship efforts.
4. We thank members often for their generous and responsible giving.
5. We ask annually. Lay leaders do at least part of the asking.
6. We link our requests for funds to our vision – hopefully describing a solid future for what we will do in the parish and how generous donations enable that future.
7. We don't "nickel and dime"; we limit special collections.
8. We expend serious effort to deliver clear reports on how money is used. We do not waste money. Nor do we sit on it or horde it. Neither are we overly tight with expenditures. We put the money we receive to work for the building up the Church.
9. We do NOT fund the parish using per capita dues.
10. Children are taught clearly and directly about stewardship and generosity in Church school.
11. Achieving our annual budget is not dependent on fund raising or alternative sources of income. Fund raising is used for charitable and outreach projects and to enhance fellowship.

12. Stewardship practices (pledging or other) are explained clearly on the parish website (and in written documents). FAQ documents; pledge forms etc. are easily available.
13. We do NOT leave the job of expressing the need for responsible giving to the parish treasurer but rather in the hands of a stewardship ministry/team.
14. We preach the Gospel of giving. We make it unashamedly clear to new members (and old members) that they are expected to provide generous, proportional and grateful financial support to the parish.
15. Our priest is provided with financial security.
16. We are in compliance with OCA guidelines for clergy compensation.
17. We believe that tithing is a goal to strive for.

Parish Discussion Questions

- In what ways are spiritual goals valuable and important? Can they be damaging or improper?
- What portion of our parish budget is spent on education? Is that appropriate? If we were able to double that budget how would we spend it?
- What is our stewardship administration method in our parish? Is it effective? How can it be improved?
- Should children be taught about stewardship? Or should we leave them alone to be children?
- This inventory contains numerous mentions of 'thanking people' can this be overdone?
- Why does this inventory suggest that lay leaders should play a leading role in parish stewardship efforts?
- Why does this inventory suggest making the need for a heartfelt, serious financial commitment to the parish clear to new members?
- Is lack of funds the primary constraint to our parish fulfilling its vision and purpose? Why?
- Is lack of understanding of our faith the primary constraint?

Potential Metrics

What are some leading or lagging indicators of progress in this area of focus?

- What % private confession.
- # of seminarians produced by the parish
- # of spiritually formative books read in a period by the parish as a whole.
- # parishioners attending adult ed. or bible study classes
- Retention of young adults; % of parish high school graduates from (e.g.) 1990-2000 that are currently practicing Orthodox.
- # of youth: singing, reading, in service ministries
- Median donations
- Donations median and total) by age profile (average donations from families in their 40s, 50's, 60's etc.
- % of parishioners tithing
- % of donations above (e.g.) $3000/yr

HOW DO WE RATE OUR PARISH ON THIS FOCUS AREA?

For each subcategory place an X in the column that best expresses your view of our parish's maturity level.

Focus Area/ Subarea	**Level 0** UNCONSCIOUSLY INCOMPETENT *As a parish we're virtually unaware of this area as important to building a healthy parish*	**Level 1** CONSCIOUSLY INCOMPETENT *We're aware of this area -- but haven't made much progress on improving*	**Level 2** CONSCIOUSLY SEMI-COMPETENT *We've worked at this & are showing signs of clear commitment & improvement*	**Level 3** CONSCIOUSLY COMPETENT *Good behaviors & practices prevail – but we need to continually remind ourselves & avoid bad habits.*	**Level 4** UNCONSCIOUSLY COMPETENT *Good behaviors and practices in this area have been 'baked in' to the life of the parish*
Christian Formation	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Orthodox spirituality	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Whole parish education	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Financial generosity	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

FOCUS AREA 7

ACTIVE SERVICE

DISCERNMENT OF GIFTS

EFFECTIVE MINISTRIES

7. ACTIVE SERVICE

Clergy offer consistent endorsement to members as they discern how they can best contribute to the community. Members are regularly, actively encouraged to discover their gifts and empowered to use them for God's glory. An appropriate set of internally and externally focused ministries provide ample opportunity for people to put these gifts and talents to work.

Discernment of gifts

Effective ministries

Check those which are performed well and with appropriate regularity.

Circle those practices which are performed inconsistently or ineffectively

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DISCERNMENT OF GIFTS/ATTITUDE OF SERVICE

1. Our parish is a place where the members of the Body of Christ are regularly and actively encouraged to discover their gifts and to use them for God's glory.

2. Our priest offers consistent endorsement and encouragement to people as they discern how they can best contribute to the community.

3. A spiritual gifts inventory is available to assist current and new members to best discern their talents, skills and spiritual gifts.

4. Our people have the opportunity, encouragement and trust to contribute what they do best.

5. We consistently remind members about the ministry of time -- the importance of contributing time to build up the body of Christ.

6. We work toward everyone having a job; a clear reason for 'being here'. We encourage members to ask and answer: "What has God called me to do here?" We work toward each one of us being a living member of the Body of Christ, not a volunteer who chooses to belong as long as the perceived benefits outweigh the costs.

> *"The most basic task of the Church leader is to discern the spiritual gifts of all those under his authority, and to encourage those gifts to be used to the full benefit of all...Only a person who can discern the gifts of others and can humbly rejoice at the flowering of those gifts is fit to lead the Church."* - St. John Chrysostom

EFFECTIVE MINISTRIES

1. Our commitment to ministries is informed by our worship experience.
2. As a community we attempt in our own particular/special way to exercise each of the ministries of the Body of Christ.
3. We have a clear set of internally focused ministries.
4. We have a clear set of externally focused ministries that includes:
    a. Homeless
    b. Prisoners
    c. Unemployed
    d. Elderly
    e. Substance abusers
    f. Orphans
    g. Unwed mothers
    h. Others
    i.

> *"There is no other way to be saved, except through our neighbor... This is purity of heart: when you see the sinful or the sick, to feel compassion for them and to be tenderhearted toward them."*
>
> *St. Macarius the Great*

5. Our collection of external ministries demonstrates appropriate balance between neighborhood/local ministry efforts, Orthodox centered/ non Orthodox centered and national/international efforts. Likewise there is balance between financial donations and hands on personal effort.
6. Participation in ministry opportunities are available to parishioners regardless of age or physical limitations.
7. A high percentage of persons in the parish take advantage of parish generated opportunities to encounter and assist the needy.
8. Parish external ministries have resulted in a change in attitude towards those in need.
9. Each of our ministries has a clear purpose.
10. We evaluate the purpose and effectiveness of our ministries regularly. We curtail some that are ineffective and bring new ones into existence as needed.
11. Ministries are generationally sensitive.
12. Our parish budget shows a clear commitment to our current and future ministries.
13. An annual ministries fair puts the work of various parish ministries in front of parishioners and helps them identify ways in which they can better contribute.
14. We provide adequate training for ministry leaders. They are equipped for service.
15. Preaching and teaching in the parish helps us to improve our understanding of and commitment to service.

PARISH DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Do we really see our parish as a place where everyone has a job/role? Where everyone can express why they are here and what they contribute to the body? Does that promote an over emphasis on busyness? What happened to stillness and solace?
- Is attendance at services and financial commitment enough?
- Is it important for a parish to actively, directly engage in various service/social ministries? Or is our role to teach and encourage parishioners to engage via other institutions outside the parish?
- What are the active ministries of our parish? Are some ineffective? Why?

POTENTIAL METRICS

What are some leading or lagging indicators of progress in this area of focus?

- # of seminarians from our parish?
- # of people touched by our ministry?
- % of parish involved in ministry?
- % of charitable efforts focused on giving money vs time?
- % of parish budget oriented to charitable service?
- % of our effort/$ oriented to "Orthodox only" causes? Is this selfless giving?

HOW DO WE RATE OUR PARISH ON THIS FOCUS AREA?

For each subcategory place an X in the column that best expresses your view of our parish's maturity level.

Focus Area/ Subarea	Level 0 UNCONSCIOUSLY INCOMPETENT *As a parish we're virtually unaware of this area as important to building a healthy parish*	Level 1 CONSCIOUSLY INCOMPETENT *We're aware of this area -- but haven't made much progress on improving*	Level 2 CONSCIOUSLY SEMI-COMPETENT *We've worked at this & are showing signs of clear commitment & improvement*	Level 3 CONSCIOUSLY COMPETENT *Good behaviors & practices prevail – but we need to continually remind ourselves & avoid bad habits.*	Level 4 UNCONSCIOUSLY COMPETENT *Good behaviors and practices in this area have been 'baked in' to the life of the parish*
Active Service	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Discernment of Gifts	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Effective Ministries	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

FOCUS AREA 8

SPREADING THE GOSPEL

PARISH EVANGELIZATION ATMOSPHERE

PERSONAL EVANGELIZATION PRACTICE

SENSITIVITY TO THE SPIRITUAL NEEDS OF OTHERS

EFFECTIVE EXTERNAL COMMUNICATION

8. SPREADING THE GOSPEL

Healthy parishes do not see themselves as a closed community --keeping the Good News as "our little secret". They consistently work to shine their light to the community in which they reside with an evangelistic intent not primarily centered on numerical growth but a desire that others will be brought to Christ. The parish does not wait to get everything right on the inside before reaching out -- but consistently works to make things right on the inside while they reach out.

Parish evangelization atmosphere

Personal evangelization practice

Sensitivity to the spiritual needs of others

Effective external communication

Check those which are performed well and with appropriate regularity.

Circle those practices which are performed inconsistently or ineffectively

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PARISH EVANGELIZATION ATMOSPHERE

1. The Parish does not see evangelization as an optional endeavor.[8] The Parish obeys the Lord's commandment to make disciples of all nations.

2. Our evangelistic intention is to serve and educate, with the hope that lives will be transformed. We do NOT see ourselves as a closed community. The Good News is not "our little secret.

3. We understand that God will lead people into the Church only when we ourselves live as Christians – when we, individually and corporately, visibly live out the truth of the Gospel.[7] We understand that evangelization is NOT a numerical growth program: an effort to pay for the roof or other looming expenses or to find those who "have moved to the suburbs".

> *...all who believed were together and had all things in common; and they sold their possessions and goods and distributed them to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their own homes, they partook of food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.*
> *(Acts 2: 44-47)*

4. The evangelization efforts of the parish are planned, structured and intentional NOT accidental or unconscious. We also understand that evangelization is NOT primarily about a program or plan but rather the desire to share the good news and bring others to Christ.

> *"desiring all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth"* (1 Tim 2:4)

5. We have inventoried our gifts, talents and skills and understand our available resources for evangelization. Our approaches and actions are consistent with those gifts.

6. We understand that evangelism is long-term and ongoing. We do NOT imagine there to be some quick fix or some elusive but sure-fire yet to be discovered formula.

7. The parish understands that it will never be perfectly ready for an evangelization effort. We are not waiting to get everything right on the inside before reaching out, but we are working to make things right on the inside while we reach out.
8. The parish takes responsibility for those to whom it has preached. No one can teach about the Kingdom of God without evangelizing and no one can properly evangelize without teaching. As people come to Orthodoxy we desire that genuine conversions take place.
9. In seeking new members we understand the requirement to accept them fully into the community.[6]

PERSONAL EVANGELIZATION PRACTICE

1. We believe we have a personal responsibility to share the Good News.
2. We understand that the most effective approach to spreading the gospel is a life that shines with the light of Christ.
3. We understand that potential members of the Body of Christ are likely to come from the network of those we already know.
4. We are equipped with the attitude and aptitude to invite an unchurched friend to church when doing so makes sense.
5. We engage honestly with others, sense a need, and engender curiosity by explaining the 'hope that is in us' and by speaking the truth in love.
6. We try to discern how God has worked in our life and are able to confidently express that hope to others when useful and appropriate.
7. We realize that in most endeavors we learn best by trying and getting started. We understand that we never "know enough" nor are we perfectly ready to spread the gospel.
8. We have a lending library including audio and video resources.

SENSITIVITY TO THE SPIRITUAL NEEDS OF OTHERS

1. We understand that persons may be facing extraordinarily trying situations requiring God's help and our concern can be important to them in coping with their circumstances through the grace of God and the fellowship of the Church.
2. We avoid evangelization approaches that are intrusive or manipulative. Emotional appeals, carefully prepared questions or high pressure tactics are not used. Evangelization is NOT an interrogation, an argument, or a conquest. We do NOT actively encourage those of other faith traditions to reject their faith traditions for the sake of" winning" a convert.
3. Our evangelization activities are oriented to seeing and connecting with a human person with spiritual needs and a personal history. That person is not an

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[6] New Christians that result from the parish's evangelism efforts will, in all probability, be different in many ways than current parishioners. The parish understands the requirement to change and adapt as others come to Christ. We must all --newcomers and long timers - be obedient to the gospel.

object to be conquered. We have an honest concern for others and respect that people come from different backgrounds and have various needs, doubts and aspirations.

4. We listen (actively) as much *or more than* we proclaim.
5. We have tried to describe appropriate Christian practice for encountering visitors to our parish. We don't over push. We welcome visitors/inquirers warmly, genuinely, sincerely, honestly and with empathy
6. We are not trying to justify our choices or prove others "wrong". We do not disparage or mock other religions as we convey what we believe to be the contrasts and limitations of other religions.
7. When asked to contrast Orthodoxy with other faiths we focus on the positive qualities of Orthodox Christianity -- not the limitations of another religion. We assist parishioners to understand those contrasts in order to be better equipped to respond to relevant questions from inquirers.

EFFECTIVE "EXTERNAL" COMMUNICATIONS

1. Our communications attempt to explain the gospel in terms understandable to the unchurched.
2. While we consider the needs and interests of external audiences we do NOT "water down" communication to be artificially attractive to the unchurched or those of other faiths.
3. We understand the perception we would like people in our (external) community to have of us. We work to make that a reality and to communicate it clearly to all.
4. While we preach the gospel to all we also have made an honest assessment of our parish and the populations that we best serve. We tailor and target our communications to be most effective for those segments.
5. We know that parish websites are an important way in which seekers, inquirers, newcomers (Orthodox and non Orthodox) find Orthodox parishes.

   Therefore on our parish web site we:

   - *make it easy to find phone numbers, service times and church location.*
   - *make it clear that visitors are welcome and commonplace.*
   - *let people know that children are welcome.*
   - *encourage inquirers to come and talk to us.*
   - *ask non-members to give us feedback on the navigability, language and content of the site.*
   - *select the web address ("URL") for our parish website to enhance our ability to be found by search engines.*
   - *publicize our web address and get others to link to it. Our listing on oca.org is up to date.*

6. The sign in front of the church is attractive, useful and inviting to newcomers/inquirers, and not ethnically exclusive.
7. We know the religion writer of our local paper on a first name basis and have talked to him/her in the last 6 months.
8. We use a wide variety of communication vehicles to announce our existence including: yellow pages, newspaper listings, yard signs, local street signs (*"Orthodox Church 3 blocks east"*) etc.
9. We make our parish known in the community as good neighbors and have active contact with the local ministerial and neighborhood associations, chamber of commerce and local government.

10. We greet people at every service. They speak to newcomers, welcome them, offer to answer any questions, ask them to sign the guest book, and follow up with a note during the week to thank them for coming.
11. We have hardcopy information on the Orthodox Church AND our parish that visitors can leave with.
12. We ask visitors "how they heard of us". We work to make those "learning posts" more potent and effective.
13. We try to learn from visitors what was attractive and unattractive about their experience and use that insight to consider adaptations to make the visitor experience more beneficial for them.
14. We have explored various ideas for building awareness of our church and the Orthodox faith. We have put some of them into practice and continually look for better actions.

A partial list of potential actions beyond those already mentioned might be:

- *Lectures and concerts promoted to target external audiences,*
- *purchasing Orthodox books for the local library with parish name inside,*
- *establish an OCF on local college campus,*
- *making literature available for persons visiting for rummage or bake sales,*
- *establishing a local bookstore/coffee house and encouraging discussion of spiritual needs and the Orthodox faith;*
- *undertaking book discussion groups welcome to non Orthodox*
- *– and more.*

Figure 4 Parish websites are important tools for communicating awareness of a parish.

PARISH DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- If we lead a pious Christian life is that enough to fulfill the command to be fishers of men?
- How can we know when someone has a need for us to reach out to them?
- How do we balance the need to be sensitive to the spiritual needs of others with the zeal to share the good news to all?
- Is it really necessary/valuable for Orthodox Christians to be able to explain the hope that is in us through a personal story of how God works in our life?
- Does everyone have the gifts appropriate to evangelization? To greeting people with empathy?
- How many new persons showed up at our church in the past six months? How many returned? What were they looking for? Did they find it?
- In our parish do we need more inquiries from new people? Or, is our limitation that visitors rarely return or and even more rarely become serious?
- What are the experiences of a non – Orthodox visitor to our parish? What might they find odd, unusual or disorienting? What would they find illuminating, enlivening and distinctive?
- What are some insensitive or ineffective behavior toward visitors? Do these happen in our parish?
- Where have the last (e.g.) ten visitors to our parish come from? (what sources) Can we make those sources more effective? Can other sources be cultivated?

POTENTIAL METRICS

What are some leading or lagging indicators of progress in this area of focus?

- # of active ways/places people can learn of our parish?
- inquiries to the parish for info (phone, web , drive-by, email, transfer etc?
- First time visitors per month/quarter/year?
- Return visits?
- Catechumens??
- Receptions?
- Baptisms?
- % of parishioners inviting friends to church?
- Ratio (Transfers out+ lost sheep)/(transfers in + converts)

HOW DO WE RATE OUR PARISH ON THIS FOCUS AREA?

For each subcategory place an X in the column that best expresses your view of our parish's maturity level.

Focus Area/ Subarea	Level 0 **UNCONSCIOUSLY INCOMPETENT** *As a parish we're virtually unaware of this area as important to building a healthy parish*	Level 1 **CONSCIOUSLY INCOMPETENT** *We're aware of this area -- but haven't made much progress on improving*	Level 2 **CONSCIOUSLY SEMI-COMPETENT** *We've worked at this & are showing signs of clear commitment & improvement*	Level 3 **CONSCIOUSLY COMPETENT** *Good behaviors & practices prevail – but we need to continually remind ourselves & avoid bad habits.*	Level 4 **UNCONSCIOUSLY COMPETENT** *Good behaviors and practices in this area have been 'baked in' to the life of the parish*
Spreading the Gospel	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Parish evang. atmosphere	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Personal evang. practice	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Sensitivity to spiritual needs of others	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Effective external Communications	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

EVALUATION SUMMARY

	Level 0	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
HOW DO WE RATE OUR PARISH ON EACH FOCUS AREA & SUBAREA? For each subcategory place an X in the column that best expresses your view of our parish's maturity level.					
Focus Area/ Subarea	UNCONSCIOUSLY INCOMPETENT *As a parish we're virtually unaware of this area as important to building a healthy parish*	CONSCIOUSLY INCOMPETENT *We're aware of this area -- but haven't made much progress on improving*	CONSCIOUSLY SEMI-COMPETENT *We've worked at this & are showing signs of clear commitment & improvement*	CONSCIOUSLY COMPETENT *Good behaviors & practices prevail – but we need to continually remind ourselves & avoid bad habits.*	UNCONSCIOUSLY COMPETENT *Good behaviors and practices in this area have been 'baked in' to the life of the parish*
Gospel Centered Vision	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Mission, vision & identity	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Parish self awareness	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Excellence based approach	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Growth and Replication	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Vibrant Worship	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Liturgical Preparedness	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Congregational participation	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Effective preaching	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Shared Leadership	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Sharing & delegating responsibility	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Leading Change	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Functional, structures/admin.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Open financial practice & reporting	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Open Communication	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Consensus and Dialogue	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Dealing with conflict	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Internal Communication methods	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Authentic Community	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Atmosphere of Love & Honest Fellowship	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Entry & Incorporation Mechanisms	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Connectedness to Larger Church	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Appropriate Facilities	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Christian Formation	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Orthodox Spirituality	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Whole Parish Education	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Financial Generosity	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Active Service	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Discernment of gifts	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Targeted, Organic Ministries	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Spreading the Gospel	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Parish Evang. Atmosphere	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Personal Evangelism Practice	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Sensitivity to spiritual needs of others	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
External Communication	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

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APPENDIX A

SUGGESTIONS FOR APPLYING THIS MODEL

SUGGESTIONS FOR APPLYING THIS MODEL

COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW -- OR ONE AREA AT A TIME

As mentioned previously there are numerous approaches that parishes can use to apply this model as an inventory of good parish practice.

Figure 5 A primary value of the inventory may be as a framework for conversation and dialogue. Here a parish group discusses one section of the inventory model.

One approach would be to conduct a comprehensive review of all eight essential dimensions/focus areas in order to identify a comprehensive inventory of the parish's strengths and challenges and a related set of improvement actions. This will require significant energy on the part of the parish and is probably best done as part of a parish council annual retreat.[7] Even in these cases it is probably best to center discussions on four or five of the most applicable focus areas through some pre-selection discussions.

An alternative approach would be to decide to explore one of the eight focus areas at a time. This could be done as:

- Part of successive parish council meetings (one area every month or one per quarter)
- Or, as the outline for weekly or bi-weekly parish education or discussion sessions.
- Or, it may prove useful for different small group ministries in the parish to focus on relevant subsets of the model. (Church school leaders focus on education. Choir and other worship leaders on aspects of worship. Parish council on sections associated with leadership and administration.)

In either case the following steps will likely be useful:

1. Provide a hardcopy of the entire model in advance.
2. Determine either by leader's decision or as a group which section will be discussed first.

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[7] Pilot uses of this model in parish review sessions have shown that a substantive discussion of any of the model focus areas can require at least 30-60 minutes.

We believe this inventory can have utility for any parish that desires to strengthen itself. Here are some situations:

Healthy parishes may use the model to assess or inventory strengths and weaknesses – and to identify and focus improvements efforts.

Plateau Parishes". Bodies at rest are in that state because there is nothing propelling them forward. The model can hopefully describe a better state for the parish and stimulate ideas about how to move forward.

Parishes in early decline - Some in the parish can probably see the need for change but the decline is often slow enough that the symptoms are not always noticed. This model attempts to describe one version of a stronger future.

"Parishes in peril" - Parishes stuck in yesterday without a vision of a brighter future or in a state of denial may receive a useful nudge by simply discussing one or two portions of the model. It can hopefully allow the parish to *face facts* and to develop a sense of urgency about its future.

Pastoral transitions - Prior to placing/receiving new pastors, parishes may want to assess their status, where they desire to head and to openly share these ideas with new clergy.

3. Ask participants to read the appropriate section prior to the discussion. Ask participants to identify areas of strength or opportunities for improvement as they read -- and be prepared to share their thoughts with the group.

4. Once the meeting /discussions begin, ask people to share their reactions. Identify areas of disagreement. Some may find the parish to be strong in a particular practice or behavior. Others may see it differently. Discuss these differences. Try to find the root causes of different views about an item. These discussions will likely reveal a clearer understanding of how people view the parish.

   Excavating for these views is the heart of (re) building a healthy parish.

Figure6 . A parish team organizes improvement ideas to determine which have the greatest impact while not overtaxing the community's ability to put them into practice.

5. Realize that the model is *not perfect or universal.* For some communities the most fruitful discussion may be in coming to an understanding of *where they disagree with the prescriptive aspects of the model.* The model presents *one view* of healthy behavior of Orthodox parishes. Other valid views exist. What is *your parish's view* of healthy behavior in area X? The discussion questions in each section may be helpful in examining alternative views. Where do you --as individuals or collectively-- disagree with the model?
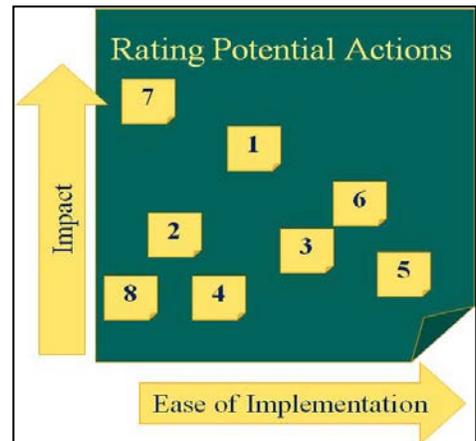

Figure 7 **The most fruitful improvement actions are those that are both high impact and easy to implement. These are rare. When in doubt avoid highly difficult actions. In this example item 5 is probably a better choice than item 7.**

6. Identify actions -- short term and simple or long term and more fundamental -- which the group can agree upon as being helpful to strengthen the parish in the area being discussed. These items may relate to building upon strengths or shoring up weaknesses.

7. From the list of potential actions rate each as to "difficulty" (how much effort) and impact (will it likely make a difference).

8. Select one or two of the items that are the best combination of the two qualities. Note you will only rarely find high impact items that are *also* easy to implement. (Usually they are one or the other –high impact are hard; easy items have smaller impact.)

9. Get started. We suggest you start with easy, small items to build momentum and confidence.

10. Feedback improvements and areas of disagreement to the Midwest Diocese Parish Health Ministry