



Creating Consensus on Vision and Strategy

EMERGING MODELS OF PASTORAL LEADERSHIP **MID-ATLANTIC REGIONAL SYMPOSIUM REPORT**

NOVEMBER 2-4, 2005

PREPARED BY:
DAVID RAMEY, CONSULTANT

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I. OVERVIEW:

Six national ministerial organizations within the Catholic community have made an unprecedented commitment to collaborate on a Lilly Foundation Grant for Pastoral Excellence. The grant entitled “Developing and Sustaining the Emerging Models of Pastoral Leadership in the Catholic Church and the United States” is intended to be a four-year study completed in three phases between January 2004 and April 2008.

Sponsoring organizations of the Emerging Models Project include:

- **National Association for Lay Ministry (NALM)**
- **Conference for Pastoral Planning and Council Development (CPPCD)**
- **National Association for Church Personnel Administrators (NACPA)**
- **National Association of Deaconate Directors (NADD)**
- **National Catholic Young Adult Ministry Association (NCYAMA)**
- **National Federation of Priests Councils (NFPC)**

These organizations have committed to a comprehensive plan, including several mini-projects intended to identify the trends, resources, and priorities needed for pastoral leadership in the 21st century. The following mini-projects will be included as part of the overall Emerging Models effort:

- **Parish Vitality Study**
- **Study of Parish Life Coordinators by CARA**
- **Regional Conferences**
- **Next Generation of Leaders Study**
- **Young Adult Focus Groups**
- **Symposia**
- **Study of Mega-parishes**
- **Diocesan Consultations**
- **Publication of Findings**
- **Concluding Ministry Summit**

Marti Jewell, formerly of the Archdiocese of Louisville, Kentucky, has been named Project Coordinator to lead the entire effort. Strategic Leadership Associates (hereinafter known as SLA) has provided its expertise in symposium development by assisting with the development of a format for the first round of eight regional conferences to be held in total, including:

- **Pacific Northwest**
- **Upper Midwest**
- **Northeast**
- **Southeast**
- **Mid-Atlantic**
- **South**
- **North Central**
- **Southwest**

On November 2-4, 2005, 62 pastoral leaders throughout the Mid-Atlantic participated in a regional symposium at Malvern Retreat House in Malvern, Pennsylvania. Participants attended from the states of New York, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, Pennsylvania, and Connecticut.

Of the 62 participants, 52 participants completed individual reflection guides with their responses to symposium questions throughout the two-day event. These written responses were used to formulate the following report.

Comments from symposium participants appearing in this report can be identified by the following codes:

- P = Pastor**
- PLC = Parish Life Coordinator**
- D = Deacon**
- PA = Pastoral Associate**
- PC = Parish Council Representative**
- DR = Diocesan Representative**
- O = Other**

The following tables represent a profile of participants who attended the Northeast Leadership Symposium:

Table 1
Mid-Atlantic Leadership Symposium
(Total Respondents = 52)

Respondents	No.	%
a. Pastors	11	21%
b. Parish Life Coordinators	1	2%
c. Deacons	7	13%
d. Pastoral Associates	8	15%
e. Parish Pastoral Council Representatives	7	13%
f. Diocesan Representatives	13	25%
g. Others	5	10%

Table 2
Gender
(Total Respondents = 52)

Gender	No.	%
a. Male	33	63%
b. Female	18	35%
Left Blank	1	2%

Table 3
Age Range of Respondents
(Total Respondents = 52)

Respondent Age Range	No.	%
a. Under 29 years of age	0	0%
b. 30 to 39 years of age	2	4%
c. 40 to 49 years of age	9	17%
d. 50 to 59 years of age	22	42%
e. 60 to 69 years of age	17	33%
f. 70 or above	1	2%
Left Blank	1	2%

Table 4
Size of Parish Households
(Total Respondents = 52)

Size of Parish Households	No.	%
a. Under 500 households	6	12%
b. 501 to 1200 households	17	33%
c. 1201 to 2000 households	8	15%
d. Over 2001 households	20	38%
Left Blank	1	2%

Table 6
Diocese in which you Serve
(Total Respondents = 52)

Diocese	No.	%
a. Allentown, PA	3	6%
b. Baltimore, MD	5	10%
c. Brooklyn, NY	7	13%
d. Camden, NJ	4	8%
e. Greensburg, PA	2	4%
f. Harrisburg, PA	3	6%
g. Paterson, NJ	2	4%
h. Philadelphia, PA	3	6%
i. Pittsburgh, PA	2	4%
j. Newark, NJ	4	8%
k. New York, NY	2	4%
l. Trenton, NJ	5	10%
m. Wilmington, DE	4	8%
Left Blank	6	12%

Table 5
Highest Level of Education
(Total Respondents = 52)

Level of Education	No.	%
a. High School	4	8%
b. Associates Degree	4	8%
c. Bachelor's Degree	6	12%
d. Master's Degree	31	60%
e. Doctoral Degree	6	12%
Left Blank	1	2%

II. FUTURE OF PARISH LEADERSHIP ROLES:

Participants in the Mid-Atlantic Symposium listened to case study presentations by colleagues describing their experiences of parish life and leadership. Through small group discussions and individual comments made in their symposium reflection guides, participants were asked to describe their parish communities based on a number of factors. These factors included a spiritually alive and healthy community; a visible commitment to building the life of the faith community; and a total ministering community, including the leadership of pastors, staff, and councils working together.

A. A Spiritually Alive and Healthy Community

A significant number of participants indicated that their parishes are spiritually alive and healthy. Many participants mentioned liturgy, worship, and strong community identity as the core of their parish vitality. Other participants indicated that their parish communities are weak or faltering and in need of greater spiritual vitality. Yet others described their communities as spiritually alive and struggling to improve.

Spiritually Alive and Healthy (through their liturgy, worship, and strong community identity)

Participants who indicated that their parishes are spiritually alive and healthy often referenced the quality of their worship and Eucharistic celebrations as the heart of their spiritual vitality. The following comments reflect descriptions of parishes that demonstrate this spiritual vitality:

“We are fortunate to have a very spiritually alive and active community. We are a rather traditional German parish with deep faith commitment to prayer life and generosity to the poor.” (P)

“Connected, participatory, open to spirit where members feel valued, welcome, encouraged and empowered (trusted) to live out their baptismal call. The parish is known for hospitality, often the blessing/curse dilemma of a small rural parish. The parish was built on a model of stewardship (3rd world mission church) for 20+ years. Burn-out is an issue. The community is almost a family interrelatedness, etc.; stability – high degree of ritual.” (P)

“My parish is spiritually alive – vibrant, active, and welcoming. Many ministries manifest this ‘life’.” (P)

“An excellence in liturgy reveals that my parish community is spiritually alive. The community has (as any) its weaknesses, but is generally healthy.” (P)

“Not definitely – Sunday Eucharist is a powerful, spirit-filled celebration made more meaningful by the expression of faith and joy in the midst of great poverty. Monday nights are reserved for prayer. Friday nights are ‘family nights’. No meetings may be held on Monday or Friday. Every two months the community gathers for a healing prayer service. And at least once a month

we celebrate a bilingual (English-Spanish) liturgy which unites the entire parish around the table of the Lord.” (P)

“As a new parish community formed 6 years ago, the spirit is evidenced in the faces and numbers of people and families who gather to worship and celebrate. Spiritually and healthy – the people, the committees, the volunteers, parishioners young and old reflect faith alive and healthy in their faces and the joy and concern in how they welcome and greet each other – the barometer for me is ‘presence’ and a ‘spirit of joy.’” (P)

“My parish is in spiritual good health for about 60% of the registered families. This % reflects those who are attending Mass regularly and are involved in some aspect of ministry and/or organizations. Our focus is on Liturgy, good preaching, and outreach.” (P)

“The parish has a deep spirituality. For instance, all four Masses were filled on All Saints Day, but it is a personal spirituality, almost solipsistic. ‘I matter to God and God matters to me and that’s all that matters.’ Yet, there is a visible thirst for something more which is quite evident.” (P)

“Very well. Our parish is a small (425 worshipping member) urban, black (Afro-American, Afro-Caribbean, and African immigrant) community. The Sunday assembly is the center of our week. Participation and involvement in parish life is very high. Approximately 50% of the community is actively involved in ministry and parish life outside the Sunday Assembly.” (PLC)

“Yes, because we have a sense of community, family, and we have good liturgical celebrations and devotions that help people to maintain and grow in relationship with God and one another.” (D)

“The Holy Spirit is definitely at work – people are taking their roles in the parish more seriously – embracing discipleship and deepening their understanding of their baptism and they are being empowered. Our biggest challenge, spiritually, is to the young families whose lives are in such chaos with raising a family, working, sports, and extended families.” (PA)

“Strong; warm; welcoming; strong active parish advisory board; meaningful, uplifting liturgies; strong, creative liturgy committee; sacramental programs; baptism prep team; marriage prep team (Pre-Cana); parish retreats – parish missions; adult catechesis and scripture study groups; pastor, warm, pastoral, compassionate. Would not ask you to do anything he himself does not do. He walks the walk.” (PA)

“Following mission as described by Jesus – teach and serve.” (PC)

“Eucharistic-centered; welcoming” (PC)

“All aspects of parish life and development are overseen at St. Therese of Lisieux Parish; from celebration of liturgy to the educational mission of the school of religion. We have two of the four main core teams that cover this area: a) Spirituality and Liturgy Core Team; b) Faith Formation Core Team. These two core teams are responsible to observe and monitor the performance of the people in each area of ministry.” (PC)

“My parish is small, diverse, and very welcoming. Most parishioners come from outside parish boundaries because they feel more at home here. As the vision of the pastor is integrated, the more people become involved and grow spiritually.” (PC)

“Yes. Some signs: welcoming atmosphere, strong lay involvement, sense of community, awareness of connection to global community, diverse ministry groups, conscious of multi-generational profile, etc.” (DR)

“My parish is spiritually alive, for sure and reasonably healthy. We are in transition with pastor change and there is some uncomfortable adjustment because of different personality styles.” (DR)

“A spiritually alive and healthy community exists in our Cathedral Parish. We are inner city, with all the social concerns associated with it, and as members of this parish, everyone knows and understand that this is a parish where everyone is involved in order to carry out our mission.” (DR)

“While I am personally involved in diocesan ministry whose parishes encompass all descriptions on the spectrum of parish health and spirituality, my personal parish is a spiritually alive, vibrant, active and healthy community.” (DR)

“The parish where I am a resident is, overall, an alive and healthy community. The first thing one might notice is the very good Mass attendance. Also, overall, the people are very supportive of the parish mission and have found that parishioners are very interested in their faith and are looking for a meaningful message from the presider at the Liturgy.” (O)

“My parish is very alive and healthy with ministries for just about everybody. We have social activities for the parish community, as well as for specialized groups that make up the parish (i.e., young adult group, 40 plus, seniors). Our parish also offers spiritual, educational, and religious experiences for youth and the parish.” (O)

“We’re alive when we move together in mission. This life is diminished when we turn in on ourselves and put our needs ahead of the needs for reaching out in relationship with the other families and churches of our community. We live when we’re active in touching and transforming the systems of our neighborhoods, towns, and Earth. We’re alive when we interpret the word through the cultures and inter-relationships that make up our life.” (O)

Weak and in Greater Need of Vitality

A number of participants indicated that their parishes are recovering from prior difficulties; consequently, they are less optimistic or guarded regarding their spiritual vitality. These parishes are described as seeking, or in some cases unhealthy, based upon their current parish circumstances. The following comments reflect this viewpoint:

“Two parishes – one small 400 families; one larger – 1700 families; the smaller one is recovering from a downward spiral and is just regaining its spirituality. The larger one is in a state of spiritual transition. This is because of population shifts and the accompanying spiritual characteristics.” (P)

“Our parish is ‘seeking spirituality’. Some are aware and connected to God. Some want to connect, but are unsure how. Many are formed, rather trained in the religious knowledge of Catholics, but are not spiritual. They have not been rooted in the Gospel, not connected to the living Jesus.” (P)

“We are not spiritually alive. We are church alive and at present, we are unhealthy. Some feel the pastor hijacked the parish survey to support his agenda to expand the church building without increasing the pew space. He ignored the fundraiser assessment that \$1,000,000 could be raised, but short of his \$2,500,000 goal.” (D)

“Our parish has a large cohort of retired persons, around 50%. They are primarily satisfied and do not want to be challenged. Families with school age youth have little time to take part in parish life outside of mass and Religious Education for their children.” (D)

“Somewhat spiritually alive, but not healthy; too much separation, no view of the church’s big picture; pastor requires his own hands-on approach – 5000+ families; dysfunction among priests.” (D)

“I think they are trying. Our pastor is a spiritual man and he really focuses each homily on God’s love for us – an unearned love at that! It’s a slow process, but it is manifesting itself in an outreach to our community – simple things like a monthly collection of items for unwed moms and their babies.” (PA)

“As a community, we are simply maintaining. It is possible that when our current pastor retires, he will not be replaced. The community has not been prepared for this kind of transition.” (PC)

“I write initially from a diocesan perspective. In a diocese of 150 parishes, I would estimate that 20-30 are spiritually alive and vibrant. This is recognized through the presence of lay involvement in ministry, life-giving liturgical celebration, social outreach, and a focus on adult faith formation.” (DR)

“My parish is not unlike most parishes as described by Robert Kinast. There is a core that is heavily involved spiritually; there is the mode that fulfills its duty; and there are the inactive.” (DR)

“Not really. Only a handful of parishioners are active in numerous ministries. The music is lifeless. The population is mostly over 55. The pastor is a warm and caring pastoral priest whose homilies connect well with the people. The associate priest is newly ordained and rigid, legalistic, and his homilies are ‘scolding’ everyone.” (DR)

“As I look at the diocese, many parishes are spiritually alive, but not necessarily healthy; limited resources, lack of personnel, etc.” (DR)

“I travel 39 miles in a highly populated area – past maybe 40-50 other parishes to take part in a healthy and alive parish community. Maybe my tastes have become too rarified. Of the 8 parishes in 5 minutes drive from my house, some are horrible, some are passable. None really nourishes me and my wife. When we can’t travel, we worship at a college community consisting mainly of Ursuline sisters and their extended network of friends.” (DR)

“The parish as a whole is not a community – unfortunately it is made up more of groups. Some healthy, some not. The parish has a neo-catechetical component which in actuality has fragmented the overall community. This split is also seen on the staff level. Some being from the neo-cat movement and others not. A level of distrust is alive among staff.” (O)

Spiritually Alive and Struggling to Improve (with various roadblocks)

Other pastoral leaders indicated that their parishes are spiritually alive, yet struggling to improve, often due to individual and unique circumstances or roadblocks in their history. Roadblocks can often occur due to a lack of pastoral vision, a difficult pastoral leadership, or simply a change in demographics. The following comments reflect parishes that are spiritually alive, but struggling to improve:

“Yes, we are alive and basically spiritually healthy. However, this is relative. For those who are part of the Sunday assembly, the above is true. Realistically, for every person in the pew on Sunday, there are three or four more that are not. To be truly spiritually alive and healthy, we need to reach out and embrace all.” (P)

“Our parish is made up of families who have lived in the area for 9 generations. They truly love their community and parish in a way that one does not often see today. They have been very responsive to Vatican II. The biggest problem is that so high a percentage of our young people must move away to find jobs.” (P)

“There are many forms of spirituality that constitute the parish community, and these are all active with a committed group of followers. I am not sure though how healthy they all are. Sometimes they compete with each other for people’s loyalty and form interest groups with their own agendas. The community as a whole is very concerned about its public image and proper performance. This can get in the way of its substantive growth in faith and genuine conversion.” (P)

“Our parish motto: ‘Reaching out to one another in Christ’. We may be considered spiritually alive because we have weekly afternoon holy hours, monthly evening holy hours, morning liturgy every day of the week, devotional prayers to our Lady, St. Theresa of the Infant Jesus, St. Anthony and the Rosary each Saturday evening before liturgy. However, the vast majority do not partake of these services. We need to make available these services to all if a spiritually alive and healthy community could become descriptive of the community.” (D)

“My parish spiritually is very much alive. Thanks to the pastor and associate pastor who are very warm and loving to their flock. As far as being healthy, I believe that we need some revitalization. Being a city parish, our number at Sunday Mass is diminishing because our parish is getting older and most of the young families are moving away.” (D)

“This is difficult to answer. I haven’t been part of this community for long and the community is undergoing major change – two parishes are moving into a single community. However, the grace and faith with which they face this opportunity is inspiring and life-giving.” (PA)

“I believe that those who are involved and engaged in parish life are spiritually alive and healthy. The challenges that this community faces to continue to grow is: learn how to share their faith and vision, inviting others into the process; learn its surface and deal with conflict in a constructive way.” (PA)

“I believe it is spiritually alive because it is an active, welcoming community and that means the spirit is present. Healthy? I think there are some unhealthy traits; there is somewhat of a schizophrenic personality between the English and Spanish speaking communities. This is something that has to be resolved.” (PA)

“Our parish has signs of life and wellness. There are active committees and organization; however, they lack a common thread or vision.” (PA)

“Our parish community is relatively spiritually alive and healthy – however, about 1/3 of our parishioners do not attend Mass regularly.” (PA)

“St. Gregory’s has been intentionally moving in this direction since 1999. We have a Mission Statement that is essentially ‘to form disciples of Christ’ and a series of five vision statements, the first of which calls us to provide a Eucharistic community through everyone’s entire life journey. I think this statement describes us well.” (PC)

“Currently, I believe my parish community possesses the potential for becoming spiritually alive and healthy. I do not believe that we are there yet because of the way in which decisions are made and authority exercised. The ordained leadership (pastor and two associates) are still working out of the old model of clergy discussion first, then inviting selected parishioners and then non-ordained staff into the conversation. But, the people respond to ministries and events in the parish in a way that indicates a desire for more involvement. The pastor lacks an articulated vision, but wants the community to come together and become more participatory.” (PC)

“More pockets of vitality with room and potential for great improvement” (DR)

“Yes, in most respects. However, there exists a group that feels that all should be signed up for perpetual adoration and many comments are made about those who do not participate (that is those who others have determined should). This has caused a disconnect and something new to our parish community.” (DR)

“For the older generation, the answer is positive. For the 30’s and 40’s generation, the jury is still out. They may be spiritually alive, but not institutionally. As to healthy or not, I think we really don’t know because we really don’t know them personally.” (DR)

“Somewhat. Our suburban parish of over 3,800 families is active and spiritually alive – 40% of those registered at least. Currently, we are struggling with the findings of the Grand Jury report. Our pastor was the Vicar of the Clergy Office until he arrived 1-1/2 years ago. So, people are struggling with a wide variety of feelings about that. Morale and trust are down.” (O)

“It has changed under a new and more involved, detail-oriented pastor. He is the (gatekeeper/bottleneck) and the health and spiritually aliveness is restricted to his self-centeredness at 70% (of 100%).” (O)

B. A Visible Commitment to Building the Life of the Faith Community (Word, Worship, and Service)

Participants were asked to describe the visible commitment of their parishes to build the life of the faith community through word, worship, and service. Many described their efforts in building the faith community as a result of effective leadership and organizational structures. Yet others believe their commitment to building the life of the faith community is demonstrated through prayer, worship, and Eucharistic celebrations.

Other pastoral leaders demonstrate their visible commitment to the faith community through inclusive ministries which involve many members. Still others believe the efforts of outreach and service are the primary means of building the life of the faith community.

Visionary and Affirming Leadership

A number of participants indicated that their commitment to the life of the faith community is often driven by the visionary and affirming leadership of their pastor and staff. The following comments reflect this centrality of pastoral leadership to the building of the faith community:

“A previous pastor of over 10 years was an affirming and inspiring leader who introduced us to stewardship as a way of life. His leadership and empowerment engaged the community. That spirit continues, although two years with a less dynamic leader has dampened it a bit. Our current pastor is warm and affirming and building up the sense of ownership among us.” (P)

“Both parishes want to rebuild themselves along the lines of vibrant healthy parishes that will actually make a difference now and in the future.” (P)

“There is great dependence on ritual, liturgical and devotional practices – great deal of concern about socialization of Catholic culture – almost European/old church. Use of bulletin to provide ‘adult education’ on broad range of Catholic issues, concerns, contemporary events, programs, and happenings. Use of (technology) to communicate with parish leaders to organize and coordinate liturgy, para-liturgy, and meet outreach and spiritual needs of the parish.” (P)

“The pastor requires that the associate and myself, as well as himself, be very much present to the parishioners. We are present at every Mass before and after to talk with our parishioners, to welcome them and make them feel at home. We have received many comments of appreciation about this.” (D)

“Yearly evaluation of the past year; goals set based on evaluation; both long and short-term goals developed” (PA)

“We all try (pastor, associates, staff, and community).” (PA)

“There is a commitment, at the top, and working down to include the entire parish. We are always being challenged to assume ownership of our parish. Many accept the challenge. We definitely need more though. All ministries are understaffed. Few do much!” (PA)

“There is a substantial visible commitment from the leadership to the growth of the life of the faith community. Resources are allocated, however, according to what the pastor believes to be a priority.” (PC)

“The pastor is new (20 years as a priest) but this is his first parish. He has a vision, but is being led by the people in the parish. He hasn’t played the pastor card yet – meaning ‘Yeah, that’s nice, but we’re going to do it my way.’ He’s open and observant, but not a tyrant.” (PC)

“The diocese is committed to assisting parishes through the formation of pastoral minister, adult faith formation opportunities, and consultation and collaboration with pastors.” (DR)

“The participants in our lay formation program are committed to this goal – often in spite of poor leadership or lack of direction.” (DR)

“There is a clear commitment of those in leadership to have a ministerially complete pastoral program.” (DR)

“My parish has a Stewardship Fair once a year that promotes each group that my parish has. Each group sets up a table with information about their group and a sign-up sheet for their group. They have the fair after all the masses to show the parishioners what they can do within the church. They also advertise a lot of the events in the church bulletin or have a speaker talk about them at the masses.” (O)

Prayer, Worship, and Eucharistic Celebration

As in other regional symposiums, a number of participants believe that their faith communities are deeply nourished by a sense of prayer, worship, and Eucharistic celebration. This emphasis on liturgy, preaching the word, and the sacraments are at the heart of their spiritual vitality as reflected by the following observations:

“It is as if you pulled this right from our mission statement. These three areas (Word, Worship, and Service) are foundational. We cover it with the umbrella of stewardship as a way of life.” (P)

“Pastoral Council and Staff are truly focused on bringing the reality of the Gospel into their everyday lives. Many people come from neighboring parishes because they feel that they are fed more substantially at our Sunday Liturgy. Their response to serving the needs of others is exemplary.” (P)

“We emphasize the importance of the Word. People are asked to bring Bibles to church on Sunday (we also provide Bibles at the door of the church). Thus, we try to nurture familiarity with a love for the Word. Scripture verse is given for memorization and reflection to the community each week. Great effort is made through our stewardship initiatives to call forth the ministries of the parish and many service opportunities are provided.” (P)

“We commit ourselves to developing our gifts and offering them to the larger community. One of those gifts is our black tradition and heritage that is very evident in our liturgy and preaching, church decoration, and environment. We put great time and effort and money into our music ministry and liturgical dance ministry and they are both excellent. We have a cluster revival once a year for three days devoted to the Word. Our Last Judgment Ministry takes on a theme or project of justice and service each month. This theme and call for action is integrated into our Sunday Liturgy.” (PLC)

“Very active liturgy committee, bible studies, stewardship committee, social justice committee, reflection booklets bought by the parish for Advent and Lent” (PA)

“Our parish is currently meeting the needs of the community spiritually, personally, and emotionally through the liturgy and services ministries.” (PA)

“On average, 1,000 people attend weekend liturgies on a weekly basis. Approximately 1,500 families are registered in the parish. The council will be considering implementing a ‘recommitment service’ or ‘re-memembering service’, a program that could run from Advent through Lent so that the ‘renewal of baptismal vows’ during Easter will have deeper meaning.” (PC)

“All ministries are present and inspired by the Franciscan charism.” (DR)

“Definitely, we could use improvement in our outreach and service area, but we’re OK.” (DR)

“Commitment in words – yes, acting on that commitment is a work in process; great strides are being made in Liturgy and especially in quality of preaching” (DR)

“The celebration of the Eucharist is central to the life of the parish and, obviously, where most members are touched or are connected. The parish is one of the few communities (in the Archdiocese) that is (and has been) involved in the Interfaith Hospitality Network. This organization coordinates assistance to the homeless in the area.” (O)

Inclusive Ministries Involving Many Members

A few participants described the efforts of building the faith community through their inclusion of many members in the ministry of the parish. While some are struggling with this commitment, the notion of inclusion as a driving factor in building the faith community is prominent in the following viewpoints:

“Parish is six years old. There is the vitality that comes from giving birth to something. Volunteerism is very strong from liturgical ministries through catechetical, to parish school, St. Vincent DePaul and everything in between. Strong witness to and balance with prayer and service also evidenced in the financial commitment to the parish, diocese, and outreach to the poor and global and national emergencies.” (P)

“Concern for social justice issues is obvious to a visitor as is a commitment to emphasize the great value of the Sunday Eucharist.” (P)

“We have 750 participating in Mass and over 300 volunteers. Our biggest programs are Evangelization, Faith Formation, and Fund Development. All provide for the future.” (P)

“As mentioned above, some people are ripe. As an Italian and Latino-dominated parish, there is already a sense of the need for a strong family. Now this just has to be incorporated as a necessity of faith community as well with celebrating, concern, and truth translated into Word, Worship, and Service.” (P)

“We have perpetual adoration which involves many parishioners and neighbors. The St. Vincent DePaul Society helps a great number of the poor. We are involved ecumenically.” (P)

“Much time, resources and effort are spent on worship – doing it well. There is a large social ministry element under the parish auspices which serves a major group in the city community and is recognized for its contribution. All ministers – liturgical and social – are trained for their roles. What they may lack though is a sense of the whole when they go about their individual tasks. This can lead to competition, rivalry and ‘stardom’ among the various ministers.” (P)

“There is a regular Liturgy of the Word for young children. There is a serious commitment to ministry to the poor. Many love to do tasks, such as serve dinners, plant flowers, and do crafts for the parish.” (D)

“Spirit of collaboration among different parish groups and associations and between them and the pastor/staff; social gatherings along with liturgical celebrations; service through collections and food pantry.” (D)

“Our parish does catechesis for multiple ages in multiple venues. Adult catechesis is a priority without neglecting children and youth. We have excellent music and preaching. The parish tithes its own resources to a variety of services, soup kitchens, urban schools and medical clinics. The teens go to Mexico to build houses. A mission goes to Haiti each year. Our parish is on the list of excellent parishes in Paul Wilkes book on excellent parishes.” (DR)

Outreach and Service beyond the Parish

Yet other participants described their efforts in community building as influenced by their outreach and service beyond the parish. This notion of a ministry beyond the faith community is reflected in the following practices of pastoral leaders in the symposium:

“Service Outreach – Our parish conducts many charitable drives each year and a vast majority of the community contributes to these endeavors. We have a ‘Midnight Run’ group that brings basic necessities for the homeless in NYC. These are the most visible signs of the parish faith commitment by living our church motto, ‘Reaching out for one another in Christ.’” (D)

“There is a visible commitment to building the life of the faith community. The generosity of the people in serving 11 nursing homes plus one hospital, as catechists, and in many other capacities is truly humbling.” (PA)

“There is wonderful worship and devotion; some service especially to the infirmed and homebound. What is lacking is any commitment to the Word. Outside of Mass, there is nothing connecting the Word to the lives of people.” (PC)

“Our Ministry Board focuses on prayer and worship, community service and outreach, community life, lay stewardship and leadership. We have a liturgical ministry retreat every year with a speaker. This year we had a morning of renewal for all liturgical ministers.” (PC)

“Our pastor has been with us for four years. He came into a parish that looked inward more than outward. His vision was to be a community-oriented parish concerned about those in need. He opened the doors to emulate our Protestant neighbors by providing shelter from the cold for the homeless and went one step further by providing Saturday morning breakfasts.” (PC)

“Members of the parish step forward to assist whenever necessary. The more we reach out to the local community, the stronger we become as a parish.” (DR)

Struggling to be a Community

A number of participants indicated that their parishes are struggling to be a comprehensive community of faith for a variety of reasons. These reasons often have to do with leadership in the community or an absence of vision. The following comments reflect this struggling perspective in building faith communities:

“These each exist as visible commitments and desires. Yet much needs to be encouraged and empowered. There were 2 previous pastors who people said let no one do anything (not quite accurate), but only minimal service exists. St. Vincent De Paul Society and Knights of Columbus only.” (P)

“More is needed than hiring an adult faith formation person who now has to wear two hats, that of a DRE as a way to save on salary for expansion.” (D)

“No vision of building the life of the faith community. No vision, no commitment; a vision requires trust in the Holy Spirit to guide the people and parish staff.” (D)

“This statement comes closest of the three for accuracy. People are involved in each of these ministerial components and they invite others to come along as well. There are many ministries and activities taking place in the parish, but often the same faces are in the majority at these events. That’s not necessarily bad, but without some sort of cohesive vision, they remain a group of faith-filled people moving in and out of parish functions without experiencing transformation.” (PC)

“There is willingness in the community to help out and some commitment to the various ministries. The liturgy and worship part of our community is visible, although more recruiting is required to fill the voids. The service part of our community is also present, but not as visible. The outreach could be more positive. Communication could be more effective in reaching the goals of our community.” (PC)

“A recent survey on the quality of worship is being reviewed by the Council and new initiatives intended to improve Mass attendance are being recommended. The school is under stress and the parish religious education is under-resourced.” (PC)

“A small segment of the community is committed to these ministries.” (DR)

“There are attempts at building the life of faith, but numbers of congregants are declining due to associate. Lay pastoral associate and minister of music try to infuse post-Vatican II spirit, but don’t seem able to excite or empower others enough to gain momentum and move parish forward.” (DR)

“Programmatic – not visibly planned” (DR)

“Very visibly committed to all three. However, very passive/aggressive and does not build community. In fact, the pastor creates divisions, cliques, and promotes discord. Removed our mission statement and did not replace it.” (O)

C. A Total Ministering Community (including the Leadership of Pastors, Staff, and Council Together)

Participants were asked to indicate how their parishes demonstrate a total ministering community. Many participants indicated that their parishes are a collaborative effort among pastors, staff, and parishioners working together in leadership. Still others indicated that while they are not quite a total ministering community, they are making steady progress in engaging parishioners, pastoral councils, staff, and clergy in the effort.

A few participants indicated that their communities are struggling or hurting to realize the reality of becoming a total ministering community. Yet others indicated that the notion of a ministering community is largely defined by individual roles of specific staff members and volunteers working separately and independently.

Collaborative Effort among Pastors, Staff, and Parishioners

Many participants indicated that their parishes are a team effort involving pastors, staff, and parishioners working together. These examples often include a concerted effort to build the role of pastoral councils working with staff and pastors to implement the mission of a congregation. The following comments reflect this leadership approach:

“We are a team recognizing and using each other’s gifts. We would depend upon the Council to bring up many challenges that the clergy might not be aware of.” (P)

“This is an accurate statement about my parish as collaboration is one of the greatest strengths it has.” (P)

“We have strived to highlight that every person has a gift which the Lord has called them to share. At least people are asked to show hospitality (beyond the Hospitality ministry) to visitors. We have focused efforts on evangelization, youth, social action, etc. which includes an ever-widening circle of people. We have just begun a training process for small group leaders and will begin small groups in the spring.” (P)

“The Pastoral Council along with the Pastor and Staff create, revise, and evaluate the vision of our Mission Statement which is to extend the presence of the Lord to others, especially the unchurched.” (P)

“The pastor is very welcoming of the cooperation. I think he also places a lot of effort in putting the parish in the ‘Diocesan map’. The council is just starting out. The pastor has been very clear with parishioners as to the future needs.” (PA)

“My pastor always encourages parishioners to join at least one ministry. We have about 24 ministries: four core teams, the pastoral council, and the staff. The council works with the core teams to identify the major areas of work to which the parish needs to devote itself. These areas should be developed once the assessment reports are completed by the core teams. Once a consensus has been reached between the core teams and the council with the council having the final say in the matter, then the work of planning as to how the needs can be best addressed can begin.” (PA)

“In both ministry experiences, the pastor is an enabler and empowers the gifts of the people. Their vision of the staff’s role is to work alongside and provide the resources for the lay leaders in the parish. The model of leadership they employ is a grass roots approach. The people closest to the needs...who are ministering to those needs are enabled and empowered to find the solutions and ways to best meet the needs.” (PA)

“We begin every meeting throughout the parish with prayer and faith sharing. We have a very collaborative ministering community (pastor as presider; pastoral council as vision, leader, and planning). The pastoral staff is totally integrated and supportive.” (PC)

“We have no paid staff except the organist. Even the receptionist in the rectory is a volunteer; different people on different days. The pastor oversees, but lets people do the job they volunteered for.” (PC)

“Our pastor has brought the pastoral council and staff into collaboration with him and uses them to promote the spiritual life of the parish by adopting the evangelizing goals of our bishops.” (PC)

“The pastor is exceptionally collaborative – a compassionate listener whose attitude with staff and lay as well as ordained is to regard them as ‘co-pastors’. Lay leadership and ministries flourish.” (DR)

“Our pastor holds regular staff meetings and the Parish Pastoral Council meets 10 times a year with prepared agenda and looking to the future as part of the discussion.” (DR)

“As a large suburban parish, my home parish is fortunate enough financially to afford a staff of religious and lay ministers who collaborate with the pastor in providing ministry.” (DR)

“Parish has a history of fostering full participation in a collaborative style. Pastor, staff and council take seriously their unique roles, as well as their interdependence when providing leadership.” (DR)

“All this great ministry results from a very strong collaboration of staff and parishioners in various leadership configurations; although the current pastor did not create this collaborative leadership style which he inherited from the very dynamic pastor before him – he values, supports and empowers it. When a young priest was assigned who did not fit this style, he arrived in July and was in another parish by October.” (DR)

“As far as I can see, each group has the support of the pastor and acceptance by the staff. The councils are made up of volunteers and everyone appears to do their part or not step on other council areas.” (O)

“There is a sense of collaboration among pastor, staff and parish council. I don’t necessarily see total collaboration, but it does occur on many levels and the pastor is sensitive to the recommendations and observations of the pastoral council.” (O)

“Everyone is asked and allowed to share their visions, dreams, hopes, and expectations.” (O)

Making Steady Progress

A number of participants indicated that the goal of becoming a collaborative leadership team is yet ahead of them; however, their communities are on an intentional path to achieving this goal in the future. Many times, they are hindered by the complexity of their situations, ethnic diversity, and prior leadership efforts that have not been particularly collaborative. However, the following comments represent a strong intentionality to move toward a total ministering community with some progress noted:

“We are on the way. All three are in place. Our new goal is future empowerment aided by building cultural bridges (we are 90% Asian).” (P)

“Our staff is not numerous so the parishioners are learning to administer to one another.” (P)

“The larger parish still has the resources (people) to help each other continue a transformation. The smaller parish is just now regaining the people at Mass and as volunteers. The smaller parish is multi-cultural and so we are trying to turn the different cultures into a new activity as ‘cultures’ in the parish.” (P)

“Staff is a new concept this year. Pastoral council is about four years old and needs mission, purpose, and direction. Finance council has risen from paper to active participation.” (P)

“The pastor’s vision is based on a total ministering community; he is, however, ministering in an environment based on the previous leadership – ‘Father knows best’ and ‘because I said so’ mentality. People are reacting to the pastor’s vision differently.” (P)

“Trying to get an angry staff member on board – began staff meetings six months ago to get us all together and give everyone a voice even if she wants to try to sabotage good programs. We held a parish council training session over the summer and worked on restructuring the council.” (PA)

“It’s the desire of our pastor to have all the parishioners involved in at least one ministry. He has encouraged members in different groups to go for training in order to be better leaders and communicators.” (PC)

“Efforts are made to serve in a unified way. There are efforts to not duplicate efforts – working together, through good communication and discussion, to address the needs.” (DR)

“Not immediately obvious, especially with Council.” (DR)

“These descriptions need clarity – what are our expectations?” (DR)

“Our parish staff has recently changed a great deal. The pastor and two priests are very involved. I’m not sure that they are too inclined to empower the laity, but are very willing to allow them to participate and assist. The pastor does consult and seems to take the advice of the pastoral council.” (O)

“It is a total ministering community in spite of the pastor. Many of the parishioners dug in and continue to work in service, worship, and word as it is our church and he is passing through.” (O)

Struggling or Hurting to Realize this Reality

A few pastoral leaders indicated that their current problems and situations are so formidable that they are struggling or hurting to realize the reality of a total ministering community. Many described this as a lack of vision or a lack of resources to create a comprehensive approach. The following comments reflect this struggling approach to becoming a total ministering community:

“We do not have a formal pastoral council at this point in time. There are individuals who have been called forth by the parish and me to leadership positions. They facilitate and also provide a forum for communication.” (P)

“The problem in the present situation is with the communal dimension of the various ministries that are underway. A lot of good things are being done for many people by many parishioners, but I do not sense that these projects arise out of a shared sense of mission as Christ’s Body for this part of the world. We do good things, but I am not sure we are related in our witness through these activities. We lack vision for ministry.” (P)

“This is deficient in the parish, but not unheard. Since development of church as ministering community is slow, patience is needed. There are volunteers for things so that’s a beginning of moving ‘willingness to volunteer’ to necessity of ministry and service.” (P)

“We are in the process, but still a long way to go. There is a need for more lay people serving the community.” (D)

“We are in the process of developing a total ministering community. Catechesis is key in such a development – we lack this component at the present time.” (D)

“Our parish is what I like to call a ‘blue collar’ parish where Father is the boss and whatever Father wants, Father gets. It is a model that we are working very hard to change by having the pastoral council more visible and responsible to the parishioners.” (D)

“It’s difficult. The pastor is not present at times and ministry is stretched too thin. We don’t hear term ‘burnout’, but are aware it’s out there. Parish Council could be utilized to a greater extent.” (PA)

“We don’t have a parish council. I would love to work with one.” (PA)

“There is no pastoral council. The pastor has a negative view from a previous experience at a different parish. Lay staff works together a little, but pastor is not particularly collaborative. He prefers to make all decisions. The associate priest is very ‘clericalist’ and too many deacons on staff with not enough to do and lack of role clarity.” (DR)

“This is an ongoing challenge.” (DR)

“The elements are in place. However, the effective integration of these elements is not. This may come as a cohesive, consolidating vision is articulated.” (DR)

Defined by Individual Roles of Pastoral Staff and Volunteers in their Various Ministries

A number of participants indicated that their parish leadership models are largely defined by highly specialized and individualized roles of pastoral staff and volunteer groups. This is often described as an isolation of people ministering independently and not together. While these models often convey a strong sense of organization, they appear to lack a collaborative or team approach to ministry. The following comments reflect this perspective:

“A definite identification of specific groups for specific tasks (i.e., ladies guild, any cooking needs, men’s group, temporalities), all maintenance – outreach, education; all ministries are self-supporting and maintaining.” (P)

“The parish has one full-time professional minister who is the parish life coordinator. One full-time secretary and a canonical pastor who is the regional vicar. He celebrates Mass in the parish on Sundays when available. He is not responsible for the daily running of the parish. Lay leaders do most if not all of the ministry in the parish. This is coordinated and supervised by the parish life coordinator.” (PLC)

“We have a separate, independent ministering community. A lot of people are working very hard at their own thing. Is it meeting the needs of the people? Do we really want to find the answer to that question? Scary!” (D)

“Again, signs of a ministering community, but all the efforts of leadership act in isolation to the others. For example, there are no staff meetings and no interaction between CCD, school, and the pastoral associate. All are ministering, but not together.” (PC)

“We have no parish council. The pastor works with a hand-picked advisory group and a finance council. Each of the non-ordained ministers on staff is assigned their responsibilities and not really looked to for input outside those areas. Staff meetings are usually no more than calendar meetings and the parish leaders are in a routine regarding their tasks and the job always seems to get done, so why change things?” (PC)

“Collaboration is weak and only works together when they need help from other staff members.” (DR)

“If I understand this question, this does not occur. Each person on staff tends to operate independently instead of collaboratively. ‘It is easier to ask forgiveness rather than permission’ mentality.” (O)

D. Current Parish Leadership Models

Symposium participants were asked to indicate the leadership model that best characterizes their current parish communities. A majority of participants indicated that their parishes have an empowering and collaborative ministry. Nevertheless, many participants still describe a hierarchical leadership model as present in their parishes. Still, other participants see their respective leadership models as somewhat sporadic that tend to arise on an as needed basis. Finally, as with other regions, a few participants indicated that their model of parish leadership is centered on a core team of professional, paid staff.

Collaborative with Shared Ministry

Among those participants who described a collaborative ministry, many indicated that this was due to a mutual and open pastor. A few specified the existence of a collegial and interdependent relationship among the pastor, parish council, staff, and parishioners. The proceeding comments reflect this collaboration:

“Enabling parishioners to learn to lead -- there may not be a priest/pastor.” (P)

“Our CCD program is all volunteer. With prayer training, I noted a new enthusiasm in all the teachers. The RCIA is a two priest team effort meeting in each other’s churches, a month at a time, then to the other church. In this way, it is more of a community effort.” (P)

“We have a small staff ministering to/with 1500 families/households. The model of leadership is empowering people. People embrace the mission/vision and welcome others on the journey to be collaborative, but also faithful to the mission of church – gentle encouragement. Parish gatherings and committees work to evidence this style.” (P)

“The servant/leader model; a model of trust, respect and accountability” (P)

“With some ‘kinks’ in the pattern, we try to weave our participation in ministry as partners (collaborators) who all have an important stake and responsibility in carrying out the mission of the parish, diocese, and church universal.” (P)

“Pastor with parish councils, separate for both parishes; collaborative model” (P)

“I don’t know about a particular model. But what I have tried to do in both parishes is: encourage people to take active steps toward their goals; guide them according to church guidelines; provide them with educational opportunities; and be there for them to help with problems or resolve issues in their programs.” (P)

“The pastor administers the parish in conjunction with the pastoral co-mission, which serves as the directors of each area of parish life. Each director leads a co-mission of 6-12 lay people who are responsible for the planning, execution, and evaluation of a segment of parish life. The pastor administers the needs of the parish plant with an administrative team, responsible for supervision and running of the parish complex. In addition, there is a finance committee with three sub-committees and a parish council all composed of laity. Periodically, a parish assembly is held for feedback from the larger community.” (P)

“Collaboration” (D)

“Pastor, parochial staff and a small group of personal leaders selected by the pastor comprises the leadership group. It is a closed circuit of individuals who support the pastor and his projects.” (D)

“A pastor who is very much into diocesan activities. He has surrounded himself with priests and staff and parishioners who will assist him in the daily life of the parish.” (PA)

“Collaborative ministry; servant leadership; leading by example” (PA)

“Collaborative; collegial; welcoming” (PA)

“Ministries are divided into five areas of parish life. Ministerial leaders come together to look at issues, needs, and find solutions. We use the consensus model and work toward a solution until all can buy in – yielding no winners or losers. Two reps from each core community make up the pastoral council – PC is where everything is coordinated, communicated. The other parish follows a similar model in that the people who are involved in ministry, those who are closest to the people, know the real needs and come together as pastoral committees for worship, faith formation, Hispanic ministry oversight, temporal administration, patrimony, and stewardship.” (PA)

“Collaboration – staff – parish advisory board – pastor working together” (PA)

“The pastor and council work in tandem. We have lots of committees; finance, liturgy, heritage committee. They all work on aspects of the parish governance and bring issues to the council for approval.” (PC)

“Pastor – pastoral council – parish staff – core team – ministries; one church; one people” (PC)

“Pastor and pastoral staff (presiders); Parish Council (leadership, input, and vision planning); parish (vibrant, active participants)” (PC)

“The pastor has an open mind and listens well. He provides support for new ideas that provide ways and means of spiritual growth.” (PC)

“A pastoral council, liturgy committee, finance committee, school board, pastoral associate, maintenance committee, music, Eucharistic ministers, lectors, RCIA director, religious education and elementary school principal. All these positions are filled and their ministries seem to be reflections the parish is moving toward.” (PC)

“A collaborative, conciliar model” (DR)

“Our parish: A lay/professional collaboration that develops gifts and calls them to ministry. In our diocese (since I occupy a diocesan position) a whole range – plain dictators, dictators who pretend to collaborate, dictators who would like to collaborate, but don’t know how, and collaborators with varying skills and degrees of success.” (DR)

“Collaborative model; enabling leadership; staff meetings” (DR)

“Now I speak of a particular parish. The leadership is collaborative. There is provision for parishioners’ involvement in appropriate decision-making. The parishioners have shared in the formation of a mission statement.” (DR)

“I believe that the model is a pastor, priest, council, volunteer; the pastor or priest is on each committee and through the committee, each activity is done. Each activity has a coordinator and they can interact with any priest in the parish if they need to.” (O)

“Full circle: Vision set by consultation with all through open forums/meetings of the whole. Holistic: One church, one people, one world model of local, global solidarity. Focus on ‘we and God’ not ‘me and God’.” (O)

Traditional, Hierarchical Model of Leadership

A number of participants described the pastor as fully in charge with a small degree of reliance upon the council or staff. Still, a few who described a traditional model of leadership also indicated a collaborative effort among all involved. Nevertheless, the significant theme is the traditional hierarchical leadership of the pastor. The following comments reflect this traditional approach:

“Pastor directed – pastoral council (top down)” (P)

“I would say that the dominant model is ‘benevolent boss’. Decisions come from the one in charge of the project with a sensitive hand in passing them on. I believe that there is still a lot of paternal or maternal dominance at work in pastoral leadership. Clear and straightforward communication is often lacking and consideration of networking one’s decisions through the various dimensions of the parish is often missed.” (P)

“Father knows best. Because we again have a Catholic regional grade school, our parish is alive.” (P)

“The pastor relies on the parish council heavily. However, he tells them what the areas are he’d like to focus on that year (i.e., hospitality, Liturgy of the Word, etc.) and the council follows the lead.” (P)

“Hierarchical model with the pastor employing a heroic leadership model” (PLC)

“Top down; non-collaborative; no unity; each doing their own thing; no sense or call for the entire picture.” (D)

“The pastor, even though he does not want to be, is the boss.” (D)

“Multi-tasked and very controlled leadership; ministry teams; meetings on a regular basis” (PA)

“The pastor is in charge. A few lay leaders were hired out of necessity. The associate priest is following the letter of the law. Deacons are unsure of their role. Lay leaders are discouraged by the lack of true collaboration. The pastoral associate refers to herself as the ‘pastoral hostess’ – putting out snacks at meetings.” (DR)

“People still defer to Father, but support staff and parishioners are beginning to ask the pastoral associate for her guidance and she feels empowered by the pastor to make decisions.” (DR)

“The pastor and priests are at the helm inviting staff and parishioners to assist them.” (O)

“Sometimes ‘top down’; more often, semi-collegial” (O)

Dependant on Specific Situations and Needs

A few participants indicated a situational model of parish leadership. These participants feel that their parishes are fragmented with no intentional model for moving forward. The following comments reflect these sentiments:

“Authority by position – Pastor says, pastor permits – until pastor is not in sync with the personal interests and directions of the Pope. Then, the pastor isn’t heeded. Very little understanding of collaboration.” (P)

“None, except ‘my way or the highway’.” (D)

“Significantly different styles from ‘I’m in charge’ to consensus seeking.” (D)

“The clergy-lay dichotomy drives the leadership in this community. While the pastor recognizes the gifts of the non-ordained, they remain in their ‘non-ordained’ box and the work of the parish happens. Staff generally uses an empowerment model within their areas of responsibility. Parish leaders often just do it themselves or invite friends into the mix. Fear of new people sometimes is a detriment.” (PC)

“Potential for true collaborative team is there, but there is still the struggle of slipping into private kingdom building.” (DR)

“There is an effort for collaborative ministry, but growth pains are evident. The pastor desires a team atmosphere, but still relies on certain folks to guide him in key decisions. This in turn upsets parish staff, etc.” (DR)

“In our diocese, the following models exist: one pastor – one parish; one pastor – two parishes or more; deacon – parish administrator (with a sacramental priest on the weekends). Bishop does not want parish life coordinators.” (DR)

“Situational leadership; that is, tell, sell, collaborate or delegate based on the needs of the situation and the task relevant maturity of the group.” (DR)

“Fragmented – each area having a different style. This style is based on the personality and theology of the person responsible for the area.” (O)

Centered on a Core Team of Professional Staff

As with many other regions, participants in the Mid-Atlantic Symposium indicated that their parish leadership models center on a core team of professional staff involving the pastor and other ministry professionals. The following comments reflect this structure of a core team of professional staff:

*“Top down and side by side – This is an ongoing paradigm shift.”
(P)*

“Canonical pastor – who has other full-time position, but who is the usual presider at Sunday Liturgy. He provides a spiritual presence to the community. The Parish Life Coordinator takes care of day-to-day running of the parish, formation, catechesis, preparation of Liturgy and Service. The Parish Planning Council sets and articulates the vision to the larger community to different ministry groups who provide service.” (PLC)

“Pastor; pastoral associate; DRC; parish council” (PA)

*“There are many organizations that operate with the support of the pastor, including a parish pastoral council and a finance council.”
(PC)*

“Our parish has a full-time pastor with one priest in residence; Director of Music; DRE; Liturgy Coordinator; Pastoral Associate; and one deacon who serves as pastoral staff. There is also administrative staff.” (DR)

“Pastor; pastoral associate (sister); Director of Liturgy; Director of Music; Coordinator of Religious Education; Coordinator of Youth and Family; Principal; Business Manager. They all strive for a collaborative style.” (DR)

E. Leadership of the Pastor/Parish Life Coordinator

Mid-Atlantic Symposium participants were asked to describe the model of leadership provided by their pastors or parish life coordinators. Many participants portrayed an empowering and collaborative pastor/parish life coordinator. Still, others indicated a strong, centralized leader consistent with a hierarchical style of leadership. A number of participants also described a gatekeeper engaged in the visioning of the parish. Finally, a few participants indicated pastor/parish life coordinator with a weak laissez faire style of leadership.

Empowering and Calling Forth the Gifts of Others

Participants who indicated that their parishes have pastors or parish life coordinators who are empowering and call forth the gifts of others also indicated these pastoral leaders are enablers who seek collaboration. Moreover, these participants identified a pastor or parish life coordinator who leans toward a servant leadership model. The following comments reflect this style of leadership:

“Now beginning staff; offering training and formation; pastoral council; finance council; school board; staff; sacramental preparation” (P)

“Most important is to witness a commitment to the parish and to gather the parishioners into a deeper awareness of what it means to be a Eucharistic community. This implies/requires collegiality, collaboration, and being present to the parish and prayer.” (P)

“Being that person, I’m prejudiced. I believe I present a vision of a renewed church and ask people to share it with me and take ownership. I’m much more the leaflet distributor than the soap box speaker and more the sing-a-long piano player than the choir conductor. I try to respect staff and community’s expertise and professionalism.” (P)

“I am new to the position as pastor. I am observing and listening to everything and everyone. I am asking a lot of ‘why’ questions about what we do. I am mostly taking direction, but I have made a few minor changes in procedures for my comfort and fit when I am the presider. My key for leading now is in preaching and in consulting.” (P)

“Primary function of the pastor as I see it is as the animator/facilitator of these leadership groups and to see to the continued development/formation of lay leadership.” (P)

“Inspirer/enabler” (P)

“Parish Life Coordinator serves as a mentor, advisor to various ministries, raises up the vision, asks hard questions (how does this relate to our Mission Statement?).” (PLC)

“Builds relationships with the community and helps them build relationships with each other. Responsible to create a culture of relationships. Looks for and develops new leaders. Encourages the use of various gifts in the community.” (PLC)

“Our pastor knows how to delegate. His philosophy is ‘a good pastor doesn’t have to always be there. That’s what you’re there for.’” (PA)

“Enables and empowers laity; seeks creative ideas from them” (PA)

“Enabler; searching out gifts and talents of others” (PA)

“In both parishes, the pastor works hard and intentionally to empower and enable the parishioners to be involved in the conversation and decision...ownership of the parish by the parishioners is important to him. The pastors are an example to the people and they see their role as calling forth the gifts of the

people and helping, facilitating, and then live out their baptismal call.” (PA)

“Connect parishioners to diocesan events, opportunities, and celebrations. It makes the community feel connected to the larger church. The downside is that it limits pastor’s involvement in the one-on-one.” (PA)

“The pastor’s leadership is exercised through the people he hires for particular responsibilities. He delegates through position. That is, when he hires a person it is to fulfill a role and responsibility. In this regard, he gives people the ability to use their gifts and talents. Where his leadership reverts back to the clerical model is in the fact that he doesn’t really see a need for information to be shared or responsibilities to be worked on collaboratively.” (PC)

“He is not an organizer and administrator by nature so he leaves that to others. He is a supporter and empowerer. He attends as many meetings as he can so the groups know he is with them and supports them and supports the staff and lay leadership in those groups.” (DR)

“Servant leadership model – The pastor is in communication with the pastoral team and other lay leaders. The pastor is open to the way God speaks through. The pastor empowers lay leaders.” (DR)

“As a new pastor, Father does seem to be connecting with parish staff and I have heard him express his desire to work as a team.” (DR)

“Individual consultation to answer questions and empower each staff member who needs assistance in their ministry” (DR)

“He animates, encourages, and directs.” (DR)

“Pastor articulates the vision both by spoken word and example. He looks for competency in hired staff. He listens to comments, observations, suggestions, etc.” (DR)

“Enables staff to work as a team; attempts to educate ‘pew people’; changed the physical plant to welcome people to come and remain for parish events” (DR)

“Sets the ‘tone’ for the parish community; gives a positive faith-witness; conveys a sense of the importance of service. Pastor is one who can empower parishioners and most especially the staff.” (O)

“They offer support for the group or activity and look for ways and resources to help the volunteer coordinator of the activity and help the activity grow.” (O)

Engaged in Visioning of the Parish

Many participants attributed their leadership models to the visionary aspects of their pastors or parish life coordinators. Moreover, many comments reflect a change agent style of leadership derived from various needs within the parish. Consequently, the common denominator is the ability of the pastor or parish life coordinator to multi-task while remaining mindful of the future. The subsequent comments reflect these perceptions:

“The pastor uses his leadership to provide a vision to the parish. If the vision is authentic, people will buy into it.” (P)

“Collaborative, trusting, open to change, but firm in beliefs about where the parish needs to move and focus.” (P)

“He is the keeper of the vision and the orchestra leader of the folk.” (P)

“He mostly provides the guidelines and framework of action.” (P)

“The pastor is very concerned about the future of the parish. He welcomes participation and leadership.” (D)

“Guidance – listening; challenging; decision-making; inclusiveness; openness; not great with confrontation, however” (PA)

“The pastor of this very large suburban parish is akin to a ‘conductor’ or enabler; a facilitator and enabler.” (DR)

“As a presider, a person with a vision of where he wants to take the parish, but with a style that allows the pastoral council and parish to travel the journey with him.” (PC)

“Pastor ‘tends’ the vision and keeps us on track. He’s highly involved in liturgy. He has a consultative style in many things, but just ‘decides’ other things. I can’t always understand the difference.” (DR)

“Guardian/promotes the mission; mission effectiveness (personnel programs); strategic, long-range planning; gift discernment – empowerment” (DR)

“The pastor brought the changes that we needed in the parish: growth, vision, and structures. He is very sensitive to the needs of parishioners and very respectful to language and cultural diversity.” (PC)

“Facilitator/orchestrator of ministries. An ‘ears-on’ approach that hears and affirms the journey and gifts of all. Visibility with and accessibility to people of the parish and broader community. Faith in people that they can lead and ability to let go of control of ministries.” (O)

*“The pastor tries to be available to staff/parishioners, but many times is called away from the parish due to Archdiocesan duties.”
(O)*

Strong, Centralized Leader

A few participants indicated that their pastor or parish life coordinator practices a strong centralized approach to leadership. Some described an ineffective form of leadership hinging upon the wishes of the pastor, while some comments point to an effective, yet directive approach to leadership. Many comments remain consistent with a traditional, hierarchical approach to parish leadership. The following comments reflect these sentiments:

“Father directs – coordinators carry out details.” (P)

“Directive – often harsh” (D)

“Father is the leader.” (D)

“The pastor is a micro-manager who has a Christ-centered vision for the parish. However, this can cause tension either creative or destructive.” (PA)

“The pastor encourages participation of laity in the life of the church, but could be more involved with providing direction and vision.” (PC)

“Pastor – strong presence; D. Min. in parish organization” (DR)

*“The pastor provides unilateral leadership. The pastor leads.”
(DR)*

F. Staff Leadership

Mid-Atlantic Symposium participants were asked to describe the style of leadership provided by the staff within their parishes. A majority of comments were related to a team-like approach to tasks and support of one another. Still, a few participants recognized the empowering attributes of the staff and facilitating abilities provided to parishioners. Finally, a relatively small number of participants indicated that their respective staffs are hindered by various factors.

Team Approach and Program Implementation (planning, executing, and engaging)

The majority of participants described a recognizable team atmosphere within their respective staffs. Many of these participants believe there is a significant collaborative effort on part of staff. Still, some participants indicated that while there may be a collaborative effort, there is evidence of specialization among their individual parish staffs. The following comments reflect these sentiments:

“First and foremost, a leadership of welcoming – need to witness to the experience of grace and struggle in their own lives and how parish is a place of support. Pastor and staff need to share commitment to the vision of the parish, the accomplishments of particular goals with staff empowering, supporting, and evaluating.”
(P)

“The staff is supporting and can often help the pastor develop his mission by their input. Certainly, they relieve the pastor of all the details of making a vision and reality.” (P)

“Staff provides primary leadership in the parish by directing the programs and projects that absorb the parish’s time, effort, and resources. They are competent and conscientious managers of their various areas of expertise.” (P)

“The staff in the larger parish has broad freedom to assist the parish leaders in their programs.” (P)

“Changing the committees, mostly, making sure the job is done.”
(P)

“The model for the parish is collaborative. No one acts in isolation. All ministry in the parish is to happen through the coordinated efforts of teams/staff with the laity.” (P)

“Staff accepts delegated responsibilities with seriousness and enthusiasm knowing that they are respected and seen as collaborators (partners) in the mission of the parish.” (P)

“There is no staff outside the parish life coordinator and the secretary. The secretary serves the parish in a clerical and organizational role.” (PLC)

“Collaborative” (D)

“Communication and support; training for leaders” (D)

“Each staff member has his/her area of expertise and responsibility. There is a lot of sharing of talents, dialogue, and interaction with the community.” (PA)

“Head staff meetings; religious education; coordinating Eucharistic ministers; stewardship; liturgy; bereavement; sacramental preparation; RCIA” (PA)

“In both parishes, the staff act as resource people...sometimes a nudger...sometimes a change agent. The staff helps the pastoral committees and core communities articulate the vision and sometimes call them back to the vision if they get sidetracked...or sometimes the vision needs to change.” (PA)

“The staff is composed of the pastor, the deacons, the pastoral associates, the school’s principal, and the directors of religious education. All decisions are made with the pastor and the staff in collaboration with the pastoral council, core teams, and finance council.” (PC)

“Two pastoral associates both sit on the pastoral council. Both are very involved in the leadership of the parish. The pastor, Parish Council chair and vice chair, and two pastoral associates meet in advance of the meeting to plan.” (PC)

“The staff provides much of the vision for the parish administratively and pastorally.” (PC)

“The principal is a strong leader who has created a strong community among school families within her responsibilities as defined by the pastor. Music ministry is well-led and planned.” (PC)

“Very small staff; religious education/youth ministry is fairly self-contained and staff member has responsibility for decisions. So, in a sense, the staffing for certain things and ministries is shared because there is collaboration between parishes.” (DR)

“They organize, plan, and coordinate in their area or expertise.” (DR)

“They show great responsibility in carrying out their tasks, involving parishioners, supporting one another, working interdependently and keeping themselves updated.” (DR)

“In their particular area of expertise, they are responsible for the day-to-day operation of the parish.” (DR)

“The staff has a desire to work together and assist the pastor in the areas of catechesis, service, and outreach. I have observed many gifted people empowered to serve through the invitation of a staff member.” (DR)

“Very little as far as policy/decision-making are concerned. Staff provides obvious support to the mission of the parish. Role is more of assistance and support. Can make recommendations to the pastor (and this happens from time to time).” (O)

“They provide resources or take messages, mailings, and set up appointments for the activity. The staff is mainly an administrative role for each activity.” (O)

“Discernment and affirmation of leaders. Organizational skills: arranging to get administrative work done, being present with people of all kinds and backgrounds. Good preaching and sharing of liturgical leadership. Sets examples of prophetic response to critical issues.” (O)

Empowering, Facilitating, and Allowing Gifts to Emerge

A number of participants indicated that their individual staffs provide an enabling and facilitating style of leadership. Furthermore, these participants seemed to echo other regions in that the staffs effectively provide the tools necessary for a successful parish-wide ministry. The following comments indicate a facilitating and enabling staff leadership model:

“Using the orchestra simile, they are the section leaders.” (P)

“We have a very small staff that excludes the pastor, associate pastor, deacon, grade school and high school principals.” (D)

“Enabler; searching out gifts and talents of others” (PA)

“We are seriously dedicated to serving the people; growing in our faith; sharing our experiences” (PA)

“Most of the time, the staff members provide independent leadership. However, most are multi-tasked and have stepped into positions formerly exclusively filled by clergy and religious.” (PA)

“Provides the resources and direction to manage the ministries” (PC)

“Staff works at empowerment more often than not. But, the staff doesn’t function as a unified body. Territoriality and an insecurity among the members of the pastoral staff prevents any kind of cohesive sense of community from being created. This being the case, the rest of the parish works in a similar fashion.” (PC)

“Large staff – highly professional, but also invitational of total involvement by laity” (DR)

“Youth; faith formation; social ministry; music” (DR)

“Empowerment of others, especially volunteers; ministry effectiveness; program development/implementation” (DR)

“Accept their responsibility in respective positions; invite parishioners to be involved in various events; present to parish” (DR)

“There is a pastoral staff of about 10, including the pastor, one other priest, a sister and the rest lay professionals. They all work very hard and offer a great deal of training and leadership and personal ministry, but they also multiply themselves by calling forth the gifts of the community.” (DR)

“The staff seeks ways to provide ongoing formation to recognize and support gifts of others and to empower others for ministry and service in the church, the family, and the world.” (DR)

“Staff is very good at providing leadership training and encouraging the laity to live out their baptismal call.” (O)

Hindered by Various Factors; Pastor Dominated

As with most other regions, participants see various hindering factors with regard to their respective staffs. Some participants recognize a disjointed staff focusing primarily on their own goals, while others focus on a pastor-dominated model of staff leadership. The following comments reflect these observations:

“Grounded in my predecessor’s style, most people are seen as suspect and hoops are set up for people to jump through. Staff is digesting Wilke’s book on excellent parishes, but very difficult to shift their thinking. The new religious education person is very community-minded.” (P)

“The deacons are trying to keep the parish on an even level, not wanting to challenge the pastor.” (D)

“The staff is an entity in itself. It serves the needs of its members. Leadership appears to be reaching out, but, in fact, it is using the talents and gifts for its own ends.” (D)

“Independent segments; leadership is not there.” (D)

“Assisting the pastor; following orders” (DR)

“Professionally trained, but tend to be the private kingdom builders; expect personal loyalty even if that undermines the best interests of the parish. Perhaps unconsciously project ‘it’s all about me’ message.” (DR)

“Training is available for volunteers in the various ministries, but more needs to be done on an ongoing basis, not just to be certified.” (DR)

“Implements desire of pastor” (O)

G. Leadership in the Community

Pastoral leaders in the Mid-Atlantic identified a number of ways their communities are engaged in the overall ministry of the parish. Overwhelming, they cited numerous examples of their community's being active and engaged in the leadership process. Many indicated the strength of their pastoral councils. Only a few identified their parishes as not engaged in ministry activities.

Active and Engaged Communities of Leadership (engaged in the visioning of the parish)

Pastoral leaders in the Mid-Atlantic cited numerous examples of their parishes being active and engaged communities of leadership. Their range of examples included the number of volunteers evident in parish life, as well as initiatives that are lay-led by members of the community. The following comments indicate numerous examples of this level of lay involvement in parish life:

"They are the players. Without the Assembly, we are fragrance on the desert air." (P)

"Services – Knights of Columbus, St. Vincent De Paul and youth ministry" (P)

"The fact that 300 volunteers do various things in many types of areas – we provide for the future." (P)

"Coordinators who carry out pastor's direction on identified needs." (P)

"When the parish gathers to celebrate Eucharist or gathers for any event, people genuinely evidence a spirit of reverence for each other, helpfulness to each other, and a spirit of joy. All visitors comment on how welcome and at home they feel – leadership by presence." (P)

"The parish is growing in the sense of self as gifted and capable. We have approximately 70 people in leadership positions. Not everyone is called to leadership, though everyone is called to ministry. We continuously discern who in the community is being moved by the spirit into leadership." (P)

"Hard working, faith-filled; taking ownership of the parish; supporting pastor; working as a team" (P)

"The community is an affluent and well-educated group who carry out the work of the parish with generosity and concern to make the parish outstanding in its work, and they serve with pride and determination to keep the parish a welcoming and caring community." (P)

“All the ministries of the parish are coordinated by members of the community, including RCIA, Children’s Faith Formation, Adult Faith Formation, Last Judgment Ministry, Dance Ministry, Music Ministry, St. Vincent DePaul, Liturgical Ministers, Revival Committee, etc. The Parish Planning Council articulates the vision of the community and plans for living out the mission.”
(PLC)

“Without lay volunteers, this parish would fall flat on its face! Our laity assumes ownership of many ministries and gives 100%.”
(PA)

“Innovative ideas for new ministries; coordination of present ministries; sharing, insights, and views from the pew” (PA)

“In both parishes, the community provides leadership because the pastor and staff listen very carefully and intentionally to the wisdom of the people.” (PA)

“The community is very open to serving and providing for the needs of the community when asked. They seem to have a sense of ownership whose larger objective is the overall need and benefit to the parish as a whole.” (PA)

“There are many initiatives that come from the bottom up. The pastor allows them and the people to do all the planning. Pastor is not actively involved in many of these.” (PA)

“The participation of parishioners in the life of the parish is overwhelming; however, we need to be more actively engaged in parish activities. We have about 25 active ministries.” (PC)

“The outreach to the poor has opened the door for many parishioners to step forward and assume leadership roles in organizing the various programs for feeding and giving shelter to the poor and homeless.” (PC)

“The community is involved to some extent in parish leadership insofar as they have areas of concern or ministry that they have made their own. They come forward to do the things they have always done and at times take leadership roles in order to ensure ownership for the event. In many cases, their participation helps them to understand their own faith commitment better, but in many ways, the exclusivity also diminishes their understanding of parish.” (PC)

“The community is involved in most of the ministries listed above.”
(PC)

“Our parish community will help with anything! Often, we are called a parish with more volunteers than contributors. That attitude is reflective of the community/ neighborhood in which the parish is located. When someone in the parish is suffering (illness, unemployment) if our parishioners are aware, the troops assemble and help. Support is generously provided.” (DR)

“This is a highly educated and motivated community who has chosen this parish even though they don’t live in the town. A healthy percentage were in lay leadership roles in neighboring parishes, were alienated when there was a change of pastor who did not validate their leadership, and then drifted to this ‘super-parish’ because of its reputation.” (DR)

“Knowing we have limited resources, people are willing to take on as volunteers important parish outreach. For example, Saturday morning breakfast for the homeless. That program is run by volunteers 52 weeks a year. When the Evangelization Team was planning a parish mission, they gathered other parish committees to be involved – organizing and running a thrift shop in a store operation.” (DR)

“Involvement in all aspects of parish life and ministry – real sense of ownership” (DR)

“Parishioners become more and more aware of their gifts and their baptismal call to discipleship. Some lead through ministerial involvement. Some lead with their lives.” (DR)

“Ministry to one another (parish; marketplace); gift discernment; hospitality” (DR)

“They also organize, plan, and coordinate various aspects of parish life.” (DR)

“They participate in many aspects of parish life – formally and informally. They recognize this is their parish and speak up as they feel necessary.” (DR)

“Outreach to many in need; outreach/ministry to and with local university students who attend the parish.” (O)

“Most of the liturgical ministries operate very well under lay leadership within the community, as well as religious instruction for children and teens. We lack leadership in the area of social justice from community, staff and clergy.” (O)

“There are volunteer coordinators who step up to the plate for each activity and control how the activity functions.” (O)

“The vision, the permanent commitment to the people and place they are ‘parished’ and the most effective witness to the love of God by together being Christ in their communities.” (O)

Strong Engagement through Pastoral Councils

A number of communities mentioned that the pastoral councils and overall council structure is integral to their sense of community leadership. The following comments reflect this perspective of strong engagement through pastoral councils:

“The community, through the pastoral council and ‘open forums’ provides direction, new ideas, or project connections.” (P)

“Liturgical ministries; pastoral council; evangelization” (D)

“Parish Council; Liturgy Committee; Social Justice Committee” (PA)

“They provide their input that allows the pastoral council to create vision and then the ministry leaders provide leadership to embrace and implement the vision.” (PC)

“The pastoral council functions reasonably well without the support of the pastor. This lack of support, however, limits its ability to make a difference. Other parish organizations are reasonably will lead by people who have occupied these roles for some time. Active participants are limited to the same group of people. New people are not perceived as being welcome.” (PC)

“Some areas have ‘fought’ to maintain some programs. They also fill and run several of the 12 committees in various degrees of control.” (O)

“The pastor and priests are very present to the community. They are open and listen. The PPC, Stewardship Council, and Finance Council are consulted and included in parish planning.” (O)

Struggling to become Engaged Communities

A few participants indicated that their parishes are passive and not well engaged or they are struggling to develop a comprehensive vision and mission for the future. The following comments reflect this viewpoint:

“A few committed leaders in the parish are healthy leaders. Most leadership is still unhealthy with a power position view. But, again, this is slowly changing.” (P)

“The community can begin to recognize their needs and present them to the pastor. In a large parish, many needs will only be attended to when parishioners speak up.” (P)

“I think this is a weak link in our leadership structure. Councilial bodies are rather passive and exercise oversight through project reports, rather than vision setting and evaluation. Solicitation of the community’s voice and needs has been done, but with a limited response. Cultivating the community to reflect on its needs

has not been well served. A lot of personal opinions are given, but shared reflection is not their source.” (P)

“Very little -- the community at large is used to following what Father says. Some members are changing and trying to be more involved.” (P)

“Poses questions – often shot down; supportive of areas where they have some say.” (D)

“Limited leadership – the projects that are led by the members of the community are projects that do not touch the heart and life of the parish community. They are good, well-intentioned people who are not connected for the life of the parish.” (D)

“Not much; many doing a lot of things, but leadership? No.” (D)

“Very little, but things are changing.” (D)

“We are weak in this area. The community is still not at a point where they feel confident enough to say yes to the challenge. Our challenge is educating the parishioners to take ownership. This is their parish.” (PA)

“The community is waiting to be asked and directed.” (PC)

“Not sure we are there yet.” (DR)

“Lay community has an active voice that, for the most part, is listened to. However, I believe they all could be activated and energized and utilized more than they are.” (DR)

“Very select – it seems that one ‘clique’ replaces another.” (DR)

“Not visible/intentional PPC members host events – not sure what else.” (DR)

“More of a supportive role – although, given the present climate, I think there is more of a demand for transparency and accountability on the part of pastoral leaders.” (O)

H. Intentionality of their Parish Leadership Model

Participants were asked to indicate why their pastoral leadership models work as they do. The overwhelming majority expressed the view that they are developing intentional models of parish life. In addition, a number of participants cite the leadership of the pastor as the primary indicator of their model for parish leadership. A few participants also indicated that their leadership is based on necessity and present needs.

Leadership of the Pastor (derived from the style of the pastor or parish administrator)

A number of pastoral leaders believe their current leadership models are derived from the leadership and preferences of their pastor. The following comments reflect this viewpoint:

“There is a tradition of pastors, although each quite different, trusting their staff members and emphasizing Sunday Eucharist as key to the parish’s success.” (P)

“For 16 years, pastor did maintaining style after parish school closed. Next pastor for four years gave work to people, but had no training for them. Reacted badly to ‘questions’ and shut himself off in his addictions. This first year as pastor, I have moved to create staff model and formation for leadership model.” (P)

“In both parishes, there is the very clear realization that I can’t be in both places at once. They are beginning to see that, if they need something; they should work to get it done. They can no longer rely on the ‘pastor’ to lead things. Also, I have tried to make it very clear that people do have the responsibility and the authority to ‘get things done.’” (P)

“History of one pastor for 22 years and an array of associates. They were continually transferred when they did not fit the pastor’s ecclesiology until he decided to go it alone.” (P)

“I have always felt that the Lord called me to be a leader and teacher. I share with the community to the best of my ability, but I can be transferred and the community will still be there. So, I try to get parishioners to recognize problems, find solutions, and work to carry them out. I was raised as a farmer and working together was necessary.” (P)

“I believe in collaborative ministry and encourage it. It is new for people, but they are responding well.” (P)

“Personally, I support the vision of the pastor and try to support in my ministry. In all I do, from committee work to preaching, (I am the Associate Pastor), I collect feedback and ask for opinions and input from the staff. People feel more involved and I feel I am more effective in ministering to them.” (P)

“Yes. This is not just a reaction to a difficult situation. I want both parishes to remain independent and capable of achieving different goals according to their different characteristics. I have announced to both congregations that I will not be able to do the job by myself and that if they want to get something done, I will help them provide the resources and training, but I will not assume the job for myself.” (P)

“Yes, I am being intentional as I try to recognize challenges to parish life and lead people to find solutions to the problems, rather than wait for the pastor to make a decision in an emergency. I am not forced to make a decision when confusion reigns, but I would rather have the community work out the solutions.” (P)

“I have had to take charge to move them from ‘Father does this’ to them doing it. Showing them the way to live out their baptismal call” (P)

“The pastor is the boss!” (D)

“Pastor” (D)

“It has always functioned this way where Father decided everything for the parish. However, since our parish is now down to two priests from five, and eventually there will only be one, Father is working very hard to change this and to re-educate the people.” (D)

“Because we have a pastor who invites, is welcoming, who doesn’t micro-manage, who is authentic, and is a model to those around him – We have for the most part a dedicated staff who works tirelessly for the parish. We also have a group of dedicated retirees who give a lot to the parish.” (PA)

“Collaboration, listening, and our pastor is the gatekeeper.” (PA)

“Example of the pastor; his trust and confidence in those who serve” (PA)

“The pastor sets the rhythm of the parish and the type of leadership. He is a humble, people person; he likes peace and harmony, but is open to conflict if necessary.” (PA)

“I think both of the pastors are visionaries and forward thinkers and they want to prepare the people for the future. Also, I believe that they believe this model helps the people live out their baptismal call. It wasn’t an easy jump for them to make...people resisted, but they remained consistent and as people began to see the benefits when they came on board.” (PA)

“The pastor realizes the many gifts of the parishioners and actively seeks out those who can offer assistance.” (PC)

“It works this way because it works. For the pastor, the idea is to do as much as possible to bring as many people to Mass on Sunday. His intentions are good; his vision – short-sighted at best. I believe he is really stuck in the clerical model of leadership while at the same time wanting to be more collaborative. His dilemma is one that seems to include his own identity as priest and pastor. Lose your authority, lose your identity.” (PC)

“In part because the pastor inherited the structure and in part because of the personality of the pastor.” (PC)

“The pastor’s vision of how the ministry of this parish needs to work to accomplish our goals. The pastor cannot do all this given the size and demographic the parish. These different ministries have committed to accomplish these tasks.” (PC)

“The model of parish leadership was presented by our pastor. We welcomed it because we (the parishioners) think that it is one of the best parish leadership models.” (PC)

“To some extent, I think the pastor is intentional. He is aware of his limitations and does not want to become involved in things beyond his capacity. Of course, this is not desirable for the good of the parish and the option of permitting (empowering) others to carry on ministry does not seem to be supported by the pastor.” (PC)

“Well, so far it only works in that sacramental needs are being met. It is ‘tolerated’ because the pastor is so ‘warm and loving’ that everyone loves him and ‘would do anything for him.’ The community does not have an active role in the life of the parish. Their ‘collective’ level of faith is ‘child-like’ and there is much attrition.” (DR)

“Because our pastor engages and informs and leads, as well as inspires. For example, during the winter as part of an ecumenical effort, we house 35 homeless people over night for one month. Several volunteers are required to be there all night. Our pastor is frequently one of those volunteers working along side the parishioners.” (DR)

“We fall into what we have always done as we wait for more direction from the new pastor.” (DR)

“Primarily, attitude of pastor and associate friar committed to a model of shared ministry respectful of community giftedness” (DR)

“Pastor’s strong ideas about parish leadership” (DR)

“Pastor and staff believe in it and work hard to maintain it.” (DR)

“The pastor makes this possible and encourages it. The pastor is not threatened.” (DR)

“Pastor is not only about ‘maintaining’ current situations, but involved in modeling the future (e.g., one day per week – no daily mass – instead a Eucharistic prayer service presided over by laity trained for this purpose).” (DR)

“The vision of our parish is articulated by the pastor and we are invited into the experience of being a worshipping community and a center of service to all who need us.” (DR)

“Pastor was deliberate about broadening the staff. He provides for good staff interaction and updating. Liturgy is seen as central to all else.” (DR)

“Because the pastor and priest are comfortable with it” (O)

“More from past practice and the overall ‘tradition’ of our Archdiocese; also, seminary training at various stages plays a significant part in this situation (good and bad effort).” (O)

“New pastor” (O)

“The pastor is moving it from collegial (horizontal) to vertical.” (O)

“As a resident, the cue is taken from the pastor. I’m trying my best to be an effective priest; sensitive to the needs of the community. Since I am a resident, probably I would be more passive in my role and presence. As a pastor or associate, more intentional and involved.” (O)

Necessity and Present Needs (based on local needs)

A few participants indicated that their parish leadership models are based on history and response to present needs. The following comments reflect this very practical response to present needs in their leadership models:

“Historical reasons – for many years, they have been led in one way. Now they are asked to be involved and most especially accountable. These changes are slow, but it’s necessary to respect the ‘personality’ and ‘culture’ of the parish.” (P)

“Was created out of circumstance (missionary-trained pastor), economic limitations and constraints, dependence upon stewardship to have parish programs, activities function” (P)

“Through clearly inviting participation; through open and honest prayer and dialogue about previous pedophile priests of the parish; through concern for parish victims; through clear boundaries about being only one priest parish; through regional planning and thinking.” (P)

“It does not work.” (D)

"We need to prepare for the situation of not having a resident pastor. We are looking into the future." (D)

"I am working to have people see the parish as something that is 'ours'. It does not belong to any individual." (D)

"At one time, a priest was present at every single meeting and function, but due to the decline of priests, we are now backing away from this. Father is letting more of the laity run the meetings and make decisions where it is not necessary for a priest to be present." (D)

"It's all we have. We don't have a lot to draw on. Sometimes it doesn't work – sometimes it does." (PA)

"It has been a vibrant parish where the faithful have historically been very active. The parish is somewhat isolated geographically speaking. The pastors have been non-Hispanics in a mostly Hispanic church and I think they have allowed the community to set the pace because they themselves didn't feel confident enough (I think)." (PA)

"Conscious effort to trust that those involved in ministry are doing their best. Accountability to pastor, co-workers, and the parish; open to evaluation and constructive criticism" (PA)

"It is often faster and easier to just do something yourself. Following this model helps people mature in their faith and mature as Disciples of Christ and that is what we are about." (PA)

"Working twice as hard to prove myself as a lay woman in ministerial position. I also struggle with our traditions of a hierarchical model of the church." (PA)

"The community is comprised of a large number of very active and engaged professionals, many from education. There is a very active interest in the local civic community and many charitable and civic events that top the parishioners' interests and abilities to be spent elsewhere. The parish has not been able to compete for their time and talent because it appears to be not required." (PC)

"To respond to the needs of the parish; because it works; because it has become the routine way of operation." (DR)

"Long history of respect for and fostering of gifts of all (from staff to parishioners to children); tone set by pastor and staff; learn from mistakes!" (DR)

"Other attempts (models) have not worked because of resistance, intransigence, etc." (DR)

"As parishes reconfigure, they (parishioners and staff) will discern which structural model works best for them." (DR)

“Mainly due to the fact that the parish is two communities, not one. You have the neo-cat community and you have the general parish community.” (O)

“I guess it’s because it’s simple and each coordinator does their activity the way they feel it needs to be done. Plus, the priests don’t involve themselves with the activity that much unless they have to. So, you don’t have extra hands stirring the pot.” (O)

Intentional Model for Parish Life (vision for an intentional faith community)

The overwhelming perspective of pastoral leaders in the Mid-Atlantic indicates that their models for parish life are based on some intentional model for a faith community. The following numerous examples express this perspective of engaging whole communities in an intentional model of ministry and faith formation:

“Our Vision and our Mission are primary realities in our operational style. If you cannot embrace the vision and the mission as discerned among the faithful, you are politely invited off the bus.” (P)

“Because we work hard at it and because we want to model good leadership” (P)

“Staff is strong and dedicated to their various ministry areas. Counciliar leadership has not been utilized in a consistent fashion and those bodies tend to defer to the staff to carry out the work of the parish. I think most of the people involved in parish life are very task oriented, and they think that ‘getting the job done’ fulfills the mission. I think more formation in visioning, the vision of the kingdom, and mission arising from this vision is needed. I also think that training in strategic decision-making rather than operational decisions is needed.” (P)

“We have wanted to entrust the ministry of the parish to the leaders of the parish and thus try to function under the principle of subsidiarity. Though not perfect, it is certainly effective. This also allows the parish council to remain apart from the ‘tasks’ to focus on the larger parish-wide and cluster-wide issues that we need to deal with.” (P)

“It works well because the people at all levels of involvement have opportunities to contribute to the mission, and they have a healthy sense of ownership in the parish. If they own the mission, they will do their best to promote it.” (P)

“We call to leadership only those in whom we discern leadership skills. They must take the two-year diocesan pastoral institute training in order to remain in a leadership position in the parish. Our goal is to maintain/develop a well-formed, informed, and educated leadership base for the community.” (P)

“By letting people at all levels contribute to the goals and vision, they will help formulate the direction in which we should go.” (P)

“The parish adheres and celebrates the mission statement of the diocese. From this statement, we developed a parish mission statement and then 10 statements or goals on how we would like to be seen by others by 2010. The 10 statements are reviewed annually by the parish at large. They are still embraced and intentionality is viewed from how we are living the dream/goal statements.” (P)

“Sharing ideas in the bulletin, concepts with the staff and joy with the faithful. People love joy-filled leaders!” (P)

“We have developed a vision and we try to always be consciously practicing that vision and re-evaluating it when needed.” (P)

“I am taking it one step at a time. My strategy is to preach a vision and try to embody it in the decisions I make; to call the consultative bodies together consistently with appropriate staff and raise strategic issues for the agenda; to listen, listen, listen – observe, observe, observe – and to make simple, clear decisions that send a subtle message that I have heard you and this is the appropriate response in my judgment.” (P)

“Ongoing education and formation; pastor, parochial vicars, pastoral associates, deacons, and staff members” (P)

“Many educational pieces, adult programs, visiting people, and homilies. With staff a mixture of both collaboration and re-tooling, as well as directing when that is all that will be understood. I think staff (most) want to change, but they know no other way. Also, being a variety of small community and leadership groups.” (P)

“We have little professional staff. We also commit our resources of money and staff to the development of our lay leaders. We never pass up a course, workshop or experience that will help our leaders grow and develop. Relationships are strong within the parish community.” (PLC)

“I spend a great deal of time doing one-on-one relational meetings with the members of the parish community. This is where I discover new leaders, their interests, gifts, and vision. I then can encourage them in their development and provide opportunities and resources for them to grow both spiritually and in specific pastoral/ministerial skills. I walk with them and supervise them in their new undertakings. I personally invite people to do things and try new things. I give them opportunities to serve.” (PLC)

“Because the pastor cannot and he is not called to do it by himself. Because we all share the baptismal call to service.” (D)

“Not giving the slightest inclination that lay formation programs are another level of church hierarchy. Focusing on our common call to respond to our baptism; formation programs are open to all of us.” (PA)

“Lay people are being sent to lay leadership programs and they are being entrusted with specific ministries in the parish while they are being reminded that the priests will not be there in the future to see to every detail.” (PA)

“Right now, it’s a tradition. The new pastor (3 months) is just trying to get his bearings. This is what he found when he got here. The model works for us. I guess if there were major complaints, we’d look for something else.” (PC)

“In addition to the meetings with the active members of the ministries, we host town hall meetings and open forums where the non-active parishioners have a chance to address their concerns and issues. Each parishioner has a chance to all have input in the decision-making process.” (PC)

“My model of parish leadership is to be inviting and open to the gifts of others. When the invitation is extended and people respond, I intentionally move myself out of the way, without abandoning the person. I believe as a non-ordained pastoral minister my intentionality needs to include empowerment and showing how to do and be minister.” (PC)

“It is a collaborative, healthy model that is inclusive and provides for visioning approach.” (PC)

“Very intentional – it has been a plan to transform leadership model and role of pastoral council to what it was intended to be.” (PC)

“Because it was built over the course of a generation by leadership committed to collaboration and faith sharing.” (DR)

“In our region, we have an active collaboration among parishes which has created more opportunities for lay involvement in regional team projects.” (DR)

“We are intentional, but flexible and I think we are trying to be proactive in planning for a future without a priest at every parish.” (DR)

“Have a vision! The whole parish is aware of why we are here. We keep the vision ever before us.” (DR)

“Everyone is invited, affirmed, needed, and expected to be part of the mission.” (O)

“My personal style of ministry is based on encouraging each individual to live out his/her baptismal call. Through intensive leadership training, support, supervision and evaluation, each person I work with is challenged, educated, and affirmed in their role in building the kingdom of God on Earth.” (O)

“I try to get others more involved with the activity so that if I left, the activity wouldn’t stop because I’m gone. I try to keep my eyes and ears open for things, other activities, and events happening in the parish or community that we can do or refer people to.” (O)

“Quarterly meeting of ‘the whole’ to open the floor to questions, suggestions, ideas, and vision. Asking people to sign a pledge of commitment to our mission and vision when they join. Collaboration all the way through.” (O)

I. Future Emerging Models of Pastoral Leadership

Participants identified future models that are emerging in their faith communities. A number of pastoral leaders indicated that increased lay involvement and attention to the laity is a driving factor of their emerging models. Others indicated that their changing physical structures, such as clustered parishes and merging parishes are a driving factor of their emerging models. Yet others indicated that collaborative team members are principle drivers of their emerging models of pastoral leadership.

Increased Lay Involvement and Dependency on Laity (baptismal call to leadership)

A principle reason cited by Mid-Atlantic participants for their emerging models is increased lay involvement and dependency on laity. The following comments reflect this emerging model based upon the baptismal call of all Christians:

“Some younger people are stepping out to take over from older people. There is a growing awareness of the need to take on some responsibility and to facilitate communications among the active members. In both parishes, there appears to be a maturing sense of independence (in the good sense) from me in planning and executing ideas.” (P)

“Lay led programs; now the few programs are mostly priest, deacon, and sister-led. Through expectation of Vatican II theology training and empowerment. We are moving toward parent/family formation of K-2 families as the re-entering community in need of great catechesis and the source of great future leadership.” (P)

“People are identifying new areas of ministry which need to be developed and are offering expertise for their accomplishment. As we decrease the number of priests and sisters on staff, we are seeing the laity competently step up to the plate. Our next real challenge is extending them beyond the parish into more of a cluster reality.” (P)

“Professional and trained leaders who have gone through church leadership institute” (P)

“More responsibility and acceptance of the call to evangelize has awakened more people to take on leadership roles. With the Sunday Liturgy as the resource, they are more courageous and willing to lead into the future.” (P)

“More lay people involvement; sharing resources with other parishes – clusters” (D)

“It is very slow in coming, but the pastoral council and others are beginning to step to the forefront of the parish and make decisions; thus, beginning to claim the parish as its own. We are also looking into the possibility of in the future hiring a parish/business manager, but due to financial reasons, this is a long way off.” (D)

“In 1979, I took a course at Villanova called ‘The Priesthood of the Laity’. We are by virtue of baptism ‘priest, prophet...’ Not only does the role of laity need to be re-evaluated, the role of pastor (identity) needs to be re-defined.” (PA)

“Pastoral Associate – I’m one because my pastor saw value in what I could bring the parish; empowerment of the laity to serve in many ways.” (PA)

“Parish Council – Diocesan initiative; every parish must have one running by 9/06. Diocese is training people on how to do this; placing programs in the hands of lay men and women.” (PA)

“My parish already has a parish council. However, I would like to see more lay people involved in the parish staff.” (PC)

“I see the community becoming even more diverse in its ministries in that more people become more involved with vision of doing God’s work in each ministry – how can I be of service?” (PC)

“Show enablement of lay people to assume leadership for their ministry” (DR)

Changing Parish Structures (i.e. clustered/shared ministries; smaller intentional faith communities)

A few participants believe that their emerging models are going to be primarily driven by structural changes in parish life, including the decreased number of priests, clustered parishes, small faith-sharing communities, etc. The following comments reflect the changing parish structures as an emerging model for pastoral leadership:

“The parish as a community of communities; the local community can be as small as a household or as large as a parish society. Each community is fed by the Eucharist and by the Sunday reading. The task is to break open the Word at the Sunday Eucharist and continue breaking it open during the week in small community employing listening, reflecting, and acting.” (P)

“Deeper levels of collaboration in pastoral care that does not require a priest: nursing home(s)/hospital care; bereavement ministry; campus life (at local university); outreach to those in crisis, etc.” (P)

“Small groups – the parish is very large and people feel too anonymous. By belonging to a small group, they feel they are connected to the larger group.” (P)

“In our diocese, there is an increase in bilingual and trilingual parishes. We also have begun to have parishes that are ‘linked’ to two neighboring parishes served by a single pastor and perhaps some shared staff. These are mainly small parishes with diminished membership in urban areas. Some of these ‘linkages’ may lead to mergers. In a major initiative over the next 18 months, every parish will be asked to partner with one or more neighboring parishes to see what they can accomplish jointly that they could not do separately and to prepare for the effects of declining number of priests.” (DR)

“I can sense a ‘streamlining’ of parish celebrations and services because of the continued decrease in the number of priests that will encourage more movement and sharing among parishes in a given geographic region.” (DR)

“Shared programming among neighboring parishes.” (DR)

“New bishop is trying hard to affect the mindset and systems necessary for good shared leadership on every level of diocesan and parish life. He misses no opportunity to talk about the role of all the baptized and the necessity of living with the heart and mind of Jesus. He is insisting on faith-formation and spiritual formation of adults (in the spirit of Vatican II). Ultimately, this will open us to new models.” (DR)

“In the diocese, one pastor and site coordinator or pastoral administrator for the parish and chapel/parish; parish plus parish (one pastor; one pastoral council; one staff)” (O)

More Collaborative Effort and Team Approach within Parish Leadership

Yet other participants indicated that a collaborative model based on team leadership is emerging which includes lay ecclesial ministers, as well as others in developing emerging models for the future. The following comments reflect this perspective:

“I hope in time that a more collaborative model will emerge where the leadership comes from the people with the pastor’s oversight. I hope that the staff will be seen more as a resource to this leadership rather than a substitute for it. I hope that this style of leadership will foster a growing sense of communion among all of us which is then the reference for all that we do and how we decide new directions.” (P)

“Need to move forward with a model of pastoral council” (P)

“I am empowering the finance committee, the stewardship committee, the liturgy committee, the social action committee, and the catechetical committee. We are recognizing that some organizations have outlived their usefulness and must be closed down. I do not dictate, but try to lead others to think.” (P)

“The model that we must help each other up the ladder” (P)

“The emergence of a Latino community is helping change to a shared ministry style of leadership. Their presence is not a threat to most anglos there and their ‘family type’ involvement is having an impact on the whole parish.” (P)

“People are beginning to see that their power is in their relationships and that if their parish is to be vital, they must be in this together and that they must be responsible for their own Adult Faith Development. They must come to know each other on a deeper level and to challenge each other to always seek more and call each other to accountability.” (PLC)

“Listening well to the community and its charism and relationships; creative collaboration and working as team members” (PA)

“I believe we will need to be more intentional in training leaders to be shepherds with a program not as full blown as lay ecclesial ministry program, but something formational; more leadership on diversity.” (PA)

“Wider consultations (surveys the use of council) are new. At the time of transition for this pastor, the model may be dramatically different.” (PC)

“Our current model continues to emerge within the structure – constant improvement.” (PC)

“At least, there is the presence of lay ecclesial ministers (pastoral associate and music minister) who meet monthly with the pastor, school principal, DRE, and business manager for ‘staff meetings’. Pastor prepares agenda, leads meetings, and makes all decisions. Deacons not invited to staff meetings. They meet privately with the pastor and associate for ‘clergy meetings’.” (DR)

“Collaboration between catechetical ministries (religious education, school, youth ministry, even RCIA)” (DR)

“More demand/request for collegiality, cooperation, and consultation. The days of ‘do this because I said so’ are long gone!” (O)

“Parishes that model mission from the bottom up; that live the call to evangelize, work for unity, and organize for justice; that are catalysts for healing and transformation of society and Earth.” (O)

None or No Change at this Time (frustration with the change process)

Only a few participants indicated that their parishes demonstrate no change or no progress in developing an emerging model for parish leadership. However disheartening, the following comments reflect this reality:

“Wait and pray model that the pastor might take some shared leadership courses” (D)

“No change until we have new pastor.” (D)

“At present, the emerging model is one that struggles with collaboration. It is a painful process, especially given the inconsistencies of competencies among both the ordained and the non-ordained. I do not believe that the faith community that I minister with is not moving forward. I do believe we are moving much slower than is possible. The reasons for this are a lack of vision and a fear of loss of control.” (PC)

“People are simply waiting -- waiting to be more engaged in the life of the parish and to be fed more. The staff is present, but they haven’t been given a new vision to feed the parish to be more connected to Jesus Christ, each other, and to the larger community.” (PC)

“Haven’t seen or heard anything” (DR)

“In order for empowering, life-giving vibrant parishes to emerge, clerical leadership must be nurtured through appropriate seminary formation. In many ways, this is the starting point.” (DR)

“Vertical, but we/many continue to believe, work toward and fight for a less vertical model.” (O)

“I’m not sure that any new models are emerging.” (O)

“I see more people not wanting to get involved with the parish activities because they are too busy with their own affairs that they don’t have the time or commitment to volunteer for activities.” (O)

III. PARISH BEST PRACTICES:

Participants discussed best practices in their parish communities after hearing a series of case studies outlining real life examples of the development of individual parishes. Following these case study presentations, pastoral leaders reflected on their own experiences of parish best practices.

A. Relation of Total Ministering Community to Health Parishes

As in other regions, participants overwhelmingly reinforced their view of an essential link between a total ministering community and healthy parishes. However, the circumstances of each parish may vary. It was almost universally the case that participants see an essentially practical, as well as theological link between healthy parishes and the engagement of laity in ministry. The following comments reflect this perspective.

“The key word is healthy. The enduring health of a parish will be correlative to the synergy created by the vocational respect of a parish team.” (P)

“It will be a necessary factor for the parish to remain viable.” (P)

“A parish cannot be healthy without everyone willing to try to work with each other. The kingdom is God’s kingdom and not people’s personal kingdoms. We need to be focused and intentional as we try to respond to needs and ideas – differing spiritualities, yes, but still share a common vision.” (P)

“It is indispensable. Besides it being crucial theologically, it is critical on a real-world practical level.” (P)

“Extensively! Need for new models around collaborative ministry with priest/pastor facilitator director utilizing deacons, lay minister, etc. to provide services for multiple parish clusters; combined service – RCIA, sacramental preparation, marriage preparation, etc.” (P)

“Given our theology of communion, we cannot be authentic without moving towards such a total ministering community. In addition, the demands of ministry under this vision require a shared and inclusive dynamic between pastor, staff and parishioners.” (P)

“It will depend greatly on total ministering.” (P)

“Almost totally” (P)

“Greatly” (P)

“Collaborative ministry and a developed spirituality of stewardship are crucial for the future of the church.” (P)

“Good RCIA programs utilizing teachers from the school or college; the pastor directs it by several meetings with the staff, allowing him to have time for other needs. The same can be said about care of the sick, welcoming new parishioners, conducting counseling programs, etc.” (P)

“The healthy development of parish life will essentially hinge on good Eucharistic celebrations, the best adult education, and enabling leadership to arise both for the church and for the world, i.e., to send Christians into the arts and sciences; politics and family life to transform society from within.” (P)

“Thinking outside the box; be creative – working together; listen to suggestions; make people welcome and comfortable” (P)

“To the extent that all parties are inter-dependent and accountable for the responsibilities assumed in their baptismal call will the health of parishes be measured.” (P)

“It will only happen if all are in right relationships, using their unique gifts and focused on the mission. They need partnerships which value the gifts of all.” (PLC)

“It would be the only choice.” (D)

“It is the only way to come together. I am very hopeful that our parish will grow. We need to start a spiritual men’s club.” (D)

“I believe that looking to have healthy parishes will necessitate collaborative ministry.” (D)

“I believe that the future of the Catholic Church in America depends on this scenario. Without total collaboration, the church as we know it will cease to exist.” (D)

“Identification of roles as to whom and to what extent will the future church’s leadership be.” (PA)

“One person can’t do it all – there are so many needs – and so diverse. It is only in the coming together and placing our gifts at the service of all that we will ever understand that we are the Body of Christ and that happens when we come together. God has provided all the gifts necessary for the community until we call forth and recognize this...we are missing so many blessings God wants to shower on us.” (PA)

“To be a healthy parish; forgiving, trustworthy, no hidden agendas; checks and balances; faith formation – begin with staff” (PA)

“It will be the determining factor and it is the way God intends since a parish, a healthy parish can in no way be led by a group of a few. This stifles the Holy Spirit and devalues the baptismal call of the parishioners.” (PA)

“We need all three and for a while we can do without one or another, but they need to come back and be there for each other.” (PA)

“Totally depend on total ministry. It will not be viable otherwise.” (PA)

“I believe this is the only way to go.” (PA)

“To a great extent; needs to be intentional; daily grind – vision; collaborative ministry happens every day – planning, marketing, and evaluating; scared to look corporate – if you don’t know where you’re going. We have to change the mentality ‘if we build it they will come.’ We’ve got to go out and get them. We have to get past the concept of ‘we’re the best and it’s your advantage to join us.’” (PC)

“From the conversation here and from lived experience, total ministering communities are really the only way healthy parishes will develop. Not only because we need everyone to be fully and actively participating, but because the relationships that develop in a community were all regarded as having a vested interest in the mission can only be relationships that transform everyone involved. Transformation leads to greater understanding of the mission and desire to continue to serve.” (PC)

“It is crucial. The clergy must allow this to occur or the church will flounder.” (PC)

“The total community will have to work together to form a healthy parish. Parishioners will have to step up and participate in the diocese.” (PC)

“Parishes will be bigger; more complex; more diversified. Clergy will be fewer and will need to collaborate and coordinate with others.” (PC)

“The future of healthy parishes will depend on a leadership that is open to receiving new ideas and a leadership that will involve all parishioners.” (PC)

“Healthy parishes will depend primarily on the total community working together. The diverse needs of the parish along with the ‘aging clergy’ will require this group effort.” (DR)

“Healthy parishes will be totally dependent upon a total ministering community. Recognizing the gifts of the entire Body of Christ, empowering the people to live their baptism call fully – showing mutual respect and working side by side is the only way all will grow in faith, become disciples, and fulfill the mission of Jesus.” (DR)

“If they are going to be healthy, totally.” (DR)

“Totally with God’s help.” (DR)

“This is a given. Otherwise, there will be no parish.” (DR)

“I don’t think it will ever be ‘total’, but we must move in that direction or we will stagnate and lose our younger generation to evangelical or become unchurched.” (DR)

“This is the nature of Vatican II. Church has yet to be done with adult catechesis on baptismal responsibility toward mission!” (DR)

“Not really a question! It will have to be. If it doesn’t happen, parishes will fold.” (DR)

“Parishes of the future can only survive with a solid, well-formed (and continuing to be formed) community working together with a vision and mission statement that are life-giving.” (DR)

“Necessity, demographics, and actual realities regarding clergy demands new collaborative models – the future is here!” (DR)

“Move from cooperation – I will help you...to collaboration – together we will determine what needs to be done.” (DR)

“Failure to collaborate (whether clergy, religious or lay or paid or volunteer) among parish leaders will result in the demise of parish vitality.” (DR)

“Without collaboration/working together, the mission for the future will be overwhelming. No one person has the vision or energy to accomplish change for the future. The spirit has gifted each of us and unless we are open to each person’s gift, the future of the church will be hindered.” (DR)

“Totally” (O)

“It is my belief that in order for a healthy parish to be viable in the future, a collaborative leadership style is imperative. This includes planning/vision, implementation, education, evaluation and the integrity of those responsible/ accountable for the health of the parish.” (O)

“I believe that pastors, staff and parishioners need to continue working together and have good communication with each other on at least a monthly basis to stay healthy in the future.” (O)

“God has given the community all the gifts necessary to build up the body. By recognizing and empowering those gifts of all, the Body of Christ can be built up.” (O)

B. Best Practices of Parish Leadership

Pastoral leaders identified specific best practices that are evident in building vibrant faith communities. These best practices include a commitment to collaboration and shared ministry; emphasis on prayer, spirituality, and faith formation; and active listening and sharing information throughout the parish.

Commitment to Collaboration and Shared Ministry (calling forth the gifts of others)

Reinforcing the theme of lay involvement and calling forth the gifts of others, many participants cited commitment to collaboration and shared ministry as a pastoral best practice for the future. The following examples were articulated by participants:

“Clear and respectful delineation of roles and responsibilities among a parish team; educational and formational support systems for the successful participation in parish life; articulation of vision and mission that is foundational to parish life” (P)

“Enabling, creative and collaboration” (P)

“Thinking outside the box; be creative – working together; listen to suggestions; make people welcome and comfortable” (P)

“Collaborative and partnership models will work best for a strong and vibrant faith community. A vision is articulated by pastor and his collaborators (partners) and carried out by all in unity and charity.” (P)

“Strategies that build up people’s appreciation of their own culture so that all feel valued and recognized; bilingual masses; pot luck suppers; fiestas, etc. Strategies to accent and support the role of men – a real issue in Hispanic and Black parishes; inclusive strategy for the creation of an annual pastoral plan” (P)

“Practices which encourage relationships among the mentors of the parish community which can then go out and relate to the larger community. Examples: One-on-one relational meetings, neighborhood or house meetings, inviting groups of parishioners to share a meal. Parish family days which center around a meal and catechesis for the entire community around a particular theme (intergenerational).” (PLC)

“Valuing the different groups in the community; valuing different approaches to designs for those groups.” (D)

“Reaching out; collaboration; sharing responsibility; having good liturgies; accepting and respecting the different ethnic/cultural groups and their practices and devotions.” (D)

“Pastor working in unison with the pastoral and finance councils and staff to make decisions; the pastor needs to step back and accept opinions which are opposite of his for the good of the parish community” (D)

“A parish that builds on its strengths rather than one that tries to correct its weaknesses.” (D)

“The ability to bring out what is within each person and empower them to share their unique gifts with others” (PA)

“Collaboration; accountability; liturgy prayed well; clustering together; working together; meeting with one another to share challenges and ideas.” (PA)

“Dialogue; trust; communication; respect of differences; openness to others” (PA)

“Teamwork – recognize each person’s gifts and talents allowing them to use these gifts the best way they know how.” (PA)

“Adaptability – respecting and responding to the particular needs and circumstances of the community. Cooperation and delegation and evaluation of what works and does not work.” (PA)

“Parish best; adaptability; connecting; creative; collaboration; communication; Christ-centered; parish pastoral council; sharing; vision for the future; take the steps” (PC)

“Collaboration of services between parish communities; identifying the roles of all the participants; trusting each other to carry out our roles” (PC)

“The best practices of leadership that I have been struck by focus on the recognition of the fact that there is more than one leader in any parish. Very often, everyone but the pastor knows that. When leadership is recognized, affirmed and shared, the possibilities for parish vitality are endless. That recognition, affirmation and sharing have to be components of parish life for the ordained, as well as the non-ordained.” (PC)

“Professional ongoing education and formation must be the norm; better accountability with appropriate assessment is needed; shared mission, vision, values, plan (a system for making things work); mutual respect/integrity; support of pastor is key. Need to affirm others.” (PC)

“Collaborative work of the pastor, staff, and pastoral council – a commitment to spirituality – forming Disciples of Christ; prayer, faith sharing and visioning.” (PC)

“Having a mission and vision statement we should stay focused, Christ-centered, and learn to trust each other.” (PC)

“Shared responsibility; mutual respect; various gifts working together; unity, not uniformity; clarity of roles; shared prayer and faith-sharing among ministerial leaders on a regular basis. Empowering of all of the faithful. Gifts discernment opportunities. Personal invitation to lead, to serve, to participate. Breaking parish down into small communities of faith. An active parish council. We felt a vibrant faith community would have the following attributes – all of which start with the letter ‘c’: connectivity, creativity, collaboration, communication, council with a mission, Christ-centered, cooperation, clustering, celebratory, conversion-producing, caring, compassionate, coordinated and commemorating.” (DR)

“Partnership model/collaboration model based on mutual respect, openness, consultation among staff and parishioners, and a willingness to experiment; a clarity of what it means to be a parish community (gifts and challenges).” (DR)

“Pastoral staff – change agents, compassionate listeners – facilitators and animators of parish life in a total collaboration.” (DR)

“Again, ownership is key; respect for each person’s individual gifts and talents must be recognized and utilized or it won’t happen.” (DR)

“Trust, collaboration, sharing of resources; clearly identifying with the mission and the vision of the church and the community; shared responsibility and authority; continued formation on all levels” (DR)

“Accountability of all – pastor, core staff and parishioners; inclusivity – welcoming community; evaluation – can we be better?” (DR)

“Collaboration on the ‘big’ stuff (vision, mission, goals); delegation on the ‘small’ stuff (activities and tasks)” (DR)

“A true leadership body (parish pastoral council) can guide the parish toward being mission motivated and visionary!” (DR)

“Being competent or intentional in ‘taking the pulse’ of a faith community within the context of the larger community” (DR)

“A strong involvement of volunteers and people need to be in place for a parish to stay healthy and vibrant. I also see the need for them to change as the times (society) changes and to take a step back at times to see how things look. Being a part of conferences that deal with their ministry and involve other parishes and their volunteers to help them see where to go.” (O)

Emphasis on Prayer, Spirituality, and Faith Formation

Clearly, pastoral leaders believe that prayer, spirituality, and faith formation are an integral part of their best practices as stated in the following comments:

“Ongoing formation; staff development days; staff retreat days (e.g., Advent day of prayer, Lenten day of reflection); regular, planned staff meetings; staff semi-annual performance reviews” (P)

“We need to clarify identities of the ordained and the baptized in relationship to each other, and then reflect on how that looks in particular situations. We need to offer opportunities for people to identify their spiritual search and hunger with the rituals of our sacraments and our breaking open the Word. We need continued training on conciliar leadership and how it works with the roles of the pastor and staff members.” (P)

“The best practice is to provide the parish with a theological framework in which the whole community can maintain its identity.” (P)

“In our discussion, a participant listed seven (principle) elements that would identify a vibrant parish, ecumenism, evangelization, catechesis, community, prayer, service and liturgy. If these elements were put into practice, truly a vibrant community of faith and service would emerge.” (D)

“A parish that covers all ministries of the church” (PC)

“Faith sharing in small groups will feed the spirituality of the parish – both in small faith sharing groups and as an aspect of most if not all parish meetings, ministries, committees, councils, and staffs.” (DR)

“Parish structure that is organized will allow parishes to be successful. Lay leaders serving on the Parish Pastoral Council can be the most successful opportunity for carrying out the mission of the church. Continuing formation of the laity is essential. Strengthening our faith community with experience of faith sharing, scripture study, etc., is required.” (DR)

“Can adapt to changing needs and realities; in touch with needs, personality, etc., of members; recognize need for diversity of approaches; focus on Mission/Gospel, liturgical life, formation, community, and outreach; engage in planning processes; spiritual formation is taken seriously” (DR)

“Integrity of leaders; viable plan or vision; system for ongoing evaluation; support/acknowledgement of ministers/stewards; ongoing faith development; ongoing leadership training; celebration of accomplishments” (O)

Active Listening and Sharing Information throughout the Parish

A number of participants also believe that at the most basic level, active listening and good communication among individuals and groups is an essential best practice for the future of ministry. The following comments reflect an emphasis among parishes and dioceses on listening and information sharing as part of their ministerial model:

“I loved hearing of western Maryland putting into practice a Catholic professional leadership meeting in place of the clergy deanery model. I will try to do that in our area of New Jersey.” (P)

“Leadership (best practice) will demand collaboration in the truest meaning of the word. Pastor (priest/lay) along with a pastoral council have to be able to see vision – how to accomplish mission – of diocese and local church/parish – how to ask important or difficult questions.” (P)

“Small faith sub-committees, enabling a relationship-based parish; trust on the part of those above (be it bishop, pastor, etc.) that those below are ministering in a way that is responsible and meets important needs; sharing of resources, personnel, and plant with other Catholic communities” (P)

“Regular open forums for parishioners; intentionally involving cultural groups into the life of the parish, e.g., deliberately appointing representative members of different cultures to pastoral councils or as extraordinary ministers of communion.” (P)

“Visionary; challenging; encouraging; trusting and valuing; empowering; authentic – approachable” (P)

“Building one-on-one relationships; celebrating around a meal; open forums” (PA)

“Regular staff meetings; cluster ministry – all parishes in one cluster pay for minister, e.g., RCIA Marriage Prep – sacramental prep” (DR)

“Open forums at least twice a year; good communication between pastor and parish leaders and others; collaborative attitudes and practices; proclamation of a mission statement developed through dialogue and consensus of the community (open forum).” (DR)

“Open forum (bubbling up); good use of authority; meet regularly and communicate openly; put people first; adapt to realities of local parish; delegate; staff with knowledgeable and trained people; trust; have a common, unified goal (mission statement).” (O)

“Identifying and sharing ‘the mission’; developing a better understanding of the role of priest, deacon, and laity; taking time to share as staff; finding ways to vision all of parish life through lens of the mission.” (O)

“Leadership of the community itself; 2-3 layers of vision, implementation, and accountability (i.e., leadership council plus core ministry teams). Staff serves the goals of these groups.” (O)

C. Challenges for Leadership in Building a Vibrant Faith Community

Participants identified the primary challenges they face in building vibrant faith communities. These include systematic and structural issues in the church, managing change, and trends in the dominant culture.

Systematic and Structural Issues in Church Leadership

Not surprisingly, a number of participants identified the systematic and structural issues in the church as significant challenges in building faith communities for the future. The following comments reflect this viewpoint:

“The ability to use the style of leadership best fitted to the people and situation” (P)

“The primary challenge is to keep the whole leadership cohort’s eye on the prize – the mission of God’s Kingdom – and not get lost in the pressing problems of the moment or the agendas of various groups or individuals.” (P)

“Openness and flexibility and support of bishops and diocesan leaders” (P)

“Allowing themselves to delegate, trust the people, accept role as facilitator; colleague as opposed to dictator/unilateral, arbitrary” (P)

“The blending and integration of the clergy and laity in a common mission -- Power needs to be constructive, not restrictive, and used only for service and not for control. Deepen the level and spirituality, especially with men.” (P)

“The unclear role of the ordained minister – both for himself and the parish. Priests (pastors and PLDs) who are threatened by the gifts of the laity. The resistance to change by the hierarchy of the church – lack of training of newly ordained in pastoral skills and partnering, particularly with women. Lack of funding to hire professionally trained ministers to work in the parishes.” (PLC)

“The priest identity as leader needs to be clarified. A catechesis of the laity as the ‘common priesthood of the faithful’ needs to be explored. Finally, a way of putting the two together to form an ecclesiology of communion.” (D)

“Challenge is for the current leadership to acknowledge and accept that there is a crisis and need for change within the church.” (D)

“A pastor who does not either want it this way or who is not trained to be able to do this; getting hung up in council on facilities and finances.” (PC)

“The main challenge lies in the structure that prevents priests and ministries from recognizing that they are first and foremost baptized. Everything else flows from that understanding. If the ordained priesthood becomes understood as a way of living out one’s baptismal commitment in service to the baptized, then the way in which authority is used can change and people might be able to enter into committed leadership in the parish knowing that the work they do will not be undone by the next ordained leader.” (PC)

“Reluctant clergy, clinging to power, full of fear of change” (DR)

“Creating an environment where everyone will feel welcome; developing a trust level between the clergy and laity is the first step.” (DR)

“Lay leaders who become ‘clericalist’ and don’t model servant leadership with the aim of empowering others.” (DR)

“Hierarchy that keeps adding rules that drive people away.” (DR)

“Misunderstanding the role of the pastoral council (everyone should read the Gulish Book).” (DR)

“Episcopal leadership, demands of current models, resistance to change and facing reality by laity and clergy.” (DR)

“The challenge is to inspire all the baptized to recognize and embrace the gift of their baptism and to help the clergy realize that collaboration with the laity is not a threat, but necessary to build a vibrant community.” (O)

“Getting the Catholic vocations out of people; will the pastor be open enough; present diocesan policies and politics; present seminary practices and preparation for new models; lack of time; fear of change” (O)

Managing Change

The predictable organizational challenges in managing change and changing roles were prominent in the minds of Mid-Atlantic symposium participants. The following comments reflect the inherent resistance to change and the struggles that leaders have at all levels in embracing new models of leadership. These are clearly challenges for building vibrant faith communities as illustrated by the following observations:

“We will find resistance. Some parishioners will not let go easily of their old ways of serving the church.” (P)

“Lack of courage and imagination and the fear of being criticized; also, the business of many families when both parents work” (P)

“Need for flexibility and creative thinking outside the box; problem of resistance on the part of some clergy to alternative methodologies/forms of ministry; willingness to risk, especially when working beyond parish boundaries.” (P)

“Other clergy; staff members protecting their turf” (P)

“Accepting, supporting, and encouraging each minister in his or her role in the fabric of parish life; an articulated and agreed upon methodology of ongoing evaluation (individual and corporate)” (P)

“Parish church mirrors corporate world – reality of downsizing workforce/paid professional staff – is vision/mission – to do more with less like the corporate reality – or to realize what is our corporate reality – we are members of the Body of Christ! Make that real.” (P)

“Exhaustion; a reality check of assessing what can be stopped or on hold while training/formation are offered. Theology of bishops” (P)

“A priest’s ‘personal’ vision versus the community’s; lack of theological framework on which one can create new ecclesiological models.” (P)

“Finding ways to bring about a sense of cohesion while not minimizing differences; maintaining self-care so that leaders do not burn out. Building sense of identity in lay leaders.” (D)

“Education – seminarians, priest, deacons and the laity; meeting the people where they are; one size does not fit all; be open to diversity; dialogue (two ways); accountability” (D)

“To listen, have courage, and have an engaging imagination demonstrated in a prudent way.” (D)

“Trust; willingness to have it work” (D)

“Meeting people where they are; we have to be reminded that we are the salt of the Earth and the light on the rooftop. Discerning God in one’s everyday life and sharing it with the faith community” (PA)

“Identity – Who is priest? What is he called to do? Community – Who are we? What are we called to do?” (PA)

“Loss of identity, especially priests...bring back to baptism; accountability; fear of change; need new models of formation and training; deepening of spirituality; understanding of what it means to work together; matching personality of priest to parish” (PA)

“Changing people’s vision and ideas of what a church community is. Giving up power and territoriality. Educating people in the faith and the ultimate goal of Christian life to be one in Christ.” (PA)

“Trust; genuine spirituality; a reaching out to those wherever they are; a church you’d want to be part of.” (PA)

“Lack of accountability; need to engage many in strategic planning to move from maintenance to mission; need people to intentionally play the role of change agent and provoke the imagination of others.” (PC)

“How can a parish reach out to the inactive, the seekers and the unchurched while continuing to catechize the faithful and continue to grow the spiritual life of the parish.” (PC)

“Releasing power; changing heart; can you be regional and not lose identity?” (PC)

“Listen to the community and respond, not react. Develop communication to prepare the community for needs of the community.” (PC)

“Time restraints of an already too busy laity” (DR)

“Dealing with multiple areas of decline – economics, age, leisure time; search for language that is faithful to the tradition, but is not ‘of the tradition’ in order to communicate with those who do not have a framework upon which to hang their experience.” (DR)

“Resistance to lay involvement by clergy; diocesan policy for assignment of pastors without consultation with community to discern needs, etc.; providing adequate preparation for pastoral leader through seminary formation.” (DR)

“All the distractions people encounter in their lives drawing them away from institutions. All self-help movements offering facile solutions to life problems” (DR)

“Discerning gifts of all involved; developing a style of prayer among staff that members fit the group; is consistent; mission effectiveness” (DR)

“Balance among work, self-care, and ongoing formation; finances; parishioners seeing themselves as stewards and not just recipients of services” (DR)

“Faith formation for new models; people willing to take the time to work collaboratively; be willing to look at the way things can be, not the way they have always been.” (DR)

“A lack of openness to the gifts of the community; fear that hinders/halts change” (DR)

“Pastoral planning vis-à-vis parish pastoral council; empowering parishioners to carry out pastoral planning objectives; building relationships (not programs); convening; listening” (DR)

“Time commitment and constraints of volunteers and priests; finding strong committed individuals to help with ministry; having volunteers work together with each other, staff, and priests.” (O)

“Leaving their egos out of the process; mutual respect among clergy, religious and lay communities; recognizing that ‘roles’ do not make a person who they are called to be; admitting one does not possess certain gifts or talents that someone else does.” (O)

“Fear of moving beyond the circles that confine us, of facing the hard issues that are knotted together in a tangle of prejudice, privilege and oppression.” (O)

Trends in the Dominant Culture

A number of participants identified strengths in the dominant culture as a factor in their efforts to build vibrant faith communities. While not frequently cited, this issue appears to be significant in many pastoral situations as reflected by the following comments:

“Culture – stressed and stretched family life – doing more with less personnel – staff issues” (P)

“Time and responsibility constraints on parishioners; addressing the attraction of the mega churches who have and often entertain people or lead them by mind manipulation. The necessity to utilize technology for education, community and formation; finding ways to meet people personally who are often reluctant to give up family time or leave home because of things like work, travel, etc.” (P)

“In older cities, the transient population doesn’t allow time for people to claim a parish as their own. The finances of people force them to work two jobs or both husband/wife must work, giving them no time to volunteer. Diocesan policies that don’t really consider the type of person that a particular parish needs. Seminary training that seems not to bring students to a spiritual maturity enabling them to rise up leaders in parishes.” (P)

“Short-staffed; lack of funds; competing with social challenges; competing with cultural challenges” (PA)

“The demands on people’s time and priorities; the technology explosion is both challenge and opportunity. The competition from vibrant evangelical outreach; perhaps our biggest challenge is the need to grow beyond pettiness and immature ideas in human nature that make people want to retain ‘ownership’ or control or territory.” (DR)

“Cultural trends which deprive people of free time or draw them to focus leisure time on electronic pursuits; difficulty of maintaining a consistent vision of parish life if bishops do not ask their clergy personnel directors to take into account the fit between the vision and leadership style of an outgoing pastor and those of the prospective new pastor.” (DR)

“Gender differences; willingness to embrace one’s own ongoing conversion (which is part of true leadership); being inclusive while recognizing the diversity; pulls on people’s lives” (DR)

D. Opportunities for Leadership in Building a Vibrant Faith Community

Pastoral leaders identified two primary dimensions of building vibrant faith communities. These include calling forth and empowering the gifts of the laity and ongoing faith formation and evangelization.

Calling Forth and Empowering the Gifts of the Laity

As in other regions, an overwhelming number of participants indicated that opportunities for the future primarily lie in calling forth and empowering the gifts of the laity. The following comments reflect this commitment of their parishes to the baptismal call of all believers:

“Calling forth the gifts of the individual parishioners” (P)

“Vacuum creates opportunity – calls others to step up and exercise gifts and talents” (P)

“Leaders will be those who can think outside the box and who can dream possibilities beyond what is presented. Where there is no partnership within the leadership of a community, there will be no church. Laity will need to be equipped to take on greater responsibility – not just as generous volunteers, but as faith-filled leaders.” (P)

“The present lack of priests presents the opportunity to raise up new leaders.” (P)

“Necessary to draw out leaders who may not even be aware of their gifts, and convince them by good example and encouragement to take it on.” (P)

“People want good leadership – consultative, collaborative, visionary, and practical – which is embodied with commitment to Christ and fidelity to God’s people. People are better educated and so are willing to take on leadership roles and also to be trained in the ‘spiritual’ character of leadership. Clergy and laity became stronger in their respective roles and support for each other as clarity and comfort grows in their assuming their true and rightful identities.” (P)

“In our diocese, there are many resources for the training, mentoring, and supervision of lay ecclesial ministers. There is no lack of ministers – only a lack of ordained ministers. With less professional staff available, people rise up to meet the challenge and do it in creative ways. The racial and ethnic diversity of our communities is a great gift and often provides models for thinking out of the box.” (PLC)

“Imagination – releasing it” (D)

“Empower the laity to become involved in baptismal preparation. We do it for all the other sacraments. Have a welcoming empowerment committee that looks to fulfill needs and wants.” (D)

“Opportunities for ministry will emerge if there is a strong foundation established of who we are as a faith community – responding to the call of our baptism to serve one another in Christ.” (D)

“Collaborate with neighboring churches; collaborate with diocese informing lay leaders and empowering the leadership” (PA)

“Shared vision; listening opportunities (staff and parishioners); after listening, put into action – many times we hear ‘I made suggestions, but no one is listening’. This starts from the bishops down to the trenches.” (PA)

“Clarification of roles; new models of formation and leadership; people come to understand who they are as the Body of Christ.” (PA)

“Being present in the church as best I can; the gifts of the people of God; and trust that God’s presence is more powerful than any one human being. He promised to be with his Church (people) until the end of time.” (PA)

“Changing people’s view; organizing a shared vision; people who have abilities can utilize them; conversion and being a witness; assessing where they are and reaching out to them.” (PC)

“Leadership will grow. People at all aspects will learn more and the parish will thrive.” (PC)

“The community will step forward given the opportunity to serve and participate in the decision-making process.” (PC)

“Leadership experience; leadership qualities” (PC)

“The laity is well-educated and eager to be a part of a community. People are hungry for God and deeper spirituality.” (DR)

“Diocesan ministry formation programs; folks do not need Masters Degrees in Theology to minister successfully. They need a discernment of gifts, an understanding of church teachings, and communications skills to engage folks in the parish.” (DR)

“A vibrant parish where the people take ownership; a leader has the opportunity to be present to God’s action in those empowered (and formed) to minister” (DR)

“Hunger for spirituality; people who walk the talk; desire for real community” (DR)

“Lay persons waiting to be invited; conviction of what you are doing” (DR)

“Emergence of lay leader properly prepared through ministry formation programs; decrease in number of clergy: realization of need for lay ministry; response by laity to fulfill baptismal call through ministry and service (church, family, world)” (DR)

“People are searching for meaning, for community; building ministerial responses around ‘family’ events (e.g., births, deaths, etc.); and other life transitions (e.g., divorce, aging, job loss, etc.); using gifts of a wide range of people” (DR)

“A deeper understanding of ‘ecclesiology’ needs to be discussed and shared – role of bishop; role of priest; role of laity as priest, prophet, king; call to be the Body of Christ set forth in everyday life; making the connection – What we celebrate is what we live.” (O)

Ongoing Faith Formation and Evangelization

Clearly, pastoral leaders in the Mid-Atlantic believe that ongoing faith formation and evangelization, including adult catechesis and adult lay ministry formation are critical to the future. The opportunities for building parish faith communities, in their minds, are rooted in a deep spirituality of the church and individual faith formation.

“To grow in personal faith; to see/discover new ways to do ‘mission and ministry’” (P)

“Catholics are some of the leaders in the social, corporate, and technological world; convert them, utilize them, and partner with them. Lack of presbyters can be and is an opportunity.” (P)

“Assessing the needs of the local community and provide a helping hand” (P)

“Enlivening faith through sharing” (P)

“Responding to God’s call to holiness and evangelization; be who you are because it is what you are called to be. Build a community around prayer, especially the Eucharist.” (D)

“Letting go and grieving what we once had. Also, encourage, evaluate, and empower the community with a spirituality of connectedness that is apostolic.” (PA)

“With the goals of evangelization in place, the parish has a model for building a vibrant parish spirituality.” (PC)

“Better educated parishioners already introduced to leadership; electronic technology to facilitate communication; a large group of older parishioners who could be a resource for the church; a need to replace the extended family and other community characteristics lost to modern lifestyle” (PC)

“Learning from some of the evangelical and mega-churches better techniques of outreach to young adults, youth, and young families. Continuing to make greater use of the talents of professionally trained lay ecclesial ministers continuing to expand opportunities for leadership on the part of parishioners.” (DR)

“Unlimited growth! Reaching the unchurched and heretofore unreached majority who are not touched often because ministry even now is limited by old models dependent on clergy and professional staff instead of empowered laity.” (DR)

“Spiritual yearning people; commitment to the spread of the Gospel as a common ground for shared action” (DR)

“Small communities of faith; prayer groups; collaborating sharing” (DR)

“Identifying people to help with parish growth; keeping people motivated in doing what they are doing” (O)

E. Parish of the Future

Participants identified the parish of the future as defined by inclusive forms of leadership, smaller faith-based communities with greater mission orientation, and clustered and changing parish structures.

Inclusive Forms of Leadership

Clearly, symposium participants believe that the future of the parish will be characterized by more inclusive forms of leadership. This transcended almost every conversation throughout the symposium and has continued in the following observations:

“It will reflect the face of Christ as portrayed in the membership. It will be defined by the interplay or lack thereof between those called to leadership and the faithful. If those called to leadership assume a stagnant posture, so will the parish. The reverse is equal.” (P)

“Healthy, collaborative lay/clerical leadership that is open to change, solid in faith and embracing – a parish planning for the next generation will be living faith in the present and will learn from the past.” (P)

“A greater sense of community rooted on a shared experience of God; people bonded by baptism and exercising different roles, one among which is the ‘ordained’ priesthood.” (P)

“I see a place where people of diverse cultures can come together as one faith community; where people are truly invested in the welfare of the church; where fewer clergy and religious focus more on building up the leaders than actually doing particular ministries; where the Eucharist and a mission-based spirituality are the focus of a community’s life and well-being.” (P)

“Larger; fewer of them; many more led by lay people” (P)

“One priest overseeing spirituality of 3 or 4 parishes with more lay involvement” (P)

“A community of lay leaders with a priest for Mass and the sacraments – with fewer Masses in most churches” (P)

“Group of people led by a deacon or a pastoral minister and having a priest coming to celebrate the Eucharist and hear confessions; having more lay people involved in different ministries. We may need to go back to the origins of the church – small communities gathering for the breaking of the bread.” (D)

“One that uplifts people of all ages” (D)

“The parish of the future should be a vibrant community of laity and clergy working together for the sake of the Kingdom. We need to develop an ecclesiology of communion for this to happen. (D)

“It will likely be larger with the decline in the number of priests. Lay leaders will be trained and formed for their roles. Small faith sharing groups will be a norm for a minority.” (D)

“I would like to see the parish of the future; pastor as pastor; laity responsible for administrative tasks and ministry.” (PA)

“Community-based; lay people will have to take leadership roles while priests minister to the different worship sites. Clusters will be formed to share resources while parish councils tend to the needs of the particular community.” (PA)

“There will be more involvement of youth in parish activities.” (PC)

“Deacons and lay people will be more active.” (PC)

“Fewer priests; fewer parishes; many more trained lay leaders” (PC)

“The parish of the future will be larger with fewer priests to serve, with more lay personnel doing the ministries other than the Eucharist.” (PC)

“It won’t look like any one thing. There will be a variety of models. I would hope that most of these models would rely on the collaborative ministry of priests, deacons, lay ecclesial ministers, and parishioners. However, there are counter-trends in the church that suggest that many future pastors will lack the skills for an appreciation of collaborative leadership style.” (DR)

“Core leadership group with priest as a member, but not necessarily the designated leader; a community where everyone takes seriously (acts upon it) our common baptismal call” (DR)

“It could very possibly be identical to how it is today or it could be very different, depending upon numerous variables that could go any number of ways. We believe in persevering in ministry and continuing to serve the Body of Christ rather than wait for changes to happen to be active. We hope it will reflect a collaborative leadership team, an active laity, a secure clergy that can allow others to share in mission and ministry; greater openness for leadership for Catholics of other than Anglo-cultures/ethnicities.” (DR)

“It will be a community that recognizes the power, responsibility, and challenge of proclaiming the Gospel in word and deed. All will welcome and the Eucharistic table will be central to all parish activity.” (DR)

“I don’t think all the parishes of the future will look the same. There will be many different models of parish. Hopefully, most will have strong lay leadership, small faith communities, and have vibrant celebrations of the Eucharist that will be the center of life and transform the community into true disciples of Jesus. (DR)

“Full of more volunteers or paid lay people managing the operations of a parish (i.e., scheduling activities, priests to visit, finances, maintenance).” (O)

“Lay administered; spiritually fed by clergy and key lay individuals; concerned more with the spirit of the law as opposed to the letter of the law; a community of mutual respect and integrity; a living Pentecost.” (O)

Smaller, Faith-based Communities with Greater Mission Orientation

Closely aligned with their sense of inclusive forms of leadership, a number of participants indicated they believe that parishes will be smaller, faith-based communities with greater mission orientation. Many described this as a return to the original church models found in the Gospels. The following comments reflect this smaller mission orientation to what we now understand to be a parish:

“Smaller, more loyal perhaps; regional or cluster with shared ministry” (P)

“Less organizational, more faith-based with a common desire to share faith with each other.” (P)

“Leadership will be shared by various roles. Eucharistic understanding will become a defining framework for identity even while the actual celebration of the sacrament may be less frequent. The Bishop will either be a wise shepherd with the vision of the whole local church for these particular communities, or he will be dismissed as irrelevant and insignificant.” (P)

“Hopefully, Eucharist-centered – a deeper and renewed sense of baptism and sacraments that will challenge people to make a deeper commitment – less paid staff so more emphasis in all that we do to be welcoming – celebrate people’s presence and desire to do what is right.” (P)

“More use of ritual Sunday worship in the absence of a priest. Faith formation will be family-based, stronger model than CCD – more like RENEW – 6-week sessions 2 times per year (for Catholic school and CCD). Clarifying values that will be refocused by the current mission.” (P)

“The parish will be a community of communities which gather together on Sunday mornings to celebrate Eucharist and go forth from the tables to build the reign of God’s justice and peace in the larger community of the city, state, country, and the world. The parish will understand that it does not exist for itself, but for the mission. Parish = communion and mission.” (PLC)

“Varied adult formation opportunities; prophetic, visionary; strong communities; moved by the Holy Spirit; strongly committed; no catholic school.” (PA)

“Small parishes held together by a faith-filled community of believers rooted in love and service to God and to each other; maybe a priest; maybe not.” (PA)

“With the shortage of priests, deacons, and lay ministers, I think parishes will be small and they will be more Christ like. There will be less church, so the church will be fuller.” (PC)

“Lay leaders in collaborative ministry; total community catechesis; love demonstrated by all; community-based; not a priest being a sacramental machine; the followers of Christ; cluster-differently; concept of parish will change. Be one parish, but with different worship sites. Priest will be presider, but identity will be captured and forwarded by the people of the parish. Parish will look like the early church – mission-driven by needs of particular community.” (PC)

“Larger with small faith communities; many different sub-groups added together with a common sense of mission; a much more dynamic structure capable of being modified to meet the needs and resources available.” (PC)

“Think it is interesting that we still think in parish language. Is it possible that ‘church’, e.g., ‘diocese’ will be more clearly the organizing principle and ‘parish’? The small faith community so often referred to.” (DR)

“More pastoral (tend to spiritual needs); smaller more communal; ownership by the people; open and honest; respect gifts and talents of the people” (DR)

“Very difficult to answer – so many variables – likely to be smaller; parishioners choosing to be more participative; making better use of ritual, signs and symbols (this is what draws people).” (DR)

“Each parish will function depending on culture, finances, and formed laity differently. The Unity of the Eucharist will be a shared experience, as well as parishes that are sources of service, but carrying out those roles will be different for each parish.” (DR)

“It depends on how we evangelize – possible decline in membership and clergy, young fleeing to non-denominational or possible growth will force new paradigms as discussed at symposium.” (DR)

“The core will shrink, while the affiliated, but inactive will increase.” (DR)

“I hope a more unified body with priest and laity working together to build up the kingdom.” (O)

“An outwardly-focused circle of a unified family of God that includes all races, cultures, and classes together pouring out the peace and compassion of Christ.” (O)

Clustered and Changing Parish Structures

A few participants believe that the parish of the future will be characterized by clustered and changing parish structures. These structural changes are noted in the following observations of a few participants:

“Larger parishes, smaller faith communities with pastoral leaders; perhaps change in requirements for ordained and non-full-time presbyters (past did have simplex priests). Parishes functioning more like small diocese of earlier times where people gathered for Eucharist from many and diverse local communities and then sent back to live church.” (P)

“Clusters; twinning; staff sharing; Eucharistic whether Mass or communion service” (P)

“Fewer morning Masses; fewer priests; cluster parishes; fewer individual Catholic schools and more regional institutions; satellite learning opportunities; online diocesan programs; more concentration on the Word of God.” (PA)

“The posture from which parishes will operate no matter how the structures change. Will still take on more of the characteristics of a Catholic ecclesial unit, not a congregational community.” (PA)

“Larger, but ‘community of communities’ consisting of small Christian communities; gathering” (DR)

F. How Close or How Far from your Parish Vision of the Future

In concluding the discussion on best practices, participants identified how far they believe they are from realizing their vision of a parish community. Participants tended to describe their experiences as working toward a preferred vision or significantly far from their preferred vision.

Working toward a Preferred Vision

Pastoral leaders are cautiously and moderately optimistic about their progress in building toward a preferred vision for the future. They are decidedly less confident of their progress than participants from other regions of the country. However, the following comments reflect guarded optimism and steady progress toward realizing a preferred vision of the parish of the future.

“About half way there!” (P)

“It is coming closer. I am getting older and yet may be there for a few more years, so I am trying to gently get the point to seek its direction to the future.” (P)

“Roughly; mid-way; need to blend the laity and clergy more to realize that we are called to work together, not against, for the benefit of the people” (P)

“When I look at my parish, I think we are pretty close to the vision on many counts. We do gather frequently to celebrate diverse cultural realities. We do spend an increasing amount of energy on the formation of leaders. We are nurturing a deeper love of the Eucharist in an outward-looking spirituality; and even as I say this, I feel it is just seeds we are sewing. I’m not sure how many people in the pew can actually articulate these ‘goals’ – although I have no doubt that they are aware of a good number of the strategies we’ve put in place to move in this direction. The ‘proof’ will only come in time and probably after I am gone from the scene. And that’s OK because ultimately, this is God’s work not mine.” (P)

“We have many good and productive ministries underway, but I do not think their foundation is firmly set on a theology of church, sacrament, and lay and ordained ministry. Consequently, people go from one good thing to another without connecting to each other on the level of God’s shared life. Leadership is reduced to leading projects rather than projecting the divine leadership of our lives.” (P)

“Presently, I am pastoring two parishes and there is more lay involvement, but due to continually changing circumstances in the larger parish and diminishing resources, I know that still more needs to be done. I think when it stabilizes, it will be less than half its present size and more manageable by me and the lay leaders.” (P)

“We’re slowly getting there.” (P)

“Already doing most of 13; need to work on communion service on Sunday celebration in absence of a priest” (P)

“Closer than we think and closer than we would like” (P)

“I think we are very aware of this vision. We have good strong relationships and a commitment to the works of justice. All of this is celebrated at Sunday Eucharist which we understand as the sources of our liberation and the call to liberate others. Our people understand that when they say ‘yes’, ‘amen’ to the Body of Christ (Eucharist) they are also saying ‘no’ to all that separates, divides or oppresses the Body of Christ on Earth (war, sexism, homophobia, capital punishment, etc.).” (PLC)

“Distance – the spatial element – is relative. Each community of faith will develop, grow and prosper only if the present structure of the church will allow for change or adaptation, and/or innovation. The present situation of most parishes is a millennium away from where they should be. Prayer, persistence, courage, and the Holy Spirit will ultimately move the hearts and minds of church officials to understand and then to act upon the importance of meeting the needs of the faithful (as a primary objective). This will eventually begin the process of change, and hopefully, the fulfillment of the vision Christ gave us ‘that they may be one just as Christ and the Father are one.’” (D)

“The restructuring process will take time. We’re being pushed into being more Catholic. This ecclesial sense will be heightened in the future.” (PA)

“My parish is moderately close to this vision. I am very happy with the ministry there.” (PA)

“Already by clusters; twinning; staff sharing; Eucharistic whether Mass or communion service; need to work on communion service on Sunday celebration in absence of a priest” (PA)

“Close enough. We’ve been made aware of things to come because we are in a rural area where all parishes have had major changes and the small cities that they serve. Towns have lost jobs, young adults leave, our parishes have closed schools, adapted unused buildings, lost resident priests, accepted PLD’s, shared clergy and parish staff. All this was done to preserve the integrity of each parish. The people identify with their parish. The faith is strong in the laity and rooted in the communities they love.” (PA)

“Having the pastor, we are blessed with we are always reminded that there’s a shortage of priests so we need to focus on the church of the future by educating ourselves now; plan for the new church.” (PC)

“We will need more lay leaders.” (PC)

“This vision is a reality in our parish.” (PC)

“Taking baby steps in that direction; parishioners change, leadership changes make implementing the vision a constant challenge.” (DR)

“Moving in this direction” (DR)

“On a scale of 1 to 10, we are at 5. We have people who understand and are ‘inspired’ and those who do not want change.” (DR)

“Our parish is well on the way toward a vision of collaborative leadership based in small group faith sharing. However, it is the exception not the rule in our diocese.” (DR)

“Some ways close – other ways, not so much.” (DR)

“There has not been an immediate need to reconfigure although diocese is gathering ‘clusters’.” (DR)

“Our parish has a full-time pastor who has the ability to draw forth the gifts of the laity. As long as he is with us, this growth will continue. So much depends upon the leadership of the pastor. Our previous pastor turned our parish into a locked fortress. That has changed. I pray that we can continue to flourish under our current leadership.” (DR)

“Membership (slightly smaller than 15 years ago) will continue being rather participative and recognize their responsibility. Liturgies are vibrant, making good use of core symbols of our faith. I suspect this parish will see a greater drop in membership as those long-standing committed folks grow older.” (DR)

“Not there yet, but the parish is growing and blessed with people willing to give their time, talents, and treasure.” (O)

“Half way there” (O)

“We’re getting closer every time we demonstrate faith in people, make their vision and input paramount, and move/walk together in faith.” (O)

“I have seen the seeds planted, but will not be here for the harvest.” (O)

“Working together, but not really unified” (O)

Significantly Far from this Vision

A number of Mid-Atlantic participants indicated that their parishes are still significantly far from their preferred vision for the future. The following comments reflect the distance between the current reality and their desired goals for their parish communities:

“Very far – As the Northeast, we still have many presbyters (for good or for bad) and this can be stifling our creativity for the future and our present ingenuity.” (P)

“Far, but on the way. In five years, some faith formation hopefully will be different through strategic planning and Catholic school study. Values will be clarified around Catholic education.” (P)

“Very far; people do not know their roles as baptized and continue to see the priest as the ‘one’ who puts them in contact with God.” (P)

“Still a long way to go; we still need to develop more lay leadership and to educate both the clergy and the faithful.” (D)

“We are not yet a third of the way there. We need to develop five-year plans.” (D)

“Very far.” (D)

“Not in my lifetime!” (D)

“Right now we are far from it since we have a pastor and senior priest in residence. There are six parishes in the city presently – one with a pastor for two parishes. Schools are struggling, but holding their own for now.” (PA)

“Long way off; the diocese is putting restrictions on pastoral duties of the laity. This is reflected in the diocesan positions. All key positions assigned to the ordained. The powers that be are not listening to the people. People are the church, not only the ordained.” (PA)

“Far. The reality of the shortage of priests has not hit the faithful or even many of the priests.” (PA)

“Very far away, but it may be thrust upon it through the outside influence and availability of clergy.” (PC)

“Pretty far at present. Among the 117 parishes in my diocese, I know of about 10 parishes that reflect the above stated ‘hopes’ for the future parish. These 10 or so parishes give one great hope that it can be lived this way and that more will follow suit.” (DR)

“The diminishment of religious practice has already begun to occur, e.g., more and more people define ‘regular’ Mass attendance as every two or three weeks instead of weekly.” (DR)

IV. PARISH 2025 EXERCISE:

Mid-Atlantic Symposium participants worked in small teams on a Parish 2025 Futuring Exercise. The purpose of the discussion was to identify the nature and structure of the parish that may exist in 20 years. After small group reports on emerging themes, individuals were given a reflection period to document their individual observations. The small group discussions and individual reflections focused on the following parish 2025 issues:

- **Parish Structures**
- **Models of Ordained and Lay Ecclesial Leadership**
- **Forms of Leadership by Parishioners**
- **Future Trends in Parish Worship Ministries**
- **Future Trends in Ministries of the Word**
- **Future Trends in Parish Ministries of Service**

A. Parish Structures of the Future

Pastoral leaders believe that parish structures of the future will be larger, clustered parishes. In many instances, they believe these will be supported by smaller faith communities. Clearly, Mid-Atlantic participants believe there will be fewer priests and greater emphasis on lay leadership and involvement in parish life. The following comments illustrate this combination of themes which, in their view, are integrally woven together:

Larger, Clustered Parishes with Fewer Priests and Small Faith Communities

“I believe, on the whole, the church will move toward a cluster model. One pastor or pastoral moderator (ordained) for a group or cluster supported and supporting a trained and professional staff of ministers.” (P)

“Fewer parishes; fewer Masses in remaining parishes; fewer priest/pastors; no more parish schools; increased efforts at adult education (religious).” (P)

“There will be fewer, but larger parishes often led by a deacon and lay minister. Priests will be primarily in sacramental nourishment.” (P)

“In clusters rather than in large churches because of building costs. New churches will be enlarged to accommodate larger assemblies.” (P)

“Clusters/regional, shared ministry; pastor/priest assigned to multiple parish arrangements with deacons, lay ministers, collaborative administration” (P)

“Will need to respond to our sacramental nature – may be fewer priests and fewer, but larger parishes and may be more lay ministers (volunteer), but will still celebrate people’s hunger for the sacred and the sacraments.” (P)

“Larger; fewer Masses; fewer priests; more ‘community’” (P)

“Larger, perhaps less intimate and often lay-led” (P)

“All different ways; priests/PLD/lay ministers” (P)

“Through healthy, strategic, comprehensive action and pastoral planning, parishes will be clear in mission and ministry efforts.” (P)

“Hopefully, the Eucharist – the Liturgy – will be the primary focus of every parish; less organizational and more communal.” (P)

“Either there will be mega-centers for Eucharist and special church gatherings supported by small communities for intentional faith-sharing and personalized ministry or the present communities will be sustained by local, resident, lay leadership, and ordained and professional itinerant ministries.” (P)

“Very different from 2005; more ‘small community’ flavor; more stress on the Liturgy of the Word” (P)

“I think there will be a variety of structures depending on geography, demographics, and finances.” (PLC)

“Probably there will be fewer parishes. There will be a priest/pastor for several parishes. Deacon/lay person in charge; more lay leaders participating.” (D)

“The model will have a stronger level of collaboration and collegiality between clergy and laity.” (D)

“Same as today may be with less ordained priests, but more lay responsibilities.” (D)

“Parishes will be run by the parish administrator (i.e., deacons, religious or lay).” (D)

“There will not be parishes in the future owned by the bishops for we have abandoned the schools. Yet, we will be faith to the Gospel.” (D)

“It is hoped that collaboration will be the main focus of pastoral leadership. Parishes will be fewer, but more communal.” (D)

“Clustering of parishes – sharing pastors; clustering of priests and staff; clustering of programs; more intentional with planning in deaneries.” (PA)

“Larger parishes; worship sites where Eucharistic celebrations will be held by deacons or other lay ministers. No catholic schools attached to them.” (PA)

"It will be lay oriented and one of shared and collaborative ministry." (PA)

"Family life coordinator; priestless parish" (PA)

"Hopefully, less structure and more substance" (PA)

"Large parish clusters of worship; few Masses; cluster celebration of the Eucharist" (PC)

"Twinned parishes, one pastor, deacons, lay leaders" (PC)

"I see mega parishes serving broad areas of territory with many diverse backgrounds; fewer priests and fewer masses." (PC)

"Larger parishes; fewer priests" (DR)

"Larger; shared resources among parishes; fewer parishes in urban areas (regretfully); many parishes without resident priests" (DR)

"I don't expect them to be a lot different, especially on the East Coast. There will be fewer parishes and perhaps larger due to consolidation. There will be fewer American born priests. In some metropolitan areas, the shortage will be made up by foreign born priests with mixed results." (DR)

"More parishes without a resident pastor; more inter-parish collaboration in staffing and programming" (DR)

"There will be fewer parishes staffed by priests and more by lay leaders. Priests will go right from seminary into pastorates which will be devastating. There will be larger mass centers almost no daily mass. More work to keep faith communities active without weekly mass." (DR)

"Many clustered parishes; more lay leadership" (DR)

Team leadership; many layers of leadership; ownership of responsibility for parish life by the body of parishioners; everyone in the parish will belong to a small Christian community." (DR)

"Given the lack of resources, each parish will depend on creative leadership surfacing from unexpected places." (DR)

"Large, lay-lead, no schools; emphasis on ministry of the word" (DR)

"Fewer parishes to accommodate declining membership and fewer clergy." (DR)

“So much depends on the necessary restructuring of the clerical state to provide for ongoing communication between themselves and the laity. Seminary formation is crucial.” (DR)

“Fewer parishes – more regionally situated; fewer priests; stronger lay leadership; larger gatherings – fewer locations” (O)

“With fewer priests, parishes will be larger with large lay staff and pastor responsible for more than one parish.” (O)

“Still top down in Northeast. Fewer parishes and regionalization; same number of people, but fewer visits to church and less income.” (O)

“More lay ministers; fewer priests; traveling priests” (O)

“The ‘mega church’ will not survive. Ordination will be opened up. A viable parish size will evolve that will be appropriate to minister within natural community boundaries. The word ‘lay’ will disappear. The boundaries between ‘apostolate’ and ‘ecclesial’ will not mean the same thing. The whole church will be on mission.” (O)

B. Models of Ordained and Lay Ecclesial Leadership

Mid-Atlantic Symposium participants were surprisingly optimistic regarding models of ordained and lay ecclesial leadership. The majority believe that the future will be categorized by an increased dependence on leadership of the laity and greater collaboration with ordained. Only a few participants indicated that the future will include more diverse forms of orders. Those participants who believe this are less prominent in the Mid-Atlantic than in other regions of the United States.

Increased Dependency on Lay Leadership and Greater Collaboration with Ordained

It is clear among participants from the Mid-Atlantic that they expect the future of ordained and lay ecclesial leadership to be more cooperative and collaborative, requiring greater reliance on laity. The following comments reflect this expectation:

“Fewer priests providing sacramental aspect while deacons and lay ministers provide administrative ministry of charity and justice” (P)

“Clergy will become increasingly like elders and Eucharist may be the only direct ministry they do. Lay ministers will be the primary direct ministers.” (P)

“Models will be the same; the problem is to own and implement what is already envisioned by the Gospel.” (P)

“You will hear (read) this theme throughout my responses. Real power resides in the diocesan bishop. When this office has a vision, collaborative ministry shared among the People of God will happen. Without vision, the people and parish leadership at all levels must move from maintenance to mission.” (P)

“The models will be shared leadership in many shared situations, i.e., multiple sites with itinerant staffs.” (P)

“Collaboration and respecting each others’ gifts. Laity will be enacted for their talents; priests will be involved in liturgical and spiritual aspects of the ministry.” (P)

“We need models that embrace a shared vision of ecclesiology and a shared understanding of what leadership entails. Priest/pastor will probably not be the operating model.” (P)

“Models that reflect collaboration, respect, and support between leaders while focus is placed on ‘real’ needs.” (P)

“Combination of both” (P)

“Ordained will focus more on the sacraments, preaching, serving people in a spiritual capacity. Laity will be more instrumental in the outreach and evangelistic work of the parish.” (P)

“Priests will have oversight over multiple parishes and have a ministry resembling a ‘bishop’; parishes will raise up, nominate its own leaders, and perhaps nominate men to serve as priests.” (P)

“Leaders will emerge from lay leadership which will present a significant training challenge for rural/small town parishes away from urban training centers and colleges.” (P)

“Need some real dialogue and recognition of different gifts to dispel the tension. If we don’t do this, nothing will change. I hope we can solve the problem of those who can pay having professional ministry and those who can’t pay having no professional ministry.” (PLC)

“More people oriented; dedicated to service and not to administration; fewer priests, but more deacons, unless Rome allows married priests.” (D)

“Ordained will be for the spiritual needs of the parish on a monthly basis, while lay will perform the day-to-day functions with communion services – Liturgy of the Word” (D)

“In our diocese, the diaconate program will be reinstated.” (PA)

“Paid lay administrators who will oversee parishes (managers) for a pastor who will be responsible to the Bishop.” (PA)

“We will be grounded in baptism and charism rather than ordination and office. We will listen and welcome the community.” (PA)

“Much more collaboration” (PC)

“There will not be any change in the ordained and lay ecclesial leadership.” (PC)

“While we cannot predict the church of 2025, each of us is responsible to pray for our bishops, priests, and deacons now and for the future.” (PC)

“Laity who have been prepared and formed to assume a variety of roles; the hierarchical church is concerned with maintaining existing organizational structure. Change will occur at grass roots without church authority.” (DR)

“It is difficult to tell. If married men and/or women are ordained, then all bets are off, but that seems unlikely. Fewer priests suggest more reliance on lay ecclesial ministers. However, if there is a trend to more clericalist priests, the range and creativity of lay ministry could be restricted. Churches could turn into ‘sacrament mills’ if that’s all the priests know how to do.” (DR)

“Shared formation; greater sense of collegiality; greater mutual respect; shared mission. Clarify of roles. Uniformity of education/formation.” (DR)

“More trained Liturgical ministers; more trained catechetical leaders; better collaboration between clergy and lay; formation/leadership programs with better defined goals and outcomes to assist and enhance parish life” (DR)

“Oversight – empowering other leaders” (DR)

“Common formation elements; greater number of PLD; increased number of ministers” (DR)

“Redefinition and clarity of priest-deacon-lay (roles); increase lay leadership; more volunteers and fewer paid ministers” (DR)

“We are working to form lay leaders to minister collaboratively and effectively in the church and in the world. How are our priests being formed?” (DR)

“More deacons will prove to be too ‘light weight’; job descriptions will be functionalized more; more ‘titled’ women will perform more of the re-ordered tasks; Bishops will become ‘regional popes’, priests, bishops, deacons and ‘titled’ will assume more priestly duties.” (O)

“There is a real ‘disconnect’ regarding this topic. In 20 years, I don’t think there would be any significant change from a lay ecclesial perspective. However, I do think lay people will end up being more responsible for various dimensions of the life of a parish.” (O)

“Pastors will be responsible for several parishes. Parish life coordinators will work with other staff and parishioners to meet many of the parish needs. Priest will oversee and celebrate sacraments.” (O)

More Diverse Forms of Orders

Only a few participants attending the Mid-Atlantic Symposium believe that more diverse forms of orders will characterize the future of ordained and lay ecclesial leadership. Their comments appear below:

“Other ordained; married other than ‘converts’ who are ordained males” (P)

“A married clergy and perhaps many more lay ministers” (P)

“Role of male and female deacons will guide the American church.” (D)

“The ideal – married priests, deacons and deaconesses” (PA)

“Possibly necessity will demand the ordination of married men to priesthood, but this will still be insufficient.” (DR)

“May have married priests; priests more focused on spiritual needs of parishioners; increased lay leadership, but not necessarily with formal theological training/formation; lay leaders a bit more conservative” (DR)

C. Leadership of Parishioners

Mid-Atlantic Symposium participants indicated that parishioners will provide a primary leadership and stewardship role for parishes in the future. While this theme is expressed in a variety of ways, almost universally, lay-led communities seem to be anticipated by these pastoral leaders as reflected in the following comments:

“Parish Councils will be stronger. Liturgical ministers will be better trained and know how to conduct worship without the presence of a priest.” (P)

“Must accept more responsibility for own and other catechesis.” (P)

“Ownership and stewardship” (P)

“They will manage the material resources of the parish with accountability to a larger configuration of church organizations – region, deanery, and diocese. They will determine the needs in their particular community, and procure trained personnel to address them.” (P)

“Leadership in administration, pastoral care, education and formation, stewardship efforts, and financial consultation.” (P)

“Leaders of small faith communities and spiritual formation – they will have more control of the physical dimension of the parish.” (P)

“Take over for priests in many areas” (P)

“Family and small group communities will grow to be more important; a sense of belonging to a parish/church will begin at the family and small group level and evolve at intentional local communities – parishes.” (P)

“Parishioners will eventually accept their call to help spread the Gospel, and not be so dependent on clergy to do it all.” (P)

“Listening and welcoming for needs-based planning; family-based faith formation; whole community catechesis” (P)

“Authority will be more evolving; divided among clergy and laity” (P)

“In the Province of New Jersey, if the methodology of the Episcopal leadership remains the same, parishioners will remain in the “Brown’s Cows” model.” (P)

“More diverse ministries will emerge as people respond to the needs of the community. Lay leaders will be better prepared and trained. More professional lay ministers – How do we pay them?” (PLC)

“They will be equipped to provide formal spiritual guidance to the people. They will be primarily fiscal decision-makers.” (D)

“Parish facilities; organization of activities; outreach to people” (D)

“Parishioners – I believe will need to lead the parish in the daily business of the parish.” (D)

“Formation, evangelization, administration, reaching out to people in need” (D)

“From the bottom up” (D)

“They will continue to take a more active role in the daily care of the faithful.” (PA)

“It depends on preparation now. Priests don’t own the parish – the laity do.” (PA)

“Need to train now for the future – strong lay leadership” (PA)

“They will have to ‘own’ their parishes. Educated lay leaders under the supervision/coordination of a professional paid lay leader will have to minister to the faithful. (PA)

“They will be less program-oriented and more spiritually oriented.” (PA)

“We will have better educated and privileged parishioners.” (PC)

“Parishioners will be the backbone of the parishes running more ministries to allow the priests and deacons the opportunity to provide the ecumenical services. (PC)

“If parishioners come to a better understanding of evangelization, their roles of disciples will empower them to take on more leadership.” (PC)

“Where given the ball and allowed to run with it, they will take leadership in all areas, social ministries, outreach to the poor, to the elderly, catechesis, liturgical ministries, retreats, etc. In other places, however, they will become passive (and possibly infrequent) recipients of sacraments.” (DR)

“Increasing until they are one day entirely responsible for parish life to the point where the parishioners will provide orientation and instruction to new pastors.” (DR)

“Coordination and facilitation of all parish operations and ministries – Parish leaders will be empowered, formed, and trained to serve and recognize and encourage leadership within the parish.” (DR)

“All forms; ideally; parishioners will take on administrative duties so priests are free for more pastoral work and spiritual leadership.” (DR)

“Greater responsibility for temporalities (e.g., facilities, finances, etc.); greater responsibility and leadership in almost all areas of pastoral ministries; paid and volunteer; full-time and part-time” (DR)

“Strong conciliar leadership” (DR)

“The various levels of coordination of ministries will be more defined.” (DR)

“With effective leadership as described in questions 21 through 26, parishioners will respond to their baptismal call more fully and will have a greater impact on the world.” (DR)

“The diversity will be widespread and apparent at all our parishes.” (DR)

“Visioning and planning” (DR)

“Increased stewardship of time and talent” (DR)

“Volunteerism stronger; faith sharing” (DR)

“All administration; most Word and Service” (O)

“Take on more administrative roles whereas the fewer priests will have to focus their time on meeting sacramental demands. In 20 years, though, I don’t see parishioners ‘in charge’ of parishes.” (O)

“May run parish functions, activities and priest visits” (O)

“Formation of the laity is important so parishioners have understanding, confidence, and skills to lead.” (O)

“The wisdom of the elders of the local community balanced with the energy and enthusiasm of the young who dream of a better world. These gifts will be honored and channeled.” (O)

D. Future Trends in Parish Worship Ministries

Mid-Atlantic Symposium participants discussed anticipated trends in parish worship ministries. These leaders believe that worship ministries will be more diverse in their forms and expressions. In addition, they clearly expect greater emphasis on the laity in leading diverse forms of worship.

More Diverse Forms of Worship

Clearly, pastoral leaders believe that more diverse forms of worship will evolve. They believe the diversity of worship may include greater emphasis on the Liturgy of the Word, recovery of the Liturgy of the Hours, non-Eucharistic liturgies, and devotions which are unique to individual, ethnic, and cultural groups. The following comments reflect the belief that more diverse forms of worship will characterize the future of the church and parish:

“Sunday worship in the absence of a priest; weekday Eucharist worship in the absence of a priest” (P)

“Worship centering on the Liturgy of the Hours.” (P)

“Depending on immigration trend, a revisiting of devotional piety” (P)

“Eucharist will remain the center, but the faith will be sustained by the Liturgy of the Hours and scripture sharing as the frequency of Eucharistic celebration will decrease.” (P)

“Fewer Masses for convenience; better scheduling to meet honest needs; reconciliation and announcing may be scheduled to best use the time of the priests.” (P)

“Fewer, larger Masses” (P)

“Daily worship will be non-Eucharistic; AM and PM prayer extended. Clergy will be older and more itinerant presiders; one Eucharist per parish on Sunday.” (P)

“More Sundays without Mass; weekdays without Mass – This will result in the felt need for other forms of worship services, not just the physical reception of communion.” (P)

“Thrust on keeping Sunday Eucharist as source and summit of faith life” (P)

“More communion services; liturgy of the word” (P)

“Liturgy will become more connected with the real life experiences of people, and that is what will be celebrated with gratitude and appreciation. Hopefully, better preaching” (P)

“More emphasis on lectionary-based study, prayer, small group sharing; better preaching” (P)

“More ethnic flavor to our worship – again, use of gifts, music, art, and dance.” (PLC)

“Less music and more praise” (D)

“Fewer Masses in larger settings” (D)

“More Liturgy of the Word and less Eucharistic celebrations; fewer confessions; more liturgy of the hours, adoration” (D)

“Services, but not necessarily the Mass (because no priest). Growth in studying and sharing scripture” (PA)

“Probably a Spanish Mass; liturgical ministries formation on programs strengthened; more Eucharistic Ministers to the sick” (PA)

“The parish will retrieve the Catholic imagination. Our liturgy will rely less on gimmicks.” (PA)

“Fewer Masses. More cooperation from other parishes; clusters” (PA)

“Could be fewer Masses; more Eucharistic services” (PC)

“Fewer opportunities for daily and in some areas weekly Eucharistic celebrations” (PC)

“Liturgy that reflects the personality of the community; liturgy that will solicit the preferences of the community and respond to what they hear; liturgy that is the responsibility of the whole community” (DR)

“No daily Mass at every parish; Liturgy of the Word/Liturgy of Hours celebration daily; sacraments celebrated within the Sunday Liturgy; First Communion; Confirmation” (DR)

“Some parishes will thrive by specializing in conscious liturgical-musical styles, such as contemporary Christian, baby boomer psalmody, a few Latin Mass churches, Gospel, etc. The bland undifferentiated middle will suffer continuing declines in attendance which may reduce the effects of the decline in priests.” (DR)

“Technology will be used to enhance and assist. More diverse prayer and liturgical experience will be in place of daily Mass. We will need to work harder at being truly a Eucharistic committee.” (DR)

“Fewer places have daily liturgy; Sunday liturgy – places ‘Mass in the absence of a priest’; small group faith-sharing” (DR)

“The current trend in liturgical practice proscribed by recent documents is problematic and disappointing.” (DR)

“Fewer Eucharistic liturgies; more lay participation in communion services, liturgy of hours, etc.; more communal sacramental celebrations” (DR)

“Depends on role of presider and what happens with ordination.” (DR)

“The Eucharist will remain as our point of unity. Not sure how that will be.” (DR)

“More services of the Word (morning prayer, evening prayer); fewer Eucharistic liturgies (locations); regional location for weekday Mass, but not possible in every parish.” (O)

“Communion celebration with deacons and lay leaders presiding; Liturgy of the Word, morning and evening prayer replace daily mass. One large Sunday gathering” (O)

“Awareness of the sacramentality of the real Body of Christ. The people that flesh out the Gospel in real life.” (O)

Increased Role for the Laity

A number of pastoral leaders believe that worship in the future will include more active roles of the laity in leading worship. It is interesting to note that compared to other regions in the United States, this theme is significantly less pronounced. The following comments reflect this view:

“Ownership through formation of communal service of the Gospel; formation of disciples” (P)

“Hopefully the boundaries between altar and pew will lessen.” (P)

“It will be led by laity and deacons; more ‘worship’ rather than liturgical.” (P)

“There hopefully will be a more participatory community of faith. Whether it be clergy or laity, we are called by our baptism to serve and use our gifts for all to benefit from.” (D)

“Lay leadership within the church’s structure.” (D)

“Monthly Eucharist celebrations and Liturgy of the Word – communion services the rest of the time; deacons will be witnessing marriage, burying the dead, and baptizing.” (D)

“Mostly lay-run conservation will change” (PA)

“We will have fewer priests, stronger lay leadership and less celebration of the Eucharist on a daily basis.” (PC)

“Lay-lead, other forms (e.g., Divine Office)” (DR)

“More lay people and fewer priests will emerge.” (O)

E. Future Trends in Ministries of the Word

Pastoral leaders were asked in small group discussions and individual reflections to indicate future trends they expect in ministries of the word. These leaders expect greater emphasis on preaching and understanding the word, often through whole community catechesis. In addition, they expect greater lay leadership in preaching and teaching, as well as greater use of media, such as the internet for communicating the word.

Greater Emphasis on the Word and Whole Community Catechesis

Participants believe that the future of ministries of the word will be characterized by greater emphasis on sharing and understanding the word, largely through whole community catechesis and small Christian communities. These participants believe there will be greater lay leadership in preaching and study of the Word of God. The following comments reflect this integrated sense of greater attention to the Word, whole community catechesis, and lay leadership in preaching and sharing the Word of God:

“Greater ‘lectionary-based’ prayer and formation” (P)

“Leaders of faith sharing around the Word will be trained in scripture interpretation and prayer leadership. Catechesis will become more prominent as a foundation for the faith, and it will extend to all stages of life. The faith will be sustained by the Word and celebrated in the Eucharist.” (P)

“Deeper use of scripture and faith sharing at meetings, adult/child faith formation” (P)

“Small Christian communities will handle sacramental preparation; all adult religious education will be based on scripture and will be seen as essential to creating a deepening sense of the spiritual community which then expresses itself whenever Mass can be celebrated.” (P)

“Again, in the absence of Episcopal input, this is very hard to project. Dreaming of benign Episcopal intervention; the breaking open of the Word by lay presiders in the presence of a closed episcopacy; small Christian communities doing it on their own.” (P)

“More liturgies of the word with proper liturgical gestures; better music; perhaps better preaching” (P)

“The Word will be emphasized more.” (P)

“Preaching will be extended to qualified lay people.” (P)

“The Word will become more central and this will focus on preaching, faith sharing, and necessarily more concern with evangelization.” (P)

“Whole parish catechesis; intergenerational; few (no) Catholic schools; more resources for faith formation in the parish” (PLC)

“Laity will proclaim and explain.” (D)

“Catechesis has long been the main forum for the ministry of the Word. Most laity functions as lectors and catechists.” (D)

“Lay ministers” (D)

“Get the church out of Catholic schools, then why have them? Stronger family centered religious education” (PA)

“Almost all lay” (PA)

“Greater connection – faith sharing – breaking open the word – to help people make the connection between scripture and their daily lives.” (PA)

“The parish will move closer to the male-female partnership that is needed for true communion in the mission of the church.” (PA)

“Sharing the Word will substitute the Sunday service and the daily Masses when priests are not available.” (PA)

“Education to prevent homelessness, hunger, healthcare, mental illness, and disaster; increase of lay leadership in our parish; increase our time, talents, treasures, and most of all stewardship.” (PC)

“Lay leaders along with deacons will be responsible for breaking open the word.” (PC)

“More focus on the word of God. Celebrations presided by non-ordained ministers” (PC)

“I think the homilies should focus not only on spiritual aspects of life, but also on social issues as well.” (PC)

“Could be more prayer services” (PC)

“Greater emphasis on scripture study opportunities, lectionary-based faith-sharing small communities, homiletics that intersect the lived experience of the people.” (DR)

“Better formed catechetical leaders – fewer Catholic schools (if any); family catechesis, intergenerational catechesis, and adult faith formation that flows naturally from parish life.” (DR)

“Very gradual growth in adult faith formation activities and increased training of adult faith formation leaders and catechists; continued contraction in the elementary Catholic school system, particularly in urban areas of the Northeast.” (DR)

“Intergenerational; whole community catechesis” (DR)

“New ways of education and formation (CCD will look different); Catholic school close; increase RCIA” (DR)

“Hopefully, we will move toward whole community catechesis. It may take more than 20 years.” (DR)

“Emphasis on adult and family focus” (DR)

“More emphasis on lectionary-based study, prayer, small group sharing, better preaching” (DR)

“Adult faith formation; whole community catechesis – really important so we all recognize that we truly become the ‘Body of Christ’ bringing his presence into all that we do.” (O)

“More lay formation so that they might more effectively spread the Gospel. There is a need for more effective CCD programs because there will be fewer Catholic (parish) schools.” (O)

“Preaching that demonstrates true compassion and celebrates life-giving action.” (O)

“Not too much except for eliminating gender-related words that refer to God as he, him, his to God, Holy One, Lord (more genderless words).” (O)

More Use of Technology, Internet, and Media

Unlike other regional symposiums, only a few participants in the Mid-Atlantic indicated that there will be greater reliance on technology, the internet, and the media for communicating the Word of God. However, the following comments reflect this expectation:

“More electronic style formation to accommodate people’s frantic lives though not exclusively. Distance learning, since adults will have experienced it already.” (P)

“More will be done in communicating electronically the scriptures and teachings of the church. These formats should be as interactive as possible. Faith group sharing and outreach” (P)

“Technology skills will be needed for virtual learning communities. I hope there will be more actual small faith communities, as well, meeting the spiritual needs of more people of the church.” (DR)

F. Future Trends in Parish Ministries of Service

Participants believe that ministries of service will provide greater attention to specific social issues which will be essential and central to parish life. In addition, they expect greater coordination and ecumenical approaches to service and ministries of justice.

Greater Emphasis on Specific Social Issues

Clearly, participants believe that the future of the parish will be characterized by greater attention to specific social issues. The notion of justice and service will become essential in defining parish life. The following comments reflect this understanding of the future of parish ministries of service:

“Healthcare will come back into the church’s purview in a new way, perhaps as advocacy for patients or oversight of the individual so that she/he is not lost or abused by the complex and large system. Stewardship will reach beyond the church to sharing resources of all with those who are in need.” (P)

“The church will become even more a symbol of Jesus’ concern for the poor.” (P)

“Care for the elderly; wholistic wellness centers; parish hospice and nursing care” (P)

“Better involvement in housing, clothing the poor, helping people use their resources wisely, more programs on personal stewardship of time, talent, and treasure.” (P)

“Parish nurse ministries will increase; whatever schools are left will be used for community educational needs, as well as parish needs. English as a second language; healthcare instruction; computer courses” (P)

“Hopefully, as the church begins to minimize the power of the Word, ministries of service will arise to meet the needs of conscience. These can develop more easily for they are basically freed from Episcopal encumbrances.” (P)

“Service will continue; large volunteer base” (P)

“A parish will be the stimulus for more areas of service, and it will engage the wider community in distributing the services needed.” (P)

“Outreach to disenfranchised; elderly; single parents; young adults” (D)

“More reaching out to homebound/sick or to those who cannot travel to the mega parishes. This will be done by lay ministers.” (D)

“Women will be ordained.” (D)

“Lay ministers” (D)

“Living the beatitudes – taking care of those disenfranchised – feeding, clothing, sheltering” (PA)

“The focus on intergenerational education rather than just child education.” (PA)

“Social justice outreach” (PA)

“Greater use of technology; global concerns; education to eliminate homelessness and joblessness; education on social justice issues” (PA)

“The role of the parish (church) in civil society will have to increase to push government to provide quality health, education, and housing for the citizens. The activity of the church in civil issues will have to parallel its present activity with abortion issues.” (PA)

“Real estate and buildings owned by the church will become centers of service: meeting spaces, daycare centers, community service spaces, affordable housing, and senior service centers. Whatever service we provide must be relevant to the people in the pews. Connection is what will get people involved. If it’s an issue that touches people, they will get involved.” (PC)

“The church will strengthen its identity through the services of her ‘disciples’.” (PC)

“The church will be seen as an agency for social changes. This might be a way to expand our parish.” (PC)

“More disaster assistance services will be developed; more need for outside funding will be sought.” (PC)

“Service ministries will have to address the issues of the poor, homeless, aged, and imprisoned.” (PC)

“New categories (rich to poor); service will change as needs change; church always serves poor, but poor will be redefined.” (DR)

“As the immigrant populations continue to become part of our parishes assisting them in their basic needs will be more widespread.” (DR)

“Match the real felt needs of the people, e.g., housing and unemployment.” (DR)

“Greater involvement in nation’s political agenda and process; better taking care of ‘one’s own’ (fellow parishioners); increasing understanding of ‘service’ as integral to discipleship – not an option” (DR)

“Continued gradual growth in direct service activities with greater leadership on the part of parishioners as opposed to staff; service will be strong in parishes that have a robust ministry with youth and young adults.” (DR)

“Will have a more complete sense of the global community because of the information available and virtual communities created” (DR)

“In many areas, we will continue to be communities of compassion.” (DR)

“ILEM will be big and play a more important role; more disaster assistance services will be developed; more need for outside funding will be sought.” (O)

“Service to the elderly; working for the needs of poor and elderly in federal and local government” (O)

“The commitment to and practice of justice will eclipse the disproportionate amount of energy devoted to ‘band-aid’ services alone. A connectedness between the people of the community and the Earth: A totally sustainable church and community.” (O)

More Collaborative and Intentional Service

Participants believe that there will be greater emphasis on collaboration among parishes and churches locally and globally in the future to address issues of service and justice. They also see this including ecumenical approaches to common issues of justice and ministry in the world. The following comments reflect this expectation of a more collaborative and intentional approach to service:

“Coordinated and planned efforts designed to keep the ‘personal’ touch, but avoid duplication (waste of time, money, resources and energy)” (P)

“Collaboration; regionally and interfaith locally” (P)

“More interfaith relationships; broad base faith-based community organizing and working on local issues (housing, public schools, etc.). See ourselves a part of local and global community” (PLC)

“More centralization; more technology; more fee for service” (PA)

“Increased stewardship efforts (time, talent, treasure); centralization of services” (PC)

“Each faith community praying and discerning the needs of the broader community in which they live and developing an appropriate response. Greater attention to spiritual formation which will lead to a greater desire to serve.” (DR)

“More initiatives from the laity in this area of service; more cooperation from an interfaith perspective” (O)

V. MARKS OF PASTORAL LEADERSHIP:

Sponsoring partners of the Emerging Models Project identified a number of marks of pastoral leadership to be discussed during the symposiums. These marks of pastoral leadership are intended to identify behavioral practices of leaders for the emerging models in the church of the future.

Participants were asked to identify how they believe these marks of pastoral leadership are demonstrated in day-to-day parish life. The following section summarizes the reflections of participants on these marks of pastoral leadership. Participants worked in peer groups of priests, parish life coordinators, deacons, pastoral council representatives, etc., to prepare for reflecting on this theme.

A. Ethical Behaviors of Leadership

Pastoral leaders were asked to identify the ethical behaviors of leadership they see day-to-day as essential to parish life. Most frequently mentioned was accountability and transparency of leadership, respect for the dignity of others, just organizational practices, and personal ethics and authenticity.

Accountability and Transparency in Leadership

Pastoral leaders spoke frequently on the importance of accountability and transparency in their leadership roles. The following observations reflect their deep belief that this is an essential element of ethical leadership:

“Respect for all the relationships involved in the faith community through accountability to them in the complex decisions a leader must make.” (P)

“Priest accountability and transparency about pedophilia, finances, and personal use of parish monies” (P)

“Accountability; respect; trust” (P)

“Absolute openness financially and especially behaviorally. Justice in salaries. No secret deals!” (P)

“Open communication; transparency; accountability; professional supervisory structures” (P)

“Accountability and transparency; acknowledge people’s situations, feelings, etc., and let them know we (priests) have the same reactions.” (P)

“Accountability – study, learn, and see yourself as part of a learning community. Get supervision and support.” (PLC)

“Be transparent; becoming what you are called to be. Living the gospel values; leading by the way we live; authenticity” (D)

“Being humble and transparent” (D)

“Boundaries; confidentiality; moral lives” (PA)

“Honoring boundaries; respect for confidentiality; accepting people where they are.” (DR)

“Standards of ministerial behavior; fairness; transparency; integrity; Catholic social teaching” (DR)

“Accountability, transparency; recognize the difference between confidentiality and secrecy. Respect is critical and integrity at all levels of leadership.” (DR)

“Respecting professional boundaries; trust with confidence” (DR)

“Dignity of the person – open to input from various ministry groups; personal and professional arenas – certification process recognizes these areas; code of pastoral code” (DR)

“Fairness; personal integrity; transparency – knowing the difference between confidentiality and secrecy.” (O)

“There is a need to get back to ‘the basics’ – focus on the Gospel – be a people of prayer with a willingness to trust in the Lord – honesty and transparency is essential.” (O)

Respect for the Dignity of Others

Clearly, a number of pastoral leaders believe that respect for the dignity of others and recognizing the gifts of the entire community are important standards for the future of their ethical behaviors. The following observations reflect this perspective:

“Respect is the basis of a Christian society.” (P)

“Be servants, rather than ‘Lords’ over people. Convince people that all are equal in God’s world.” (P)

“To be spiritually, physically and emotionally stable to minister and respect the dignity of others. To become aware of where people are in their needs. Are we practicing social justice as Pastoral Associates?” (PA)

“Everyone brings gifts and they should all be respected.” (PC)

“People should come first. Our parish should grow spiritually and administratively.” (PC)

“Members of clergy, the staff and pastoral council must respect the gifts of others and invite others into collaboration.” (PC)

“Exhibit care and compassion when dealing with the community and individuals and their problems” (PC)

“The ethical behaviors in our parish community are based on care and respect for each other.” (PC)

“As leader, the responsibility is to set the standard for the parish. Leading by example sets the tone. If as leader, you are kind, prayerful, loving to all and engage the community in your role that will flow into the whole parish community. Treating people with respect and dignity always! Honesty!” (DR)

“Respect for the dignity of each individual; all are created in the image of God. No one is better or acts by different rules.” (DR)

“Treating everyone who joins the activity the same; not excluding anyone from the group and making an effort to interact with everyone.” (O)

Just Organizational Practices

A number of pastoral leaders expressed the belief that just organizational practices are essential for the future of ministry. The following comments reflect this commitment:

“Council for just compensation of professionals; evaluate persons work based on accepted standards; treat people respectfully; listen compassionately and attentively; appreciate the giftedness present in each person; culturally sensitive; articulate and enforce a code of conduct; carefully engage in background checking of volunteers and employees” (DR)

“Sexual abuse is not the only form of abuse in the church. There is pastoral abuse when a pastoral worker comes new to a parish and shows no respect for the structures, people and traditions that have existed in that parish. This is abusive. The abuse is most serious when perpetrated by a pastor. A serious ethical problem is the lack of real accountability on the part of pastors for their employment, financial, ministerial, and other decisions. Prospective pastors should be appointed as administrators the first few years and be regularly supervised by an experienced dean or vicar who has authority to keep them from doing things that are destructive to parish life.” (DR)

“The practice of not holding ordained clergy accountable for parish practices in all areas is very unethical. They can hurt people, communities, spend money at will, and be incompetent on many levels, with no significant consequences unless sexual misconduct is involved. We need to improve our own practices of just wages and fair benefits.” (DR)

“New pastors must be respectful and sensitive to existing practices, responsive to the movement of the spirit in God’s people. Leadership must be consultative moving toward relational ministry.” (DR)

“Use of suppliers who follow ethical business practices; practice what is preached; follow Catholic social teachings in church employment practices; Catholics at large encouraged and educated in Catholic social teaching to have an effect on secular workplace.” (O)

“Do what they say! Do set a good example! Respect each other on staff. Pay a living wage. Utilize good corporate practices in purchasing, i.e., Styrofoam, questioning sources of products (countries).” (O)

Personal Ethics and Authenticity

A number of pastoral leaders believe that their ethical behavior is rooted in a Gospel understanding of authenticity in leading a life of integrity and trustworthiness. The following expressions of ethical and authentic behavior were offered for individuals and parishes of the future:

“Word and action must reflect each other.” (P)

“Model what we preach.” (P)

“Ethics on all levels is essential. Individual priests must be ready to call each other to ethical behavior and be open to it. Bishops must surround themselves with a staff of ethical people and be ready to accept both the good and the bad news.” (P)

“Faith communities must be justice based.” (P)

“Ethical faith communities will assume their true Catholic identity, recognizing an identity beyond the walls of their buildings and structures.” (P)

“This is paramount in all parishes.” (P)

“Lead by life” (D)

“Keep confidences; model what is preached; respect boundaries; authentic; fiscally balanced to support a full range of services” (D)

“Authenticity – being oneself and always seeing Jesus in others.” (D)

“Trust” (PA)

“Lead by example of their own lives; authenticity; respect; trust” (PA)

“Practice what you preach; just wages; proper respect – reprimanding others in ethical way; do unto others as you would have them do unto you; justice issues; parish recycling (protecting the environment); don’t use products that use child labor.” (PA)

“Example – The leader should live a life according to the Gospel and church’s teaching. Teaching – The leader should connect in a pastoral and caring manner to the members of the community.” (PA)

“Integrity; trustworthiness” (DR)

“Compassion; maintain appropriate boundaries” (DR)

“Keep people focused on that which reminds us of our basic unity: mind and heart of Jesus. Act that way ourselves!” (DR)

“Help people see the ‘wholeness’ of life: congruity between what we say and believe and how we live.” (DR)

“Committed to journey toward generativity” (O)

B. Pastoral Behaviors of Leadership

Symposium participants identified the pastoral behaviors of leadership as offering an affirming presence to people in order to empower others.

Affirming Presence to People

Clearly, pastoral leaders believe that their effectiveness is based upon offering an affirming presence to people. This Gospel of passion, sensitivity, and awareness is clearly evident in the following comments:

“Wanting the best for everyone and it be challenging and empowering and supporting” (P)

“Practice what you preach.” (P)

“Gospel-based; concern for family; needs of divorced and separated; must be basis” (P)

“Behaviors shaped by the vision of the Kingdom and evaluated on those terms.” (P)

“Model of what we preach” (P)

“Pastors should lead by example and encourage spiritual growth within parameters of the church teaching and discipline.” (P)

“Need to be good – great – examples of the persona of Christ, rather than speakers of the Word. They must be doers!” (P)

“Gospel-based, compassion; look at the person, not the rules. Building relationships among the people” (P)

“Listening; affirming; approachable” (D)

“Being spiritual and inviting others to put themselves in the presence of God” (D)

“Availability and service; listening to people; compassion, empathy; reaching out” (D)

“Meet people where they are and always be available.” (D)

“Shepherd; spiritually and emotionally healthy; listener; compassion; empathetic; forgiving” (PA)

“Compassionate – forgiving – good listeners – not be power hungry” (PA)

“Leaders should know their people one-on-one. This will give them an idea of their gifts and talents (which they all have) to better serve the community.” (PA)

“Be more concerned with the spirit of the law rather than the letter of the law. Jesus wasn’t about rules and regulations. Jesus was about building the kingdom of God. What we say and do could make or break someone.” (PA)

“Reaching out; vision; give people things to do; welcoming; supporting; open to ideas” (PC)

“Develop relationships to foster the church mission and expand outreach.” (PC)

“Sharing and inviting; opening the door for others to step through leads to building the vibrant community; visionary” (DR)

“Listening presence, incarnational approach to people” (DR)

“Observant; prayerful; attitude of beatitudes; revisit vision – regularly – assist parishes in forming mission and vision statement” (DR)

“A truly authentic listening presence, a maturity, deep spirituality and a competent and advanced level of faith formation are needed along with patience, understanding, and compassion. We need to stop being cynical and be more trusting and idealistic; a willingness to risk, also a willingness to take risks with courage.” (DR)

“Committed at once to the Word and tradition and to the concrete reality of the community” (DR)

“Focus more on the person than the tasks at hand. Keeping focused on the person leaders to responding to their needs.” (DR)

“Building/fostering relationships that are ‘of God’ is critical. Good observation of what is happening and name it. Patience; recognize one’s own limitations” (DR)

“Compassionate listening presence” (DR)

“Leaders who ‘practice what they preach’; people of service who are continually trying to discern God’s will in all things; service and proclaiming of the Gospel are essential.” (O)

“Spirit rather than letter of law; Jesus built the Kingdom not a rule book.” (O)

“We need to be aware of and minister through the spirit of the law as opposed to the letter of the law.” (O)

Empowering Others

A number of participants expressed a theme that pastoral behaviors are rooted in a commitment to empowering others. This includes offering a vision and mission for the future of the parish, facilitating outreach to the disenfranchised, and calling forth the gifts of members within a local community. The following comments reflect this commitment:

“Collaboration; flexibility; openness; planning effectively” (P)

“Discernment of the gifts of the laity; pastoral sensitivity, especially for the poor and vulnerable; foster a sense of mission; building a relationship – fostering unity – especially among different cultures.” (P)

“Active attention to disenfranchised Catholics; active attention to unchurched Catholics; development of an educational/formational system that is intergenerational. If necessary, abandoning our present childhood system of evangelization (the Catholic school system).” (P)

“People of faith and prayer – relate with people and be real. Collaborative; listeners; teachers; healthy individuals: physically, spiritually and emotionally; awareness; approachable – caring – compassionate” (PA)

“Being able to collaborate with the community to enter into a share their gifts to help build the kingdom. We need to theologically be reflective.” (PA)

“The pastoral council is empowered and equipped to care for the needs of our parish community and see to it that the overall welfare is met.” (PC)

“Outreach to the poor or families in need; sensitivity to the cultural and ethnic needs of parishioners. Pastor should have a vision of peace and a vision of unity, especially in a multicultural parish.” (PC)

“The pastor sets the tone. His support whether active or through attitude is essential to make this work.” (PC)

“Detachment (not territorial); good at delegating; inviting others; referring to other professionals when a situation is over their head.” (DR)

“Persons of prayers; sense of deep personal commitment; appreciate the giftedness of the community; all collaborative – alternative to building and supporting relationships; properly qualified and credentialed for ministry; committed to ongoing, lifelong personal growth and skills development” (DR)

“Mission motivated versus turfdom; empower versus power” (DR)

“Inclusivity/hospitality; empowerment of others; promoters of the mission and vision; attentive to mission effectiveness” (DR)

“To encourage participation from the community and to try not to take over everything; they need to be involved to see if things are going in the right direction spiritually, but at the same time not be a part of the activities to the extent that they take over and nobody makes a decision unless the pastor okays it.” (O)

“Engaged in building relationships and facilitating leadership/mission.” (O)

C. Prophetic Behaviors of Leadership

Mid-Atlantic Symposium participants most often described prophetic behaviors of leadership as involving a prophetic stance toward issues of justice and fidelity to the Gospel.

Prophetic Stance toward Issues of Justice

Clearly, a number of participants referenced a prophetic stance toward issues of justice in their community and the world as an essential element of prophetic leadership. The following comments reflect this priority:

“Speaking the truth; having courage; keeping values in the forefront” (P)

“Need to speak the truth in love with a sensitivity for the culture and the conditions of people’s lives.” (P)

“Preaching must be of truth and justice. Be willing to suffer for the sake of the Gospel and the dignity of every person. Stretch the walls and boundaries in our ministry to people. This means justice and equality in the church as well.” (P)

“Speaking the truth as found in the Gospel values; moving the congregation in directions that arise from the Gospel and not from convenience, for example.” (P)

“Building personal relationships with the power and disenfranchised; working with people of other faiths; preaching on issues of social justice; advocacy for rights of the poor” (P)

“Building relationships with other churches; stretching boundaries; preaching on justice issues; getting involved in local issues (not partisan politics).” (PLC)

Speaking the reality of the church; courage, patient; being humble, having sensitivity; being the presence of God/Jesus; image of love; manifesting the need for married and women priests” (D)

“Identifying the gifts that are present in the community; speak the reality we see in the church and the world.” (D)

“Courageous; loving; present in the face of controversy; speaking out; affirming; be willing to do as Jesus did to wash the feet of others” (D)

“People of faith; people of conviction; vision oriented; courageous” (PA)

“Be there for the people” (PA)

“Looking outward rather than inward; helping the homeless; engaging with the people rather than writing a check.” (PA)

“Taking risks to preach the social Gospel” (DR)

“Willing to take courageous initiatives; visionary – ability to assist leadership of parish to articulate its vision and focus its energy; aware of and in touch with the larger community, its needs and issues; use skills of theological reflection” (DR)

“To give public voice on those issues that are contrary to the Gospel; to call the community to reflect theologically on particular issues and to act pastorally on them; to be agents of change” (DR)

“Ongoing theological reflection on the implication of the common call to discipleship; name the justice issues within the church and within the culture we exist for mission of transforming the world toward realizing the reign of God.” (DR)

“Leaders need to model integrity and truth and not necessarily caught up with the ‘traditions of the system’ which are often the very kinds of things that have gotten us into trouble.” (O)

“Aware and engaged in strengthening the web of life: mercy and justice and sustainability = peace. Active on an interfaith and ecumenical basis to end racism, religious intolerance, and oppression.” (O)

Fidelity to the Gospels

A number of participants referenced fidelity to the Gospels as the essential core of their commitment to a prophetic sense of leadership. The following comments reflect this Gospel foundation for their prophetic role:

“Prophets need to be tolerated. They make us uncomfortable. The church needs to be empowered to engage in a Gospel-based visioning process. Those gifted with prophetic charisms need to be at the heart of this process.” (P)

“Model of what we preach” (P)

“Honesty, integrity, and genuine motivations in doing the work of the church; must be trusted and accepted as genuine followers of Christ. People will follow someone who is outstanding in commitment to the Gospel.” (P)

“If the pastor teaches the goals of evangelization through homilies and his own outreaches and encourages others to reach out, Gospel values are fostered.” (PC)

“Living congruently with one’s beliefs; faithful, yet challenging; keeping personal ‘opinion’ out of the professional realm.” (DR)

“Fearless preaching of the full Gospel (versus comfort that is avoidance of the Gospel message)” (DR)

“Remind people of our core identity as baptized persons and the implications for life and ministry” (DR)

“The leader needs to keep religion on the minds of the people by having prayer before each event and making sure the activity is not doing something that is contrary to the teachings of the church.” (O)

D. Collaborative Behaviors of Leadership

Participants were asked to illustrate the collaborative behaviors of leadership that are important to their faith communities. Overwhelmingly, these pastoral leaders stressed the importance of collaboration, delegation, and empowering the gifts of others to emerge. They believe these behaviors are rooted in the fundamental stance of prayer and responsiveness to the spirit of God. The following comments reflect this overwhelming belief in these principles of collaboration, delegation, and empowerment:

Collaboration, Delegation, and Empowering the Gifts of Others

“Respect for others’ gifts and encouraging them to use their gifts” (P)

“Building relationships; respecting one another; being willing to listen, pray and reflect” (P)

“Discernment of gifts; theological framework which explains, inspires, and motivates collaborative ministry.” (P)

“Understanding and working like we are all disciples; listening meetings, discerning each other’s gifts and insights and recognize that collaboration is not consensus. Need to collaborate outside the parish community with civic and other churches.” (P)

“Openness to the ideas and opinions of others. Strive for unity in belief and purpose. Rely on the power of the Holy Spirit to urge, motivate, guide, stimulate, and inspire.” (P)

“An active embrace of the empowerment derived from our initiative as Catholics; drawing from the graces of Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, and the development of an ongoing formational process. An interface between the reality of the pastoral experience of the community and the compendium of church teaching and tradition is the platform.” (P)

“Professional support; homily feedback form; ministry feedback for parish/pastor plan evaluations; theological framework of ministry of the spirit leads us into relationships and collaboration with God and trust in God.” (P)

“Set the tone; speak last in meetings; include all opinions; delegate; empower” (P)

“Dismissing no one nor discounting any gift as a possible service for the mission. Realizing that many viewpoints are needed to make good judgments.” (P)

“Collaboration; in the face of lack of priests is obviously going to be essential in the future.” (P)

“A parish strongly committed to ongoing and lifelong faith formation” (P)

“Building toward this: communion, sacraments” (P)

“Building partnerships in ministry – shared responsibility and shared accountability; creating an atmosphere in which true discernment of the Holy Spirit happens; ongoing pastoral planning and evaluation of the plan.” (P)

“Understanding partnership – discernment of gifts; taking time to do one-on-one relational meetings; letting go of tasks others can do and moving to new things that others can’t. Encourage all to grow in their leadership abilities.” (PLC)

“Recognizing the talents/gifts of others; encouraging people to use their gifts; affirming people, working with others; respecting other ideas” (D)

“Empowering; modeling” (D)

“Work side by side with others. Not there to replace ministers, but to assist them to make the parish and their ministries stronger. Deaconate is being a servant to God’s priest and a slave to God’s people.” (D)

“Being faith-filled; God works through us.” (D)

“Not afraid to give up power and control” (PA)

“Listening; open to the Holy Spirit; respect; authenticity; inclusiveness” (PA)

“Listener; adapter; compromiser; appreciative of different personalities” (PA)

“Leaders wait to speak last so as not to lead the direction and shut down the wisdom of the group.” (PA)

“As baptized Christians, we all have a mission. Each of us has a specific gift. We all have to work together to share these gifts with the community.” (PC)

“Collaboration empowers parishioners to use their gifts for the good of the church community and the community in which it exists.” (PC)

“Develop relationships that empower the laity to fulfill the mission of the church.” (PC)

“The key word is ‘respectful’ of the gifts of all. Open, vulnerable, seeking feedback; consultative and also detached and open to new ideas.” (DR)

“Gift discernment processes; personal invitations; move from cooperation to collaboration” (DR)

“Institute for Ministries; collaborative experience; certification board; advisory board; input from ministers” (DR)

“Beyond intra-parish collaboration, parishes need to focus less on maintaining their individual identities and more on partnering with one another to see what they can accomplish together that they could not have done, as well as separately.” (DR)

“Creating an environment whereby everyone feels comfortable, speaking and acting to carry out the mission of the church. It is an ongoing and forever endeavor.” (DR)

“Take part in or facilitate a gift discernment process. As a community, share and reflect on current documents.” (DR)

“We need to move beyond territorial and protective ideas while at the same time respecting parish identity and history. We need to reach out beyond boundaries and share resources and energy – build our larger Catholic community. Communication and honest dialogue is important.” (DR)

“Active listeners; discerners; do not cling to or rely upon authority in leadership.” (DR)

“Respect; mutuality; listening” (DR)

“Listen, listen, listen to what is being said, communicated, and especially to what is not being said and communicated. Decide if the goal is efficiency or communion. Recognize that the wisdom people are most often in the margins and shadows.” (DR)

“Mutual respect among clergy and laity; mutual respect among ethnic groups in parish setting; understanding of unique gifts of ethnic groups, generations, and genders.” (O)

“Be a person who is willing to listen; be a person who sees the good in others; be a person of Gospel wisdom; openness and creativity and visioning are important characteristics” (O)

“The leader needs to look at each participant and listen to them and see how they interact with others to determine what skills and talents they have. The leader then needs to see where that person can be used along with their skills and talents.” (O)

E. Inclusive Behaviors of Leadership

Participants defined inclusive behaviors of leadership as fostering open and inviting communities and developing multicultural awareness and practices of inclusion.

Creating Open and Inviting Communities

Among pastoral leaders who believe that open and inviting communities are important, they expressed a deep belief that engaging others despite their differences and gifts is an important part of building parishes of the future. The following comments reflect this commitment to creating open and inviting communities:

“We must look beyond gender and ordination issues. This is very messy, yet critical if we are to model our behavior and that of Jesus.” (P)

“Allow for honest disagreements and for different perspectives to be heard and discerned.” (P)

“Recognizing that people are all different and important; need to include others outside the church (civic, church, and non-church entities)” (P)

“A parish that builds and maintains a strong emphasis on evangelization both initial and ongoing” (P)

“Keeping Gospel-centered; respecting both the unique and common” (P)

“Leaders who are inclusive respect differences and consider them all part of the fabric of faith. They celebrate diversity, encourage change, and promote stability and charity.” (P)

“Recognizing and strengthening the communities in the parish so that each grows in respect for the other. Again, stretch the boundaries beyond the parish. Speak against the ‘isms’; build relationships with other faith communities.” (PLC)

“Accepting others as they are; recognizing the different groups/nationalities; cultural differences and working together” (D)

“The marginalized also have gifts to share. By reaching out to include all ages, all cultures, the single, married and divorced, the whole parish profile is well served.” (PC)

“Welcome to all; outreach to the ‘hidden’ (e.g., persons with disabilities, minorities, etc.)” (DR)

“Make the extra effort – reach out; stop and reflect on our own behaviors to search where we need to be more inclusive.” (DR)

“Need to recognize our own exclusionary behaviors that may unconsciously mimic or reinforce those present in the local culture. Something as simple as knowing someone’s name and speaking with them by name can have a tremendous impact.” (DR)

“Avoids ‘tokenistic’ attempts at inclusivity (i.e., at Pentecost doing readings in many languages, but nothing the rest of the year). Genuinely seeks leadership and representation from all groups within the parish.” (DR)

“We need to find creative and insistent ways to remind all people of the diversity of the church even when the community is not ethically or culturally diverse; reaching out and authentic listening; consistently checking our own perceptions against the perception of those in the community being served.” (DR)

“Respect; mutuality; listening” (DR)

“Attentive to the wide diversity among us (theologically, spiritually, culturally, economically, ethically, etc.) by including this diversity in planning and resourcing.” (DR)

“Once again, openness is essential; welcoming and focusing on the Gospel; affirm cultures and types of people in the parish” (O)

“Include everyone in a group and try to do things that please everyone for the most part. The leader needs to encourage them to take a more active role to get others similar to them involved.” (O)

“No one is left out. We learn the necessary languages and appreciate and learn from all the cultures. Structures that honor these elements.” (O)

Multicultural Awareness and Inclusion

A number of participants expressed a deep commitment to multicultural awareness and inclusion is an important part of building the parishes of the future. These culturally-inclusive priorities are reflected in the following comments:

“Be ‘color blind’ and accept people as they are, looking for the gifts they can bring to the table.” (P)

“Community is not the great equalization. Make each culture strong; build up entire community.” (P)

“Affirming/developing/strengthening the cultures of a community which build up the body and increase the sense of unity among cultures. Calling diverse people to work together on common projects for the sake of the whole” (P)

“Every effort to include cultures, as well as divorced and remarried is really only trying to be honest to who we are.” (P)

“Affirming the ‘cultures’ of the parish without making them all equal” (P)

“Our community is changing to include African-American and Hispanic. We need to be not only welcoming, but also open to their culture.” (D)

“Openness to the Holy Spirit; seeing Christ in everyone; patience in trying to get beyond language and culture differences to an appreciation” (PA)

“Making sure that symbols used in worship speak to all parishioners; making sure that everyone is invited into discussions and planning – representative of culture, language” (PA)

“Work daily to prepare for ethnic changes in parish make-up. Unity/diversity” (PA)

“Listener; understands and appreciates; human nature; has a global view of church as ‘people of God’.” (PA)

“Leaders should be sensitive to language and ethnic needs of parishioners.” (PC)

“Being inclusive is more than being welcoming. To be inclusive of diverse groups, e.g., ethnic groups, young adults, blacks, and Asians, you need to be responsive to the adjustments in parish life. They may need to feel at home in the parish. We can’t expect them to participate only on our terms.” (DR)

“Recognizing all diversity is important, but the tension exists when boundaries and parameters exist.” (DR)

“Hospitality; diversity of gender, culture, ethnicities, and age-in leadership” (DR)

“Use of multiple languages in single service; use of ethnic works of art, fabric, holidays, music; multi-cultural socials” (O)

“Include different languages; customs; allow this to happen.” (O)

F. Welcoming Behaviors of Leadership

To conclude their discussion on the marks of pastoral leadership, participants described the welcoming behaviors of leadership that are most important to their parishes. Overwhelmingly, these participants identified an accessible, hospitable, and welcoming community as important for the future. The following comments reflect the diverse ways participants seek to build welcoming communities in ministry:

“Developing/enabling a ministry of hospitality which really welcomes people into the church; visitation of new families, etc., as a component of evangelization ministry; create a place for everyone to serve, i.e., a talent base that is really used.” (P)

“A welcoming leader is one whose genuine interest in the welfare of others is easily transparent. They are ready and willing to share the gift of faith with those who are searching. They are joyful to see another grow closer to God through their efforts.” (P)

“Create a space where people and their gifts are celebrated; make visible signs to display with people’s faces of many cultures, ages, and lifestyles.” (P)

“Having an open heart and mind and being ready for surprises others can bring to the table.” (P)

“Make people feel they are the focus of your attention when speaking; that the minister recognizes that he/she is not the only or even chief welcomer. Work on secretaries being given a pastoral education and listening training.” (P)

“I’m trying very hard to instill this in the leadership.” (P)

“Faith sharing; sharing in prayer and fellowship (pray and play events)” (P)

“Respond to spiritual hunger for closer relationship with God; empower to ministry” (P)

“Allowing everyone access to the leaders and to leadership roles if they are competent. Listen to everyone, even while everyone cannot get their way. Sense that we stay in relationship even when we disagree.” (P)

“A parish that builds and maintains a strong emphasis on evangelization both initial and ongoing” (P)

“Keep leadership fluid in the community. Find ways to give new people a way to serve and minister. A ministry does not become the property of one person or group. Call forth gifts of all. Encourage people to commit to ministry for certain periods of time and then move on to another freeing the previous ministry for someone else.” (PLC)

“Presence; acceptance of others; relationship; community gatherings; vibrant and alive liturgies; different types of liturgies/devotions” (D)

“Approachable; available” (D)

“Always keep the door open for conversation and conversion” (D)

“Become greeters” (D)

“Leaders have to know that ‘one at a time’ approach is not a waste of time. We win and we lose people one at a time. We can’t play the numbers game or worry about that.” (PA)

“Friendly; love of people; appreciation of gifts; outreach” (PA)

“Be a good listener” (PA)

“Grounds well kept: neat, clean, and well lit; inviting parishioners to move in the pews; as issues come up, invite people to participate and they feel like they are needed.” (PA)

“Trying to include everyone; respect; seeing Christ in others; genuine care for others” (PA)

“Intentional about hospitality in and through everything the parish hosts. Trains all parish staff to be ministers of welcoming (secretary, janitor, everyone!).” (PC)

“The doors of the church should be opened wide to everybody.” (PC)

“It is important that a church community looks outward, as well as inward. The doors must be open, not only to the inactive to return, but also to the seekers seeking and the unchurched to find a spiritual home.” (PC)

“This is a very important skill that not only the leaders must practice, but that the leaders need to cultivate in the entire community.” (DR)

“Hospitality is the responsibility of everyone. The modeling flows from the leaders. Listening and engaging people are elements of hospitality.” (DR)

“The virtue of ‘hospitality’ should be at the heart of every office (diocesan) and parish.” (DR)

“An openness to sharing oneself with others; the authentic listening before; an ability to recognize and reach out and draw people in.” (DR)

“Implement ‘Welcoming the Stranger’ – great examples of diverse pastoral activities related to hospitality” (DR)

“Programs (welcoming, hospitality, availability)” (DR)

“Respect; mutuality; listening” (DR)

“Conscious, intentional efforts to identify and to notice those who are not familiar” (DR)

“Inclusivity creates a welcoming atmosphere.” (DR)

“Welcoming atmosphere; proper lighting, cleanliness, upkeep of property and grounds; invite all to become involved in community, especially those who are married to a Catholic, but are not Catholic him or herself; ‘time limits’ on parish ministry involvement to allow ‘turnover’ – for example, Eucharistic Minister for two years then must move on to next ministry interest.” (O)

“Let crying babies stay; latecomers will be latecomers; one-on-one invitations” (O)

“To listen to everyone and talk with everyone and remember something about them to talk to them about the next time they come around.” (O)

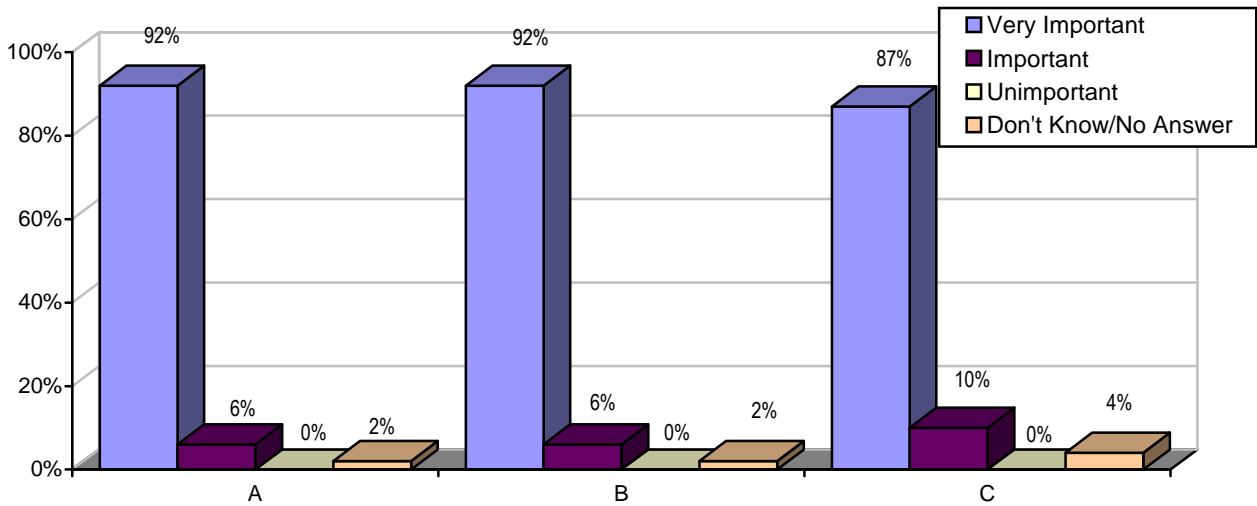
“In mutually life-giving and caring relationship with every parishioner, family, group, ministry, and partner; and with the leaders, systems, and citizens of the community.” (O)

VI. CONCLUDING ASSESSMENT:

To conclude the symposium, participants were asked to privately evaluate their parish ministry on a number of factors. The summary below represents this region's report/symposium only. Data will be aggregated across all regional gatherings for a more detailed analysis by cohort group and on a number of detailed demographic factors.

Figure 1 below indicates the current importance of the three major elements of pastoral leadership as expressed during this symposium. Among all Mid-Atlantic pastoral leaders, all three major elements of pastoral leadership are identified as overwhelmingly very important. These pastoral leaders rank these three priorities with greater importance than their colleagues in other regional symposiums conducted to date.

Figure 1
Importance of Pastoral Leadership Elements
(All Respondents)

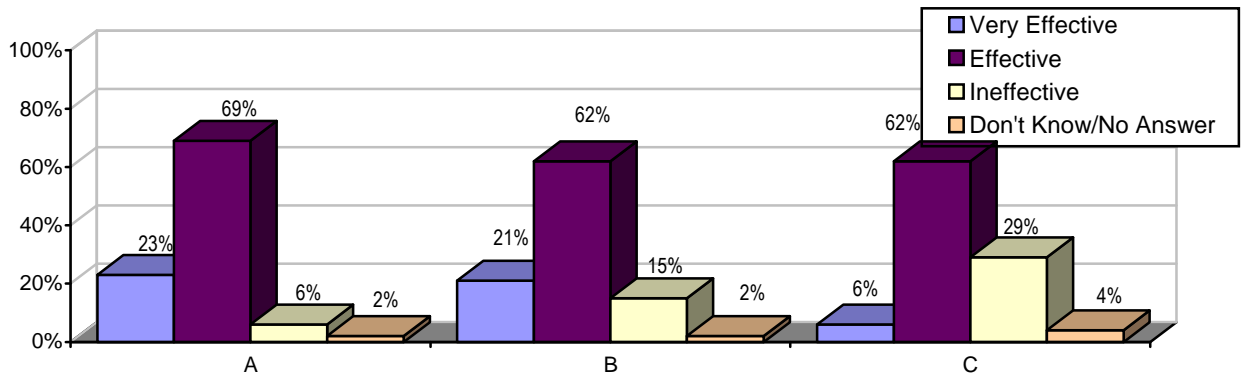


- A. A spiritually alive, healthy community
- B. A visible commitment to building the life of the faith community
- C. A total ministering community (including the leadership or pastors, staff, and council together)

Figure 2 below indicates how effective participants believe their parishes are in realizing these same three critical dimensions of pastoral leadership. Similar to other regions of the United States, these pastoral leaders believe that parishes are effective to very effective in the pastoral practices of building a spiritually alive and healthy community, creating a visible commitment to building the faith community, and advocating for a total ministering community.

It is interesting to note that 29% of these participants, however, rated their parishes as ineffective in creating a total ministering community. This is somewhat higher than other regional symposium ratings on this factor.

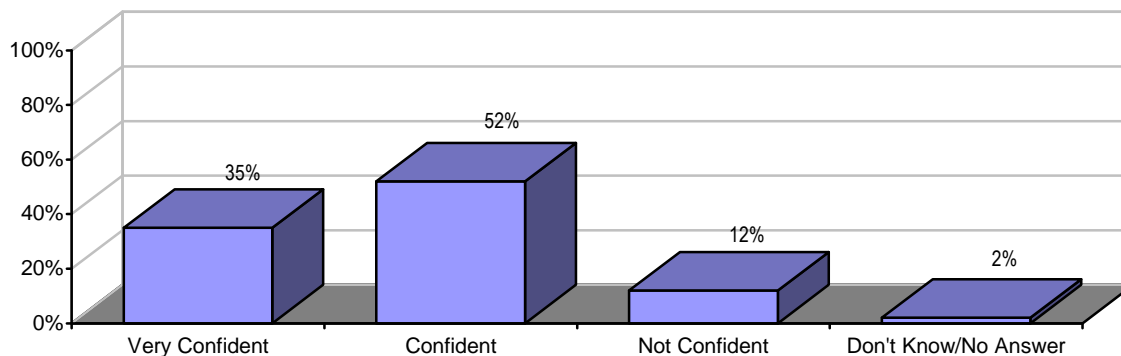
Figure 2
Effectiveness of Parish in Pastoral Leadership
(All Respondents)



- A. A spiritually alive, healthy community
- B. A visible commitment to building the life of the faith community
- C. A total ministering community (including the leadership or pastors, staff, and council together)

Figure 3 below indicates the level of confidence participants have in becoming vibrant faith communities in the future. The majority of participants are very confident or confident that their parishes are in the process of becoming vibrant faith communities. This is a slightly higher confidence level than other regional symposiums to date on the future vitality of their parishes.

Figure 3
Confidence in Parish becoming a Vibrant Faith Community
(All Respondents)



When participants were asked to comment on their level of confidence in their parishes becoming vibrant faith communities, they offered the following observations:

“All church is parish. As a pastor, this is my vision!” (P)

“People are hungry for it, but have been held back.” (P)

“We are trying hard, but who can predict the future!” (P)

“We have grown very much over the last 13 years. I have been their pastor. They are talking about what needs to be done in two formerly German parishes and now is an inner city parish.” (P)

“The parish leadership/members in general express a very genuine desire to foster vibrant, healthy, and faith-filled life and identity.” (P)

“We are well on the way in all honesty. Though there is room to grow, I feel the seed is sprouting into a well-nurtured plant.” (P)

“People hunger to be holy. How do we feed the hunger? This requires trust, time, and the ability to build and strengthen relationships. Also, the grace to understand that we are all at different points on the journey of faith and the beauty of people traveling ‘necessarily’ different paths on that journey. A variety of spiritualities – centered on the Eucharist” (P)

“We are working so hard presently to improve our vision and goals to be alive in our faith sharing and experiences. Even in our moments of discouragement, we pick up the task again and move on.” (P)

“Because we have already made a good start; the people involved are really interested and willing to move on.” (P)

“The financial crisis and priest shortage in the diocese may force the closing or merging of this dynamic, vital faith community.” (PLC)

“We have a high percentage of elderly and they don’t see themselves as potential designers of our future – that’s Father’s job.” (D)

“We are in that process already.” (D)

“We will do this voluntarily under our present pastor or forced to do so when a new pastor is assigned.” (D)

“Pastors believe that a new, modern church will inspire our faith community to become a vibrant faith. We are moving backward rather than forward.” (D)

“We are working on setting up a pastoral council. We are sending laymen for pastoral leadership training and empowering them. We are educating people as to the future trend of the church.” (PA)

“The transition is happening now – We just need to keep challenging, inviting, and offering programs, missions and support.” (PA)

“The present pastor is a great shepherd. Hopefully, he will be there for many years.” (PA)

“We already embark on that journey. We just need new ideas and new skills to make this journey more interesting.” (PC)

“We will continue to improve even if our current pastor were to be replaced by the most reactionary pastor. I don’t think he would be able to stop the inertia.” (PC)

“We are slowly evolving into an evangelizing parish.” (PC)

“The Foundation has already been set and all our parishioners are working hard to keep these ministries alive.” (PC)

“I believe without vision and the ability to unite around a vision, the possibility is not very real.” (PC)

“New pastor – great hope” (DR)

“As mentioned before, I belong to one of the three to four most vibrant parishes in the diocese. Under the current pastor, I am very confident that it will evolve toward fuller collaboration in ministry. However, when this pastor retires, it is not clear whether the bishop will choose to appoint a successor who will continue this vision or one who will shut it down.” (DR)

“With current personnel it’s unlikely. With a change in personnel, all things are possible.” (DR)

“My confidence is in our current pastor. If that should change, I have no confidence.” (DR)

"We are on the way. More people are being called forth by parish leadership to share their gifts." (DR)

"Diocesan efforts will promote creative thinking." (DR)

"My parish leadership team has already made significant advances." (DR)

"Good groundwork and modeling by pastor; already well on the way" (DR)

"I expect the next couple years will be a significant time of transition in structure and leadership. It is difficult to predict what will happen, but we have a good history and a good man as pastor." (DR)

"The parish is on the rebound." (O)

"There is great potential and a real, basic, genuine love of God and a desire to know His will." (O)

"It is a growing parish with people from the city moving into the area. It's becoming a 'bedroom' community for a large city. Since it's growing that way, the church pastors are trying to figure out how to meet the demand and grow with the community (i.e., new schools, new facilities)." (O)

"We are committed to holistic mission in and care for the people and systems of our county." (O)

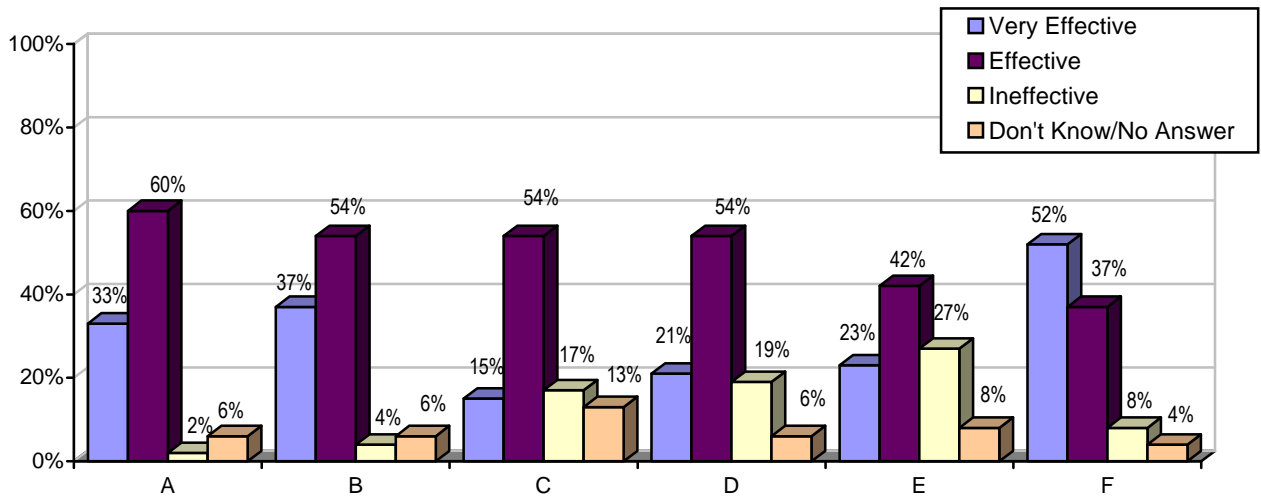
In concluding the symposium, participants were asked to indicate the effectiveness of their parishes in demonstrating concrete behaviors of pastoral excellence. Figure 4 below indicates their rankings.

It is interesting to note that the overwhelming majority of Mid-Atlantic pastoral leaders believe their parishes are very effective to effective in demonstrating welcoming behaviors of leadership. It is also interesting to note that 27% of these pastoral leaders believe their parishes are ineffective in demonstrating inclusive behaviors of leadership.

Overall, Mid-Atlantic pastoral leaders believe their parishes are effective to very effective in demonstrating the following behaviors of leadership:

- Ethical Behaviors
- Pastoral Behaviors
- Prophetic Behaviors
- Collaborative Behaviors
- Inclusive Behaviors

Figure 4
Effectiveness of Parish Leadership in
Demonstrating Concrete Behaviors of Excellence
(All Respondents)



- A. Ethical behaviors
- B. Pastoral behaviors
- C. Prophetic behaviors
- D. Collaborative behaviors
- E. Inclusive behaviors
- F. Welcoming behaviors

VII. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

On November 2-4, 2005, 62 pastoral leaders throughout the Mid-Atlantic States participated in a regional symposium on the Emerging Models of Pastoral Leadership. This regional symposium was one of eight regional, multi-year symposiums being sponsored by six leading national organizations of the Roman Catholic Church. These symposiums are funded by a Lilly Grant for Pastoral Excellence.

The following topics were explored at the symposium:

- **Future of Parish Leadership Roles**
- **Emerging Parish Best Practices**
- **Parish 2025 Futuring Exercise**
- **Marks of Pastoral Leadership**
- **Future Models for Pastoral Ministry**

When discussing the current vitality of their parishes, participants defined their parishes as:

- **Spiritually alive and healthy (through liturgy, worship, and strong community identity)**
- **Spiritually alive, but struggling to improve (with various roadblocks)**
- **Weak and in greater need of spiritual vitality**

When participants were asked to define how their parishes express their visible commitment to building the life of the faith community, these visible commitments included:

- **Visionary and affirming leadership**
- **Prayer, worship, and Eucharistic celebrations**
- **Inclusive ministries involving many members**
- **Outreach and service beyond the parish**
- **Still struggling to become a community**

Participants evaluated the extent to which their parishes reflect a total ministering community involving pastors, staff, and pastoral councils working together. Participants most commonly characterize their efforts as:

- **Collaborative among pastors, staff, and parishioners**
- **Making steady progress toward collaboration**
- **Struggling or hurting to realize this reality**
- **Defined by the individual roles of pastoral, staffs, and volunteers in their specific ministries**

When asked to describe their current parish leadership models, participants often referred to them as:

- **Collaborative with shared ministry**
- **Traditional with a hierarchical model of leadership**
- **Dependent on specific pastoral situations and needs**
- **Centered on a core team of professional staff**

In their written comments and group discussions, participants most frequently described the roles of pastors and parish life coordinators as:

- **Empowering and calling forth the gifts of others**
- **Engaged in the visioning of the parish**
- **Providing strong centralized leadership**

When asked to discuss the emerging roles of pastoral staffs in leading parish communities, participants often defined staff leadership roles as:

- **A team approach with responsibility for specific programs**
- **Empowering, facilitating, and allowing the gifts of others to emerge**
- **Hindered by various factors, especially pastor-dominated staffs**

When asked to define the leadership provided by lay parishioners, they often characterized lay leadership in their communities as:

- **Active and engaged communities of leaders**
- **Strong engagement through pastoral councils**
- **Struggling to become engaged communities**

When asked to reflect on the intentionality of their parish leadership models and why they function as they do, participants identified the following reasons:

- **Leadership style of the pastor**
- **Necessity and present needs**
- **Based on an intentional model for parish life**

When asked to characterize their emerging models of pastoral leadership, participants most frequently defined their local emerging models as:

- **Increased reliance on lay involvement**
- **Changing parish structures through clustered ministries or small faith-sharing communities**
- **More collaborative and team oriented within their parish**
- **Not changing due to frustration with their current circumstances**

As in other regional symposiums, Mid-Atlantic participants clearly identified an essential link in their minds between a commitment to a total ministering community and to healthy parishes of the future.

When identifying best practices for parish leadership, participants most frequently mentioned:

- **A commitment to collaboration and shared ministry**
- **An emphasis on prayer, spirituality, and faith formation**
- **Active listening and sharing of information throughout the parish**

When identifying their challenges for leadership in building vibrant faith communities, participants in the Mid-Atlantic often mentioned the following:

- **Systemic and structural issues in the church**
- **Managing change**
- **Trends in the dominant culture**

The most frequently mentioned opportunities for leadership in building vibrant faith communities are:

- **Opportunity to call forth and empower gifts of the laity**
- **Ongoing faith formation and evangelization**

When asked to identify their composition of the parish of the future, participants mentioned:

- **More inclusive forms of leadership**
- **Smaller faith-based communities with greater mission orientation**
- **Clustered and changing parish structures**

When asked how close or how far they are from their future vision of the parish, participants most frequently mentioned that they are:

- **Working toward a preferred vision**
- **Significantly far from their future vision**

As part of the symposium process, participants worked in small teams to imagine parishes in the Year 2025. When asked how parish structures of the future will evolve, their responses included larger clustered parishes with fewer priests and small faith-sharing communities. In describing their expected evolution of ordained and lay ecclesial leadership roles, participants primarily envision:

- **Increased dependency on lay leadership and greater collaboration with ordained ministers**
- **More diverse forms of orders**

When asked how the future of parishioner leadership will evolve, participants believe that parishioners will be much more engaged and responsible for the leadership of various aspects of parish life. When further describing their expectations for future trends in worship ministries, participants clearly expect:

- **More diverse forms of worship**
- **Increased roles of the laity in leading worship services**

When describing future expectations for parishes in terms of ministries of the word, Mid-Atlantic participants clearly expect:

- **Greater emphasis on the word and whole community catechesis**
- **More use of technology, the internet, and media to communicate the word**

When asked to define future trends expected in parish ministries of service, participants expect:

- **Greater emphasis on specific social issues related to the church locally and globally**
- **More intentional and collaborative service involving other churches and denominations**

To conclude the symposium, participants were asked to identify the marks of pastoral leadership beginning with the ethical behaviors of leadership. These ethical behaviors of leadership include:

- **Accountability and transparency**
- **Respect for the dignity of others**
- **Just organizational practices**
- **Personal ethics and authenticity**

When asked to define pastoral behaviors of leadership, Mid-Atlantic participants focused on:

- **Offering an affirming presence to people**
- **Empowering others**

When participants were asked to define prophetic behaviors of leadership, they indicated a:

- **Prophetic stance toward issues of justice**
- **Fidelity to the Gospels**

When asked to define collaborative behaviors of leadership, participants most frequently mentioned collaboration, delegation, and empowering the gifts of others.

Finally, when defining the inclusive behaviors of leadership, participants most frequently expressed:

- **Creating open and inviting communities**
- **Multicultural awareness and inclusion**

When defining the welcoming behaviors of leadership, participants clearly believe that hospitality and a sense of genuine invitation and inclusivity will be the hallmark of future parishes.

This Mid-Atlantic Symposium Report represents a detailed analysis of the findings and themes from the Mid-Atlantic region. These findings should be understood as representing one of eight regional symposiums scheduled throughout the United States between 2004 and 2007.