



Creating Consensus on Vision and Strategy

EMERGING MODELS OF PASTORAL LEADERSHIP
NORTH CENTRAL REGIONAL SYMPOSIUM REPORT

NOVEMBER 7-9, 2006

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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**

A total of 55 participants attended the North Central Emerging Models Symposium on November 7-9, 2006. The symposium was held at the Christ the King Retreat Center in Buffalo, Minnesota.

Of the 55 participants at the North Central Symposium, a total of 46 participants completed individual reflection guides with their responses to the symposium questions. These written responses have been 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 North Central Leadership Symposium:

Table 1
North Central Leadership Symposium
(Total Respondents = 46)

Respondents	No.	%
a. Pastors	14	30%
b. Parish Life Coordinators	5	11%
c. Deacons	3	7%
d. Pastoral Associates	4	9%
e. Parish Pastoral Council Representatives	1	2%
f. Diocesan Representatives	8	17%
g. Others	5	11%
h. Left Blank	6	13%

Table 2
Gender
(Total Respondents = 46)

Gender	No.	%
a. Male	23	50%
b. Female	17	37%
Left Blank	6	13%

Table 3
Age Range of Respondents
(Total Respondents = 46)

Respondent Age Range	No.	%
a. Under 29 years of age	0	0%
b. 30 to 39 years of age	4	9%
c. 40 to 49 years of age	11	24%
d. 50 to 59 years of age	17	37%
e. 60 to 69 years of age	8	17%
f. 70 or above	0	0%
Left Blank	6	13%

Table 5
Highest Level of Education
(Total Respondents = 46)

Level of Education	No.	%
a. High School	0	0%
b. Associates Degree	0	0%
c. Bachelor's Degree	8	17%
d. Master's Degree	29	63%
e. Doctoral Degree	2	4%
f. Left Blank	7	15%

Table 4
Size of Parish Households
(Total Respondents = 46)

Size of Parish Households	No.	%
a. Under 500 households	9	20%
b. 501 to 1200 households	17	37%
c. 1201 to 2000 households	8	17%
d. Over 2001 households	5	11%
Left Blank	7	15%

Table 6
Diocese in which you Serve
(Total Respondents = 46)

Diocese	No.	%
a. Crookston	1	2%
b. Davenport	2	4%
c. Dubuque	5	11%
d. Fargo	1	2%
e. Grand Island	2	4%
f. Memphis	1	2%
g. New Ulm	3	7%
h. Omaha	7	15%
i. Pueblo	2	4%
j. Rapid City	1	2%
k. St. Cloud	5	11%
l. St. Louis	2	4%
m. St. Paul/Minneapolis	4	9%
n. Sioux City	1	2%
o. Left Blank	9	20%

II. FUTURE OF PARISH LEADERSHIP ROLES:

Participants in the North Central Symposium listened to case study presentations of their peers describing their experiences of parish life and leadership. Following the case study presentations and small group discussions, participants were asked to share their views on the vitality of their parishes in the reflection guides. They were asked to evaluate the current vitality of their parishes on three factors, including 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

The majority of symposium participants identified their parishes as spiritually alive and healthy. Many identified this health as the strength of their liturgy, worship, and community identity. Still others described their parishes as spiritually alive and healthy with some challenges to overcome. A few participants identified their parishes as struggling to realize their full potential, but working toward this goal.

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

The following from pastoral leaders indicated that their current parish life is spiritually alive and healthy:

“Christ Renews His Parish Retreats unified the various parishes of our cluster. They helped to break down barriers as people shared faith and built community. These participants then carried out various leadership roles in our community. Secondly, our parishioners gather together for worship themselves even when the priest is away – daily services, seasonal liturgy of the hours. Masses and other liturgies and devotions are well-attended.” (P)

“My parish is vibrant, spiritually alive and healthy. There are over 100 organizations and 155 meetings a month, 3 priests, 3 religious, 75 full-time employees, a school of over 900, a CCD of over 800, perpetual adoration, etc.” (P)

“We have a spectrum of people from those enthusiastically alive and healthy to only seeing them at funerals. We have a number of programs from Christ Renews His Parish to 3 years/levels of the Great Bible Adventure Bible Study, to K of C, CDofA, Legion of Mary and so on. Programs don’t make the difference, personal commitment/involvement does, so we are looking at ways to increase the individual’s involvement in parish activities.” (P)

“On a scale of 1 to 10, we are a 7. I think we have enough conflict to be alive. Seems to be a move to more traditional, however, people are in charge of things like adoration.” (P)

“We are blessed with many lay ministries. We have an energizing ministry to Spanish speaking and have another permanent deacon about to be ordained in June. The Gospel is carried by them to others.” (P)

“Our parish is a newly consolidated parish made up of 5-1/2 parishes that were closed about two years ago. This decision was the result of a two-year strategic planning process that included the decision that the new pastor would not have been a part of the planning process. We are still in the process of establishing a clear, new identity, as well as organizing for ministry. The most unsolicited comment heard in our early weeks as a new parish – and probably unspoken by many – ‘Isn’t it good to have so many people back in the church again?’” (P)

“Both of my small parishes (400 households and 150 households) are vibrant and viable faith communities. They have active religious education programs, RCIA, and strong youth ministry. St. John’s has 310 students – preschool to 12th grade (over 70 students in 9-12 grades). Yes, they come to RE after confirmation. The pastoral councils seem to understand their role of visioning for the future. Liturgies are alive and faith-filled. Father preaches in a way that I believe upholds the spirituality of the people.” (PLC)

“My parish is alive and healthy – our liturgies are vibrant. Our many, many volunteers serve in a variety of ways and in the 1970s, we adopted a sister parish in Haiti and continue a fruitful relationship. In our city community, the church and our people are very involved in creating a positive environment. Our heart is beating. We are growing (the RCIA process is great). Our spirits exhibit an active prayer life and motivation for good. Having said that, there is room to grow. Much of what is has grown organically and is informal. We recently developed vision and mission statements that, if communicated and shared, will enliven us and help us to be a transforming community of faith.” (PLC)

“We are a very spiritually alive parish community living out our baptismal promises in a healthy way.” (D)

“I would say at this point it is very healthy. As clustering and sharing of pastors is in our future, I am concerned about our health.” (PA)

“We are continually working on assisting our parishes to be spiritually alive in all that we do from our liturgies, outreach, and education programs and to consistently remind people this is the way we are here. Catholic education programs take a lot of our financial resources and at times (by some people) this is why the parish existed. We have ‘stayed the course’ and begun to focus our priority as the spirituality of our parish...we have seen some positive results.” (PA)

“Yes, we have a spiritually alive and healthy community. Parishioners are happy, membership is up, and finances are improving.” (PC)

“Yes, very high demonstrated by the fact that parishioners have healed and moved on after a sad, painful experience with the past pastor.” (DR)

“Willingness to change; reading the Gospel of the week; base communities; openness to new ideas” (DR)

“Our parish community has an intergenerational faith formation program, hundreds of lay people involved in ministries, such as befrienders, Eucharistic Ministers, social justice and advocacy, a pastor who believes in empowering staff and lay people alike to ‘vision’ for the church. We have a pastor who challenges all of us to truly witness our baptism. Yet, we only have about 34% of the parish members are active.” (DR)

“Yes – growth in younger families due to a classroom model religious education program on Sundays” (DR)

“I believe we are a spiritually alive and healthy archdiocese that attempts to live out the Gospel message of gathering people around Christ and developing ministries to support evangelization – but I also recognize the dysfunctional aspects as well.” (PC)

“I see a spectrum. In some ways, I see spiritually alive individuals. I see individuals who have a peripheral God. Others recognize that Christianity is more than being nice and the core is based on relationships rather than obligations.” (O)

“Depending on how you define parish community, the answer will change. We have roughly 40,000 people who live within our canonical parish boundaries. Roughly 7,000 of these people are registered in the parish. Roughly half of them (3,500 people) contribute in a measurable way and attend weekly. We have over 60 active ministries which host 5,000 meetings each year out of our buildings. We bring between 40 and 60 into the church each year through RCIA.” (O)

“Liturgy is carefully prepared and celebrated with grace and passion. There are a variety of spiritual and educational opportunities offered to small groups. People are invited to participate. The ministerial staff is visible and present; welcoming.” (O)

“Yes, I think our parish is spiritually alive and healthy. Could it be more so? Certainly. One example is the parishioners being invited to gather around the altar during Eucharistic Prayer at Holy Thursday. They talk about it all year long.” (O)

Spiritually Alive and Healthy (with some challenges to overcome)

A number of participants described their parishes as alive and healthy, however, they also focused on some of the challenges they are addressing affecting the spiritual vitality. The following comments reflect this more qualified view of their spiritual health and vitality:

“The two small rural parishes I pastor today are very much alive and healthy. Still, there is room for growth, but they are growing.”
(P)

“Primarily in my parish community has 40,000 members – half unchurched. 11% go to a church/synagogue on a given weekend. Of the 2400 Catholic families in this parish, half attend Sunday Mass regularly. Of the 1200 who attend Mass (families), about half are spiritually alive and healthy – contributing their talents in ministry in different ways. About 60 or 70 ministries; good or excellent liturgies; global mission activity; RCIA, etc. My other parishes are alive and healthy, each in their own way being led by deacon parish directors or excellent lay parish director.” (P)

“My parish is somewhat typical with 300-500 core active people – households – 300-500 positive, but uninvolved and ½ or 1000 that are non-existent – we keep them informed. So, it is alive, active, yet to offer growth opportunities is something ‘unchosen’ so the need for growth in any is there, but the desire is weak.” (P)

“At the beginning of the clustering process, the committees’ spirituality and vitality varied. I attribute this to the grief process.”
(P)

“This needs improvement, but the recent merger of four parishes into one has driven many to see ‘what it’s all about.’ That is, the true role of place and particularly in the larger church.” (P)

“Healthy in liturgy; alive spiritually; but how are we in public.” (D)

“We are a people of great spiritual interest and therefore healthy in the people’s thirst for good liturgy, faith formation, social concerns, and outreach. We struggle (itself a sign of life) with becoming free of micro-management.” (PLC)

“As PLC of two rural parishes, I see a distinct difference between them. The larger parish, I would say, is more alive and hungers to develop spiritually – liturgies that are lively and participative, bible study groups, prayer groups, and an annual adult theology class which fills up very quickly. The smaller parish has people who are very loving and care well for one another, but lack ‘formal’ spiritual development. They never had daily Mass so we started Tuesday evenings. Small group attends – half from the larger parish and it is a struggle to get any type of bible study or adult education going.” (PLC)

“Overall, yes. We have a strong spirit of volunteerism and a great spirit of charity. We celebrate liturgy well. Our spirit of stewardship (not just financial) needs building. There is some residual pain from clergy – sexual abuse that happened more than 40 years ago.” (PLC)

“I think it is difficult to measure ‘spiritual vitality’. Many people may be coming to church, participating in RENEW, and praying their daily prayers. That, in and of itself, may be a measure of spiritual vitality. The piece that challenges us as leaders of our parish community is to help our people reflect on their experience, on their participation, in light of the gospels and life of Jesus Christ.” (O)

“I believe our parish is spiritually alive and healthy, but that we could also do better. The young people (high school age – age 35) don’t seem to know their role in the church. While this may be because of the ‘busy family syndrome’, or just lack of importance placed on their faith. Perhaps they don’t feel needed.” (O)

“A spectrum, as I would expect most parishes to be. Those may best be called ‘inquirers’; those who are seeking and receiving only community; those who are busy-bees doing lots of service; those who only come to worship; those for whom worship, service, and community truly draw them into a deep relationship of love with Jesus Christ.” (O)

“I see parishes alive (at different levels of health – very subjective) and exhibiting health in that they continue to minister, serve, and teach within the scandal in the church, the turnover in parish leadership, the dwindling number of resident parishes – the church still lives!” (O)

“Per our mission statement, ‘We are striving to become.’” (O)

Struggling to Realize their Full Potential (but working toward it)

The following comments indicate the view of some participants that their parishes are struggling to realize their full potential due to changes in leadership and demographics:

“Not alive, but more of a spiritual complacency, yet some are asking for Bible study.” (P)

“I am the 5th pastor in 10 years. Some of the previous pastors were fairly abusive. The fact that the parish stays together is a phenomenal sign. Cursillo is so important as a backbone. When doing spiritual talks, 1/3 of the parish comes.” (P)

“We have 1000 families (2500 members). Approximately 200 to 250 (10%) are actively involved. 33% go to church on any given Sunday. Another 2500 Catholics or so from within our geographic boundaries have not registered with us or now attend worship services at a number of evangelical churches in the area. Basically, 5% of our community is spiritually alive and healthy.” (D)

“Liturgically, our parish is not as alive as it was in the past. Major staff changes have had an impact. From a service and outreach perspective, we are thriving and growing. We are reaching out and building relationships far beyond our church borders. A new pastoral staff person is infusing much energy into this area of parish life (hope).” (PA)

“My parish is experiencing a decline because of leadership that ignores problems and cannot deal with criticism. Problems are not addressed. Parishioners have left in droves because the feelings of the laity have never been heard. People go elsewhere to Mass. Pastor needs some type of evaluation for anger and depression.” (DR)

“Sometimes we are deceptive in how we ‘evaluate’ our parish, especially our health and the spirituality of our parishioners. A good definition of what is a healthy and spiritually alive community needs to be clarified and communicated, then self-reflection and evaluation can take place. A new Pentecost is called forth.” (DR)

“Parish is mixed – people are at various stages in their journey – unfortunately, about 30% of our parish is divorced and remarried – we do very little to reach out to them.” (O)

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

Symposium participants were asked to identify concrete expressions of their commitment to building parish life and the faith community through word, worship, and service. A significant number of participants in the North Central region identified their commitment as both visible and balanced and having strong attributes of word, worship, and service in their communities. Others indicated their communities have signs of a visible commitment, but struggle with areas of needed attention.

A few participants indicated that their outreach and service within and beyond the parish is a hallmark of their visible commitment to building the faith community, while others referenced their education and formation programs as significant examples of their commitment to building the life of the faith community.

Visible and Balanced Commitment

Among those participants who indicated that their parishes have a visible and balanced commitment to word, worship, and service, the following examples were indicated:

“One of the parishes is very focused on the mission of its parish school. The school serves as a principle of vital unity – the children at the center seems to call forth from most everyone a continued desire for growth. The other parish evidences great desire for its youth for the sacramental life of the church.” (P)

“There is a very visible commitment focus on the Word because the parish has a K-8 grade school.” (P)

“Parishioners stay within our cluster even when they could worship at Mass closer to them outside the cluster. When we pray for folks who are sick in the intercessions, parishioners from other towns will ask further about them and visit. Parishioners assist at dinners, events, and liturgies at other churches in the cluster. Catechists serve at towns other than their own. The people of the four churches are now collaborating on a new church facility and the diocese is interested, as well as our Protestant neighbors.” (P)

“Constant efforts to form a community of communities in Word, reason, and mission of the church; about 1000 individuals committed to serve; open house for those seeking to become Catholic or to come back home; intergenerational catechetical formation; good to excellent liturgies” (P)

“Yes, we have a good liturgy and are dedicated to service within the community and outside. Our parish tithes off the top of everything that we bring in.” (P)

“When I preach one weekend a month, I strive, especially in the smaller parish, to bring in scriptural history and sound theology to stretch their growth. We have the opportunity to gather daily for either Eucharist or a Word/Communion Service. Monthly we hand out publications (user-friendly) on sacraments, scripture, church teachings, etc., to further education. Our weekly bulletin is a combination of schedules, announcements, and teaching. Both parishes have a long history of service to local communities – Habitat for Humanity, Foodshelves, Meals on Wheels, mentoring, etc.” (PLC)

“Strong commitment to religious education and Catholic school; vibrant liturgies (ministries are well prepared). Music is coordinated to the scriptures. Outreach and service are key components in both faith communities.” (PLC)

“The vision and mission process is one way we share this commitment. Also, we are sponsoring a mission with the theme of forgiveness and healing. Our staff had its first ever day of reflection together. The staff is more intentional about praying together. Stewardship is a new (or revisited) theme in our parish. We have collected time and talent surveys and have been asked to prayerfully examine our giving of treasure. A sense of grateful response to God’s love is a theme that is shared through homilies and bulletin writings.” (PLC)

“We strive to be a visible example of our faith community through quality Liturgy of the Word and Eucharist and of service to the whole Archdiocese.” (D)

“Definitely. What helps is in this area are different members re-lighting the flame every couple of years. We have a good solid Director of Religion, Liturgist, Music Minister, and Pastor – people helping people.” (D)

“This is very clear by our desire to have quality liturgies and to have the word spread through all that we do. It is taking the word and making it our own through the life of the parish. Our main component is a developing aspect of our life. We do a third Sunday collection which supports local ministries; our annual Haiti project widens the lens of folks gradually through financial and personnel resources.” (PA)

“Visible commitment is seen: number of people involved in outreach ministry; hard work by big volunteers with liturgical ministries; formation programs (especially adult formation) is thriving.” (PA)

“A very visible commitment is evident in the ministries offered. Need to find a way to evangelize within the faith community.” (DR)

“Visible commitment has to come from the entire parish – beginning with each individual recognizing that they are called to be a disciple and to bring about the kingdom here and now, as well as planning for the future kingdom.” (DR)

“We are committed to involving the youth and as many people as we can in assuming leadership roles based on their gifts. I and another sister came to this 3-parish rural/reservation area to help them achieve their diocesan 2002 synod goals. They invited us, so in a sense we are a ‘visible sign’ of their quest to further the synod goals which address Word, Worship, and Service.” (O)

“A community that is working toward connecting the mission of the parish in all walks of parish ministry, especially in the area of Word, Worship, and Service.” (O)

“A rural (no town – just church in the middle of lake country) that had to demolish a structurally unwound church and built a new (beautiful) church in 6-7 months all the while continuing to worship, serve, and do catechesis, etc. This community leadership was almost exclusively from the people. Pastor’s role was limited sacramental.” (O)

“We offer ever-changing services to try and touch as many people as possible.” (O)

“Very strong; we are very incarnational in commitment. Our mission is to create a spiritual family that lives, celebrates, and teaches God’s word so that our journey in faith will continue to build the kingdom of God. I believe we do engage this in a very dynamic way.” (O)

Signs of Visible Commitment (with areas of attention needed)

Some participants in the North Central Symposium identified signs of visible commitment, but also focused on areas of needed attention that often block their progress. The following comments illustrate this perspective:

“Strong on religious education for children; worship – as good as any (national average); service – weak, but growing” (P)

“Commitment is varied due to grief.” (P)

“Word and Worship not bad; service needs improvement” (P)

“Liturgy is alive and well, but formation is weak. My parish does a lot. There is much more going on, but some people are always doing it all. Don’t know how to grow emotionally to the 300-500 positive but shy.” (P)

“Religious education is difficult in a small parish, but we have an excellent group of catechists. Adult faith formation is weak. New liturgical ministers are recruited and trained regularly, and the parish celebrates Eucharist well, even with limited musical resources. We constantly seek to serve others in new ways. Our sacramental minister is a good (very good) preacher who calls us to justice with every family.” (PLC)

“We work very hard in these three aspects of faith life.” (PLC)

“In business, we talk about the 80-20 concept (80% of revenue comes from 20% of the customers). 80% of employee problems come from 20% of the employees, etc. I believe in our parish we could say 95% of the visible commitment to building the life of the faith community comes from 5% of the Catholics of our Catholic community.” (D)

“Majority of our communities are connected to Sunday Eucharist, but little visible commitment. I see the need for encouraging the pew dweller to seeking spiritual growth and ongoing conversation.” (PC)

“I think the struggle is to see the relationship between Word, Worship, and Service. In my rural area, I see a growing awareness that communities focus on the youth and there is a need to be intentional in the faith formation of adults.” (O)

“We have an adequate amount of lay ministry volunteers, i.e., EMS, lectors, ushers, etc., but they are the same old ones all the time. Our groups are also experiencing stagnation. However, when the new programs are started (The Great Adventure Bible Timeline and Consecration to Mary), a surprising number of people participate.” (O)

“There are pockets of the current faith community which are visibly committed to building the faith community. Inertia exists in other segments.” (O)

Outreach and Service within and beyond the Parish

Still other participants indicated that their outreach and service within and beyond the parish is a hallmark of their visible commitment to word, worship, and service as indicated below:

“As a stewardship community, we give 10% of our weekly offering to the poor (or a mandated second collection). We need more external service. One good example is that we host a free mid-day meal each Thursday at our local church.” (P)

“This commitment is most evident in our Sunday liturgies, especially in the participation of the community, the ministries of music and lector, and in the commitment of our presiders and preachers. It can also be seen in our outreach to the elderly and our youth, our support for an elementary school, and our programs for the poor (St. Vincent DePaul) and the homeless (room at the inn).” (P)

“These are all central...worship is central, high commitment to parish service and outreach/social justice (food shelf, missions, chosen groups that they support with money, time, and donated items, meals on wheels, cancer center, women’s safe home, etc.); homebound ministry; building and grounds; funeral lunches; sacristan, etc.” (PLC)

“Yes to all three with persons involved in each of these areas, especially service.” (PA)

“We have numerous volunteer service-oriented programs.” (PC)

“Service within and outside the community” (DR)

“Service – relationship to monastery in Coban; Guatemala – adults go once a year to work; a second group goes at a different time just for pilgrimage/retreat to live among the people.” (O)

Whole Community Catechesis (education and formation)

A few participants also mentioned their educational commitment, in particular whole community catechesis, as a significant hallmark of their visible commitment to building a parish community. This is evident in the following comments:

“We have dropped the CCD style religious education program for an intergenerational one. We have begun a project to help African faith communities become self-sufficient, the bible study, and such are all non-traditional endeavors of our parishes and like all things, they started out small and are growing.” (P)

“Have physically built two additions onto the church; hired an adult enrichment coordinator. This is an exciting time as the new NDC calls for lifelong catechesis.” (DR)

“Have come to offer a variety of adult faith formation; extensive use of liturgical catechesis; ministry to the larger community; relational approach to sick, homebound, marginalized; collaboration to smaller cluster parishes” (O)

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

Participants were asked to indicate how their parishes reflect a total ministering community of pastors, staff, and councils working together. Many expressed optimism that this collaboration is a current reality. Other indicated they are making steady progress toward this goal. A few participants identified their parishes as struggling or hurting to realize this reality. Still others indicated that their efforts as a total ministering community are dependent on the wishes of a dominant pastor.

Collaborative Effort among Pastors, Staff, Councils, and Parishioners

A number of participants in the North Central Symposium expressed the view that their parishes are experiencing a total ministering community of collaborative efforts at all levels of working together as reflected in the following comments:

“Though there is little professional staff, there is an organic engagement of many people on various levels of the life of the community.” (P)

“There is no full-time staff outside the school, yet the part-time staff is committed to serving the needs of the community.” (P)

“There are many opportunities for worship and we seem to work together wonderfully. The staff meetings each month really solidify our mission.” (P)

“This is a high point. All the leadership sees that they need to collaborate.” (P)

“Staff (volunteers and paid) retreat; consistent meetings; a meeting quarterly of total parish leadership – the heads of all committees and departments to examine the focus and path of the parish” (P)

“We are a servant leader, collaborative, collegial corporate system – core staff is in the practice of co-pastoring with the pastor with council acting as a visioning body – ‘What does Christ desire of us in the next five years?’” (P)

“We seek to implement the teaching of Vatican II by not ‘clericalizing’ the staff, but truly calling forth the gifts and leadership of parishioners. Ideally, staff would nearly work themselves out of a position by training and forming parishioners. We seek out assistance from parishioners instead of always waiting for them to come forward.” (P)

“I think the best example is the leadership of our Life on the Edge Core Team. Through their hospitality, each student invites others to participate in the Edge Program each week.” (P)

“We are in the process of building a pastoral leadership team based on the presumption that ‘leadership’ is a charism and ministry of the church not limited to the ordained and characterized by collaboration, accountability, mutual responsibility and support, and effective communication. We are also in the process of establishing the lay advisory councils with the right and responsibility of participating in all decisions that affect the life, welfare, and ministry of our parish: pastoral council, school board, and stewardship and development councils. Transitional councils’ works are now coming to an end.” (P)

“How we are as staff, we are as community. I feel our parish members live their faith in the community and outside the parish. Our parish community is receptive to the town.” (P)

“While we do have staff meetings, our smaller size allows for impromptu discussions frequently – DRE, liturgist, sacramental minister, myself as PLC. Both parish councils meet quarterly. Canonical pastor attends some, but not all. I see their role as not only advisory, but folks to share the vision. Decisions are usually made through consensus. We have engaged more and more of the laity in the last 8 years, especially in the last 17 months – homebound ministry, bereavement, social justice, education, facility maintenance, leading Bible studies, morning prayer, etc.” (PLC)

“The pastoral administrator and sacramental minister work as a pastoral team. We consult and collaborate regularly with staff and councils. Many parishioners, perhaps one-half to one-third of all adults are involved in some sort of ministry in the parish or in the community.” (PLC)

“We have a very strong and organized leadership through the parish council, finance committee, trustees, and professional and experienced staff.” (D)

“Yes! Our pastor is good at that and at the same time appreciates my interpretation of the ways in which that could be improved.” (PA)

“We rely on the vision, insight, talents, and collaboration of each of these for the good of the whole community. I find that we do an excellent job in consulting, advising, communicating, and implementing decisions.” (PA)

“The pastor, deacon, staff, and council share in the leadership of the community.” (PC)

“Our best model for total ministering community is the trinity. Right relationships among all who lead – to respect and trust the gifts each bring – to celebrate that and to strive for its application in service to the parish, the larger church, and to the wider community.” (DR)

“Sharing power; twisting arms for council elections” (DR)

“Pastor and pastoral associate do most of the ministering; educating adults in RIA and sacramental preparation.” (DR)

“Our community does this well.” (DR)

“The parish looks for ways for each of these groups to work together, support each other’s work, and carry on where another group leaves off.” (O)

“The pastor considers the staff to be his co-pastors as ecclesial ministers. The council has been chartered to be a visioning body looking at where the parish needs to be five years out. The pastoral business manager was established as an ex officio link to ensure communication and common goals between the vision body, the staff, and the finance council.” (O)

“Lay volunteers and ministers in a parish of 1400 households. We have approximately 1000 volunteers. Staff is ultimately responsible for their ministry, but they consult with parishioners for direction and look to parishioners to implement.” (O)

Making Steady Progress

A few participants indicated that while they have not fully realized collaboration among various leadership groups in their parishes, they are working hard in key areas and making steady progress. The following comments reflect this viewpoint:

“Pastoral care of sick and homebound by lay people really going well” (P)

“I don’t always feel we are vibrantly together, but all are working hard, just solely. Always a task to build bridges – never just once – always. We are connecting or fixing the connection – challenge is to find a way to make people feel a part of the whole.” (P)

“We are in the process of merging eight parishes into one. As part of that we are working on establishing better means of communication, interaction, dialogue, and so on. In this process, we are emphasizing the need for everybody to minister/evangelize each other.” (P)

“We are growing in this process. Our pastor with support of trained staff members is building awareness in the laity of their role in ministering. We need to continue to work in this area – the model of the laity being ministered to or needing permission to serve is very comfortable, but limiting. As a rural community, much is done informally – we would benefit by providing educational opportunity to examine the true meaning of ‘Co-worker in the Vineyard of the Lord.’” (PLC)

“This is in the process. Pastoral council has set a goal of radical hospitality in all parish events. The RA/SP, staff and council have been given this charge. We believe hospitality (welcoming Christ as the stranger and the friend) is essential for total ministering. The smaller parish is not quite ready to move in this way. I’m allowing for each parish to discover their own realities.” (PLC)

Struggling or Hurting to Realize This Reality

A few parish leaders indicated that their parishes are in some way struggling or hurting to realize a more collaborative reality. These comments appear below:

“There is tension right now. The Archdiocese has just informed my parish that it would have a priest pastor from a neighboring parish. There was no process/discussion with the parish and they are struggling with how the parish will be managed, how decisions will now be made, etc. Because there has been no ‘staff’, the parish is used to lay leadership and is not sure how the new priest/pastor will make decisions and work with them.” (PLC)

“We need help interacting and working toward mutual respect and consensus.” (PLC)

“We are not here yet, but the pastor very respectfully consults with staff and pastoral council. He takes recommendations and advice very seriously. I often wonder (sadly) if I will ever have an experience of a ‘total ministering community.’” (PA)

“One of our missions as a diocesan office is to bring total leadership together to support, mature, and to develop collaboration – some successes, but struggling to improve.” (PC)

“Our parish operates on the 80-20 rule: 20% of the people participate in 80% of the activities. We are undergoing change in pastor and I don’t have a good feel for how he will work with the councils.” (O)

“Have not experienced this” (O)

Dependant on the Wishes of the Pastor

Likewise, a few pastoral leaders indicated that their efforts of collaboration are often blocked or heavily influenced by the wishes of a dominant pastor. The following comments reflect this viewpoint:

“Pastor is quite dominant now, but we’re working on it. This was to some extent inevitable in the situation of creating a new parish.” (P)

“Collaboration is a foreign concept. The Council is a rubber stamp of the pastor’s agenda. Staff lacks creativity and is not encouraged to take the initiative.” (D)

“The pastor talks about collaboration, but also is very clear that he is the final authority canonically, which, of course, is true, but it stifles the conversation sometimes. The trustees rotate. The parish council chair and finance council chair are trustees.” (O)

“Our pastor delegates, but keeps veto authority on everything. He often forgets that others are there to collaborate with.” (O)

D. Current Parish Leadership Models

Symposium participants were asked to describe the leadership models that best capture their current approach to parish leadership. Some pastoral leaders indicated they have a collaborative leadership model with shared ministry. Still others indicated they have a traditional or hierarchical model of leadership. A few leaders express the view that their model is heavily dependent on a core team of professional staff.

Collaborative with Shared Ministry

The following comments reflect the view among participants that their leadership models are strongly collaborative with a shared sense of ministry:

“Increasingly parishioners are taking more responsibility for ministry where they can instead of always deferring to the pastor. They will seek counsel and direction from staff.” (P)

“Servant model; corporate; collegial; collaborative; staff has a mission statement that serves our parish vision statement.” (P)

“We still have the model of priest-staff-volunteers. The pastor is constantly reminding the people that this is ‘their’ parish and he does not need to be present at everything. With over 100 organizations, there are plenty of leaders.” (P)

“One set of three parishes were molded on collaboration. The other set of three were modeled on the ‘Ombudsman’ style. What we are moving to is collaborative co-workers. This is a work that will take much.” (P)

“Leadership needs to set the tone. Our pastor treats the deacons as co-pastors and the parish council and parish staff as advisors according to their expertise.” (P)

“We have strong leaders trying to involve and welcome others. We are collaborative, but with a clear articulated vision that means we ask for commitment and service to enable the vision. Seeking to meet the needs; seeking for what they are.” (P)

“Collaboration; consensus; shared ministry; wisdom community models” (PLC)

“A working pastoral council intent on serving the needs of the people; a variety of opportunities for formation and spiritual growth providing a potential core of future leaders” (PLC)

“PLC with sacramental minister and canonical pastor (who is 20 miles away). I like to think of our parishes as collaborative and people empowered. While I meet with all the various committees, we dream/vision and pray together, consider a variety of ideas, decide what to do and how. They then take the ball and run. I try to stay in touch and given them support. And, of course, be present as much as possible during their implementation.” (PLC)

“I have tried as the pastoral administrator to bring collaboration to the parishes. That does not work in every situation. I believe it is the best that I can offer as a lay woman (appointed to this role). The emperor model wouldn’t last long.” (PLC)

“We use a collaborative model in which the pastoral leader projects a vision and works with the parish to achieve it, or at least grow toward it. The pastoral leader makes those decisions that he must make, but seeks input on all major decisions.” (PLC)

“We are moving toward collaborative ministry of pastor, staff, and parishioners. But, I know ‘Father says’ carries the most weight with the most people. We are in a time of transition. Our pastor is very open to input in decision-making and understands the difference between collaboration and delegation. Two staff members have graduated from LIMEX and support collaborative leadership. We are in the early stages of this shift.” (PLC)

“Our leadership model is from the top down with all final decisions made by the rector/pastor with finance committees, trustees, parish council, and staff as advisors.” (D)

“We are collaborative to a point. The pastor gets input and at times needs to make a decision, but rarely does this in isolation. Will (almost always) bring to staff” (PA)

“There is the professional pastoral leadership, as well as the leadership of the councils and the whole community at large. People are very ready to assume the leadership in order to get things done, to offer input, and to assist the good of the whole.” (PA)

“Empowerment; sacramental leadership and companionship models; servant model” (DR)

“Cooperate and collaborate” (DR)

“The language and hope for collaboration are there, yet it is probably more that the pastor is a warm, good, talented pastor who delegates responsibilities to staff.” (DR)

“Collaborative versus consultative; staff and parish council” (DR)

“The pastor is the leader and keeps the vision in front of the congregation. Lay ministry is the key.” (O)

“Parish council and staff get together once a year; commissions and representation on parish council.” (O)

“Pastor/staff vision – share and carry out pastor’s vision. People, when allowed, bring forth and execute excellent ideas and concepts; some collaboration between parishes” (O)

“Depends on the circumstances; mostly collaborative, consultative, and delegated; sometimes executive or consensus.” (O)

“Our ‘best practices’ leadership model is our generations of Faith Core Team which is composed of lay leaders from each of the three small rural parishes. We serve to coordinate and provide resources. The lay core team members develop less on plans and lead the sessions. We integrate a ‘learning’ at each core team meeting which seeks to educate and provide a theological context for the topic we’re addressing.” (O)

Traditional, Hierarchical Model of Leadership

A number of participants indicated, however, that their leadership model is still traditional with a hierarchical structure or approach to leadership dependent upon the pastor as indicated in the following comments:

“Currently we have an empowerment model at work that focuses on the identification of needs and opportunities and the enablement of ministries and ministry leaders. Because the experience of sadness and anger have at these times sometimes been intense, we have also seen and used a more hierarchical model in order to provide for some needed levels of order, direction, and purpose while at the same time attending to such emotions.” (P)

“We have multiple models of leadership, including hierarchical with pastor and deacons as leaders.” (P)

“Benevolent, but firm direction; greater participation and collaboration needed.” (P)

“A strong, well-educated rector who tends to micro-manage, and therefore, offends the other gifted ministers within the parish.” (P)

“Top down, but with a lot of delegation” (PC)

“We see many models. We have a mostly hierarchical leadership in the rural and small parishes. Our hope is for a collaborative/consultative model.” (PC)

“In my personal parish, the leadership model is authoritative (pastor) and collaborative (staff). Some of the staff and most pastoral council members are servant models of leadership.” (DR)

“Authoritarian model; ‘ignore the problems’ model; openness is absent. We are in big trouble. Pastoral staff is paralyzed.” (DR)

“The pastor resides at my parish and he also has a mission parish. This is typical in my area. Frequently, if there is staff, it is a part-time secretary and a part-time DRE who may or may not be paid. The style and ecclesiology of the pastor greatly affects the leadership.” (O)

“Ours is changing. We had a 62-year-old pastor who firmly believed in a collaborative style. Our new pastor (36 years old, ordained 4 years) is more of the ‘trickle down’ type.” (O)

Centered on a Core Team of Professional Staff

A few leaders indicated that their models of parish leadership are heavily influenced by a core team of professional staff as reflected below:

“Pastor; school principal; pastoral associate; DRE; secretary/bookkeeper; liturgical director; multiple volunteer leaders on many, many levels” (P)

“The only strong examples are those that allow the messiness of as close to collaboration as we can get. Many times, people have their own agendas, but that is part of being human.” (P)

“What is collaboration? There are different ways to collaborate. We say we are collaborative, but most is staff driven. However, with a change and reduction in staff, ministry is becoming more collaborative.” (P)

“Committees led by one chair; committees led by two chairs. Pastor as ‘head’; staff as ‘second in command’. Sometimes collaboration; sometimes unilateral decisions by the pastor; pastoral council and finance committee have much influence.” (PA)

“We have a corporate model with pastor as CEO. Pastoral business manager as COO and ecclesial co-pastors (liturgy, formation, outreach, youth) as department heads. Although corporate in structure, the model is one of servant leadership.” (O)

“Collaborative top down; staff driven; ad hoc laity committees” (O)

E. Leadership of the Pastor/Parish Life Coordinator

Symposium participants were asked to describe the model of leadership provided by their pastors and parish life coordinators. In the North Central region, these leadership roles were characterized as strong, centralized leadership; engaging people together to envision the parish of the future; or a role in transition and change.

Strong, Centralized Leader

A number of participants referenced strong centralized leadership as the hallmark of the role of the pastor or parish life coordinator as indicated below:

“The pastor gives expression to the shared identity and mission of the community. He identifies, affirms, and coordinates the gifts within the community. He acts as a conduit of God’s grace and revelation of himself.” (P)

“Pastor sets a vision for the parish. He works in collaboration with the staff. He recognizes and affirms the gifts in the parish. He calls forth gifts and leadership from the parish.” (P)

“I desire to pastor/shepherd the community to a more felt and experienced relationship with God. There are many ways to do this – facilitate them all – find good talented people and let them lead.” (P)

“I must admit, I see myself as a collaborative ombudsman. I hope that I will be more collaborative listener with decisions made in timely fashion.” (P)

“We have a pastoral associate who runs the RCIA, Confirmation Prep Program, and Stephen Ministry. She also oversees the Divorced/Separated Catholics Group and the Adult Education Program.” (P)

“The pastor sets the tone and articulates the vision. He is an encourager, listener, affirmer, and teacher. He is first and foremost our spiritual leader. We are very blessed to have a pastor whose confidence in his role allows him to truly partner with staff to lead our parish toward a spirit-filled community of welcome, love, healing, and wholeness.” (PLC)

“Responsible for all decisions made at the cathedral with assistance from advisors” (D)

“Our pastor likes to teach. His model is instructional and he sees himself as a spiritual guide. He strongly embraces the ‘parish as family’ model. He sees himself as the ‘Dad’ perhaps.” (PA)

“Our pastor is not an extrovert or overt leader. He has an uncanny way of presenting ideas and inviting leadership to emerge from the whole. He is a quiet supporting presence who leads by affirmation rather than initiative and will never hinder or impede what needs to be done.” (PA)

“Pastor who serves his parish” (DR)

“Pastor does not communicate with staff or other parish leaders. He has his secretary or another staff person deliver the message. If a commission or committee doesn’t agree with him, he disbands the committee or they stop meeting.” (DR)

“We do not have a parish life coordinator. Our pastor provides all the parish leadership. He ‘listens’ to those with expertise, but makes all decisions on his own.” (O)

“Pastor is clearly in charge; very concerned about the details.” (O)

“The pastor in consultation with staff sets the overall goals for the parish.” (O)

“Very social, but pastor has final say.” (O)

“Sacramental leadership; spiritual leadership; teaching leadership; ensuring that the vision and mission of the parish are being lived, and resources are being stewarded in a way that reflects our values – coordinating efforts.” (O)

Engaged in Visioning of the Parish (working together)

Still other leaders in the North Central Symposium characterize the leadership of the parish or parish life coordinator as engaging others in visioning the parish of the future. The following comments reflect this more visionary and engaging role of their pastors or parish life coordinators:

“The wider vision of the church in the diocese and world. Supplying varied ideas and goals that can be considered.” (P)

“Collaborative, flexible, and multi-parish; pastor is sacramental, visionary, and evangelical. The pastors are the leaders, but it is a delegated leadership. Because there are so many needs, we have divided up areas of responsibility, but we work together as much as is possible/practical.” (P)

“Setting the tone is critical. We have to welcome joyfully the people of God as our co-workers in the vineyard. We must help in communicating the vision or we will perish.” (P)

“At present, I am attempting to identify and establish a strong pastoral leadership team, as well as cultivate leaders in parish ministry from our membership. I am also trying to develop and root with the help of others a clear vision for our parish that is also clearly consistent with the mission and pastoral goals of our deanery. Finally, I am trying to define my leadership role as more clearly distinct from parish administration.” (P)

Set the tone; leadership helps set the boundaries; vision; parish mission statement” (P)

“Vision to and with council and staff; support of staff skills and gifts; forming community via liturgy, preaching, and pastoral care; accountability of staff to parish vision and staff vision” (P)

“They work together to develop good liturgy, strong communication, and service. They promote programs, such as stewardship – time, talent, and treasure; caring and sharing; Catholic school and CCD program.” (P)

“Helps the parish to look at the larger picture, examine and discern our gifts, engage in ministry (leadership training, etc.), and to see a ‘vision’ based on their mission statement.” (PLC)

“Good vision and direction within limits” (PLC)

“Vision – overall, but shared and developed with parish councils and committees. Sometimes the final decision is up to me, but I want as much input as possible first. I try to set a warm hospitable example for all in parish and community work, welcoming all ages, calling people by name, asking about situations or events in their lives.” (PLC)

“Project vision; call forth the gifts of parishioners; oversee and hire staff, oversee administration, affirm the gifts and contributions of others, coordinate volunteers when necessary because no one else does in a particular situation, enables parishioners’ involvement.” (PLC)

“Has vision for the parish that encompasses the tradition of the parish and the current community. Communal boundaries not narrow at all – inclusive of staff with room to grow.” (PA)

“Vision is about mission for the community. Build bridges to assist the community to be communal and move toward the mission. Provide healthy sense of identity and boundaries. Profoundly sets a tone about welcome, spirit, security, helpfulness, openness, etc.” (DR)

“Pastor who provides the vision and invites the gifts of members of the community to carry it out” (DR)

“Empowers staff and lay people to walk with him.” (DR)

Role in Transition and Change

Still other participants indicated that their pastors or parish life coordinators currently play a role in some type of transition or change as indicated below:

“Mostly a model of collaboration grounded in hospitality, yet what I see as my strengths, others may not believe I bring.” (PLC)

“We have a lot of transition. Parish needs someone to set the vision, set boundaries, and make decisions.” (D)

“I’ve seen a spectrum of leadership styles. A life-giving style involves and enables the community. There is vision and fostering of responsibility and ownership. A non-life-giving style does otherwise, perhaps from the continuum of laissez faire to authoritative.” (O)

“Concepts without adequate communication” (O)

F. Staff Leadership

Symposium participants were asked to describe the type of leadership provided by their pastoral staff. Many described this leadership as a team of people involved in planning and program implementation, while others characterized their staff as empowering and facilitating the gifts of others to emerge. A few participants indicated that their parish staff is hindered by various factors, including limited resources or pastor dominated communities.

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

Among those participants who described their pastoral staff as heavily involved in planning and program implementation, the following comments reflect their staff roles:

“There is a very small staff. Still, many people provide leadership in the diverse and varied aspects of parish life.” (P)

“Model collaboration among themselves – being able to work together, not ‘my department is more important than your department’” (P)

“In their various ministries, they are the leaders – together they meet monthly and look for ways to support one another and offer advice and encouragement.” (P)

“Practical implementation of ideas accepted by pastor and parishioners. Also offers innovative approaches and goals to be pursued.” (P)

“We provide support for many of the organizations, such as chaplains for groups or advisors for others. We have a good sense of mission and ‘overall picture’ which helps keep organizations on track.” (P)

“A lot of day-to-day stuff is delegated to the staff. The priests depend heavily on the staff for feedback, suggestions, advice, and counsel. We have a monthly meeting with the entire staff to review, plan, and pray.” (P)

“Staff was servant to the pastor prior to my arrival. Now I asked them to be servant to the people.” (P)

“We have so many diverse experiences from our staff that we are blessed to bring these to the table. We have a process and planning leadership, creative and symbolic leadership, and catechetical leadership.” (P)

“It’s small, but does well, especially the deacon and DRE.” (P)

“Implements, advises, and plans all operational, program, and pastoral needs.” (D)

“Liturgy; education; youth development; music, and service; parish staff consists of Director of Religious Education, CYO-Youth Minister, Music Director, Liturgy Coordinator, Pastoral Care, Deacon, and the parish priest” (D)

“Staff is task driven.” (PC)

“We provide leadership on different projects. He can be hands-off. We bring visioning ideas – for example, ‘Reclaiming Our Mission’ came from two staff members and at first he disagreed, but then supported 100%.” (PA)

“Our parish staff is experts in our own field – silo model; consultants or advisors; share the load of all parish work” (PA)

“The staff are the initiators and often the ones who will be the catalysts for what needs to be changed or improved. We are continually assessing the needs of the parish and in dialogue with the parish council seeking how to best respond to these needs. We also keep the vision of church ahead of people and call people back to that vision in what we do and how we do it.” (PA)

“The staff has the healthy leadership role. They are a great resource in their areas of expertise. They are all very pastoral.” (DR)

“There is a team of parish religious education coordinators and school staff. The focus is youth and adults to a smaller extent. Otherwise, the bulk of the leadership arises from the community; perhaps for a season of time as the parish council, council president, or perhaps as the wise sage from the community or perhaps for the knowledge/experience for something specific.” (O)

“Staff are specialists – very concerned about their own program areas – work with commissions.” (O)

“The staff as co-pastors set goals within their ministry areas that help achieve the overall goals set by the pastor. They are responsible for their ministry areas on a day-to-day basis.” (O)

“Parish mission statement; staff mission statement; staff function primarily as specialists” (O)

“Front line responsibility for their ministry; dreaming and visioning anew. Communicating/collaborating with other ministry staff and parishioners” (O)

Empowering, Facilitating, and Allowing Gifts to Emerge

The following comments reflect the views of those participants who experience their staff as empowering and facilitating the gifts of others to emerge:

“Calls forth the gifts of laity; education/formation of laity in service to others; supports ministries; holds ministries accountable to parish vision” (P)

“The leadership role of our staff is primarily now one of empowerment and enablement of others as volunteers or employees in the educational, social, and pastoral ministries of our parish, specifically by providing education, formation, training, and support for ministry, as well as recruitment and screening in many areas.” (P)

“Staff should invite participation and help parishioners learn and succeed in ministry. Staff too often finds it easier to do it themselves.” (P)

“Our staff is a resource in creating the confidence in the laity to be a ministering community. By modeling our response to our baptismal call and call to ecclesial ministry, we may inspire others. Staff is another set of eyes and ears to understand parish needs and recognize the giftedness of parish members. I see my role as leaven in my community giving rise to the vibrancy characterized by trust, commitment, and cohesion. Parish staff is a catalyst, empowerer, and organizer.” (PLC)

“A reality check for the PA and SP -- They provide us with some truth. Hopefully, staff brings out the gifts of the parish. They are sounding boards. They provide creativity and direction.” (PLC)

“Vision of servant leaders – ‘I am with them on the journey. We are church together.’ Calling forth gifts within the parish; inviting individuals to participate in various ministries.” (PLC)

“Modeling of collaboration, but many parishes struggle with micro-manager pastors. I believe the mission of our office is the empowering and calling forth the gifts of lay leadership.” (PC)

“Our parish is a growing suburban parish where the boss (pastor) has a number of specialists (staff members) handling ministry responsibilities.” (DR)

“Given free reign within the realm of their area of expertise” (DR)

“Staff provides experience, formation, and connection to the broader parish community. Their main role is to find and invite others to share in the work and ministry of the parish and in the ministry beyond the church doors.” (O)

Hindered By Various Factors (pastor dominated, understaffed, etc.)

A few symposium participants indicated that their staff leadership is hindered by a number of factors, including limited resources or role constraints based upon the wishes of the pastor as reflected in the following comments:

“There is no real staff. We have a part-time music director (on weekends), part-time custodian, full-time PLA, part-time office manager – all listen and share perceptions.” (PLC)

“Not broad enough; confined to silos” (PLC)

“We only have a part-time secretary, a part-time bookkeeper, a part-time custodian, and a part-time sacramental minister – along with a full-time PLC/PA. The leadership of the first three is minimal. They act as support staff almost exclusively, yet know they are a vital part of the team.” (PLC)

“‘Silo’ ministry – they control their own kingdom.” (DR)

“Staff members like me are allowed limited leadership appropriate to their position, such as time management and deciding how to implement decisions made by the pastor. It didn’t always used to be like this and I am having difficulty sometimes with this adjustment.” (O)

“Dedicated, but a lot like the mushroom (they are in the dark). Shape and mold the object and train the leaders.” (O)

“Does what the pastor tells them to do.” (O)

“I question the word ‘staff’. We minister in three small rural parishes in an economically depressed area. We are subsidized by our religious community. We function as ‘staff’, but are not paid as staff. Our goal is to develop lay leaders to assume the role we currently play in the community. We always have that in our mindset to ‘work ourselves out of a job’ with the provision that a lay leader will come in faith to call forth and coordinate the gifts in the parishes.” (O)

G. Leadership of the Parish Community

Pastoral leaders were asked to describe the ways their parish communities and members are involved in the overall ministries of the parish. In the mainstream, symposium participants described their members as active and engaged communities of leadership. A few described their members as engaged communities with some significant transitions, yet others characterize their community members as passive and not well engaged.

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

The preponderance of participants in the North Central region identified their parishioners as actively engaged in the leadership of the parish as reflected in the following comments:

“In both the parishes I serve, the community possesses a very strong sense of their identity, history, and mission. This deeply held identity shapes, in a sense, the leadership as to what matters and the direction of the community.” (P)

“The community votes (leads) with its feet and pocketbook; this tells us what isn’t working. Sometimes they bring back good ideas from other parishes.” (P)

“Most of the events and organizations are run by the laity. They know they have a green light and seem to rise to the occasion for the various positions.” (P)

“There are many organizations that seek to be of service to the parish – provide social and service opportunities. The people are asked for input. Surveys send invitation to join and be involved.” (P)

“There are a lot of initiatives undertaken by the community. The CRHP is run by non-staff individuals, the Legion of Mary, food bank, prison visits, and so many other ministries are ones envisioned, planned, and operated by individuals or groups within the community.” (P)

“Identify needs or issues in the parish community.” (P)

“We are formed by this community of resources. We listen and they will show us the way of holiness and wisely learn to complete God’s will.” (P)

“The community is the ‘soul’ of the cluster. They will provide the timing and insight which will guide pastor/staff.” (P)

“Calling forth gifts of fellow parishioners; helping to set vision of cluster and assisting peers in owning it and critiquing it.” (P)

“Community leaders with their insights, their gifts and skills, making impact within the parish and outside the parish” (P)

“Shines!” (P)

“Initiate discussion on perceived needs; studies, discusses, discerns, concrete plans that the parishioners will take on with guidance from PLC.” (PLC)

“Good at expressing perceived needs” (PLC)

“Once a committee has met, shared vision, set a goal, and decided how to achieve it, they really take it and run. It is theirs, not mine.” (PLC)

“They provide the faith – faithfulness. They provide various roles that emerge: RCIA, Catechists, experts in finance, vision and goal setting. They are the church. They lead by their examples of faith and service.” (PLC)

“The community often reveals the needs of the parish. With a conduit to express needs and solutions, the resourcefulness of the people is unleashed. By their giftedness, the community becomes more than a sum of its parts. The definition of leader is one having followers. Sometimes a leader may say, ‘These are my people – I must follow!’ Leader/follower, a living relationship in dialogue with pastor and staff give and take. The community goes places together much more than when effort is divided.” (PLC)

“The councils and committees are strong. They offer many good recommendations regarding parish direction and organize most parish activities.” (PLC)

“Implements, advises, and brings to completion all programs and activities, both spiritual and social.” (D)

“Provides leadership in the areas of K of C, Bible Studies, St. Vincent DePaul, monthly service groups, CCD, Catholic school, First Communion, Confirmation, Reconciliation, Baptism, Finance Committee, Grounds and Buildings, Spiritual Development, Lenten Program, Parish Retreats, Right to Life” (D)

“Legion of Mary members visit the homebound, new mothers in the area (Catholic and other); Knights of Columbus – anointing Mass supper, youth events, vocation support; diocesan women; identify gifts and resources – still calling forth the gifts of others” (D)

“Parish council leadership is ‘checks and balances’. They have a grant for theological speakers. They lead many peace and social justice initiatives.” (PA)

“They are the listening presence of the community and are able to bring forth needs that need to be addressed, as well as the body that consistently ask...how are we going to be church...the Body of Christ here in this time...in this place?” (PA)

“Community seeks out new areas of social concern and responsibility.” (PC)

“Tasks that need to be done or vision, planning, or mission are done best in the community. We have an educated – talented community.” (DR)

“Consultative consensus in decision-making; many activities and lay ministers” (DR)

“Staff developed – turned over to laity; broad outlook into larger community; five-year vision per neighborhood groups” (O)

“The community provides leadership as volunteer ministers within the parish ministry areas and in identifying new ministry opportunities.” (O)

“When allowed – go ahead and serve and meet needs.” (O)

“Consultative, advisory leadership; sought and received by staff with respect for the wisdom to be found in community members, but recognizing that responsibility will lie with staff.” (O)

Engaged Community in Transition

A few participants identified their parishioners as engaged; however, their parishes are experiencing significant transition at this time as indicated below:

“Much like Chicago, the parish has had very abusive pastors before me. They survived despite the leadership of the previous pastor as opposed to growing because of it.” (P)

“At present, this is not as developed as I hope will be true in several more years, especially through the work of the advisory councils.” (P)

“Parish was founded 14 years ago on the model of volunteerism. Everyone was expected to get involved. It worked beautifully when there were 200 households – impossible now at 2500 households, but there does continue to be a spirit of volunteerism.” (PA)

“Many parishioners serve on lay ministry teams, but do not necessarily provide leadership.” (PC)

Passive and Not Well Engaged

A few pastoral leaders indicate that their parishioners are passive and not well engaged in the leadership of the parish as indicated below:

“The parish community at large has very little leadership of the entire parish. The craft group ladies run the craft group, the CCW ladies run the CCW, and the KC run the KC, but do not in general provide leadership for the parish as a whole.” (O)

“In many cases, people take on the ministering roles to each other without any formal structure or involvement from staff.” (O)

“Mixed – older folks freely give input, but the pastor making the decisions is accepted. Younger people just do ‘stuff’ and have little decision-making input – they don’t see the value of it.” (O)

H. Intentionality of the Parish Leadership Model

Symposium participants were asked why their parish leadership models work the way they do. In addition, they were asked how intentional they are in their particular parish leadership model and approach to building their parish communities.

A number of participants indicated their leadership models are driven by the leadership of the pastor and staff. Others indicated their leadership models are an intentional model for parish life based on some active visioning approach involving members. A few indicated their parish leadership models are a result of necessity and present needs.

Still other participants indicated that their parish leadership model reflects a sense of openness and involvement in parish life embraced by members of the community. Finally, a few indicated their parish leadership models are not intentional, but they are in the process of working in that direction.

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

A number of participants indicated that their leadership models are intentional due to the role of the pastor and parish staff in providing direction. The following comments reflect this perspective:

“As pastor, I attempt to actively identify persons and their place in the community – to bless and affirm. I intentionally seek to give voice to the living reality of the Gospel as I see it ‘acted out’ in the parish community.” (P)

“Because we still have three full-time priests, two deacons, and religious sisters. Our staff is not as large as other parishes (despite having over 3000 families). Our people are well-educated, so there is not a shortage of capable volunteers.” (P)

“Through prayer and mutual accountability between pastor and staff, between staff and ministers in a systemic corporate model” (P)

“Because it seems to be moving positively; I am continually meeting and asking for input.” (P)

“Leadership in our parish works this way best because people who want to be involved in these areas are involved voluntarily, not assigned. Thus, they are doing something their heart is behind, not just a job, but a passion. Proactive rather than reactive” (P)

“The models seem to work because the church is both hierarchical, as well as democratic. We are all gifted in the Holy Spirit, as well as the charism that flows from Holy Orders. If we keep Christ at the center, we will live in his kingdom, not our own.” (P)

“Over the past three years, I have worked with the leadership to understand that: 1) There are other models available (other than what Father says); 2) Their baptismal call gives them rights and responsibilities; and 3) We are called to work together and that this is their parish community and my role is to guide them.” (PLC)

“We have to rely on the work of staff and parishioners to carry out our mission as church. We went from a full-time resident pastor and a full-time pastoral associate to a full-time PLC with a sacramental minister who comes from a priory 40 miles away. But, I also think my own personality just naturally leans toward collaboration and combined efforts.” (PLC)

“Our diocese has a long tradition of having smaller parishes led by a pastoral administrator, assisted by a sacramental minister. It also works this way because the priest and I both believe in collaborative leadership.” (PLC)

“No resident priest is present. The leadership is based on my direction. My model has been to show the council and the community the teachings of the church, the Vatican II documents, and then ask them to respond. This has led to a lot of discussion – a move to renewal and revitalization of the parish. Father has been a key part of that in his strong preaching and pastoral care.” (PLC)

“The bishop provides the tone of leadership.” (PC)

“Consistent, clear vision from a pastor who practices what he preaches about the parish, decision-making, essential communication and transparency, and value of baptismal identity.” (DR)

“It’s the model that we know. The operating paradigm by the ‘pew people’ generally is a hierarchy of priest, sister, and lay.” (O)

“Pastor has a vision and utilizes and empowers staff and parish to see it to fruition.” (O)

“Leadership; structure; formation” (O)

“We work smarter and more effectively together than we do separately. It is respectful of various gifts and talents brought by each. It is faithful to canonical and civil law.” (O)

“Uniqueness of the pastor, great vision, an outstanding teacher, a true disciple (disciplined follower) of Jesus Christ, great homilist, excellent liturgist, creative juices” (O)

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

In addition, some parish leaders indicated that their models of parish leadership are intentionally chosen as a result of a parish vision or process to create a vision. The following comments reflect this viewpoint:

“Parish leaders (ordained, staff, councils) wanted to be proactive and develop an intentional approach to pastoral planning that we may not desire ideally, but can live with practically – instead of having one imposed that would possibly be very unfavorable.” (P)

“As we set up the new parish council and related committees and sub-committees, we are trying to create a structure that promotes and facilitates leadership at all levels.” (P)

“Our parish council works on the strategic plan every few years. This helps us to stay on course and plan for the future.” (P)

“Coming to this symposium means looking for better, proactive and responsive ways to lead. I intend to grow. The staff intends to grow, adapt, and change to meet the needs.” (P)

“My pastoral approach has been to try to form a vision that is broader than our parish. We send our ministers to national conferences and training so that we sharpen our ministry and share our gifts with others, as well as learn from them.” (P)

“Because parish structures support the vision; Holy Spirit active in parish leadership and parish structures; realize the mission of the church, the mission of evangelization” (P)

“I believe that the intentionality of this effort is most evident in the consensus work that is now underway within our staff and with our pastoral council, school board, and finance and administration council – to understand and commit to this model. By early next year, we will have spent over 9 months describing and discussing this approach to leadership, it’s organizational structure and expectations, and the hoped for outcomes within our parish community. We also expect that by next spring to have in place our ‘next generation’ of councils and to begin further group discussion of our parish mission and ministries.” (P)

“Ongoing formation, homilies, written articles...always trying to act collaboratively” (PLC)

“Vision and pray together (every meeting, Bible Study, class, etc. starts with prayer. Communication (parish newsletter, the educational part of weekly bulletin, letters to committees as follow-up to meetings). Transparency in finance – quarterly financial reports and page of detailed explanations; commissions/committees responsible for various areas of outreach ministry; proactive (emerging plans for the present and future).” (PLC)

“I consciously seek the counsel of the committees and councils in my parish. I know I need the participation of many in order for this parish to be vital and alive.” (PLC)

“I have added more discernment and self-reflection to my prayer life. I then listen to others for understanding. I invite other parishioners into leadership and affirm them. I build rapport with my pastor realizing trust must be present for collaboration. (I am a lay pastoral minister). I promote the idea of our vision and mission being the source of our staff ministries and I am mindful of that. I realize someone must make the decision, but I offer my input and take the initiative in my role.” (PLC)

“Transparency of finances; proactive versus reactive; lay collaboration as vision and prayer; priest collaboration – established vision that the people carry out.” (D)

“Through our parish strategic plan, drawn up with the full participation of the parish community and with Archdiocesan community input” (D)

“Staff participation and parish council participation in almost all decisions when major things are happening; listening sessions with the community; we bring in facilitators.” (PA)

“Our parish name is St. Vincent DePaul. The founding pastor and leaders always tried to keep the spirit of St. Vincent himself as part of the focus of everything in the parish. There has always been a commitment to the poor and those in need. ‘Volunteerism’ is based on building relationships...not just acts of charity.” (PA)

“We are somewhat intentional in that we have continually empowered parish councils and committees to assume a more consultative, vision making, and planning role. It has been a long process, but there is a greater ownership among the council and the people at large.” (PA)

“We have three parishes that are ‘single entities’ and it is an evolving process to bring these parishes along to work with a common vision and purpose. It involves planning, consultation, collaboration, and implementation. It works presently; however, it continues to be developed.” (PA)

“We are training deacons and lay ministers together to develop a greater sense of collaboration and less categorization of roles. More of a team approach. Also working to acknowledge all who serve as leaders in the church – space given to PLC’s (PLA’s) in the Diocesan Directory. Well-articulated, written policies and procedures for PLC’s (PLA’s). Formal installation is important.” (DR)

“I am very intentional about understanding other perspectives even when not agreeing. I really try to model collaboration and empowering others. I invite being challenges if not living up to this.” (O)

“We are intentional by receiving the direction and challenges of others (staff and parishioners) when it is offered in a spirit of charity by people I respect. By agreeing to work within structures rather than be a ‘lone ranger’ or an ‘imposer’.” (O)

Necessity and Present Needs (based on local needs; always been done that way)

Some participants indicated that necessity and present needs are often the driving factors in their parish leadership models as reflected in their comments below:

“It is a small community with a very directed mission.” (P)

“There is too much for any one individual or group to do (lay or ordained). If we don’t work together (collaborate) and not micro-manage (delegate), we couldn’t meet the needs of our parishioners/community. For example, leaders within our Hispanic parishioners asked if they could start with a bible study and have a weekly charismatic prayer meeting. We provide the space in the parish center and chapel for them, but not having any fluent (2 of us priests do the Mass in Spanish) people on staff, this is the only way this could happen.” (P)

“When we had strong staff with good ideas, I let them lead. Now that they are no longer on staff, I work with who is here and find people to help to accomplish the task at hand. With different staff and fewer staff, there is more input and leadership from lay people.” (P)

“Required to work this way temporarily by the situation” (P)

“In part due to necessity, in part due to skills of pastor, staff and parishioners. It has proven effective for us. Diocese promotes collaborative approach.” (P)

“The model of pastor directing and laity following works because people have not experienced another way. Because of education of laity and shortage of priests, laity in our parish has been given more freedom and responsibility. The people are becoming more accustomed to seeing laity in new roles, such as presiding at Communion Services, Stations of the Cross, funeral vigils, etc. There is a growing recognition of the call to be priest, prophet and king. As we as staff work from our parish vision and mission, we will more naturally call others into ministry.” (PLC)

“Because it has proven to be effective, adjusting to new pastors and parish strategic plans” (D)

“It’s a standard model that’s been that way for years.” (DR)

“Our parish is in an area of our state where many people retire. Thus our population is always changing and hardly anybody is a lifelong member. At the same time, we are getting new retirees as members. We are also experiencing a huge growth of families. We are in a state of transition and are in the midst of a capital campaign to build a new church. All these factors can make for a somewhat divisive congregation. Through what he calls the ‘new evangelization’, our pastor hopes to change that.” (O)

“Frequently operate on a moment-to-moment basis; recognize the limitations; communication to staff and assembly lacking” (O)

“As the parish has grown, it has become necessary to adopt a corporate style of management in order to adequately steward the resources of the church.” (O)

Openness and Involvement in Parish Life (Embraced by the community)

A few parish leaders indicated that their parish models are more reflective of a spirit of openness and involvement in parish life building a sense of belonging and community. This is reflected in the comments below:

“I believe that a model working in this way offers the best opportunity possible for utilizing the competence and experience of the pastoral staff and the greatest hope for identifying and calling forth leaders for parish ministry from the parish.” (P)

“The parish is highly blue collar with some professionals. Some economic split (rich/poor) so the challenge is to build community and a sense of being welcomes and affirmed. The staff do hands-on ministry.” (P)

“Outreach is always the ‘heart’ of parish life. We are a very welcoming parish. We also try to be an inclusive parish.” (PA)

“As an office, we are working at the importance of communication, shared planning, and mutual support.” (PC)

“We are moving into a model where the leadership is gathering, forming, sending, and nourishing the laity to live their call to be Christ in the world. All of our ministry areas are focused in this direction.” (O)

Not Intentional (but working toward becoming intentional)

A small number of participants in the North Central symposium indicated that their parish leadership models are not intentional or that they are experiencing some difficulty. This is reflected in the following comments:

“I think we still have a long way to go in intentionally engaging all members of the parishes and engaging the pastoral council to follow a collaborative process. Communication still is an issue. What I think we have communicated isn’t always perceived by the rest of the community as strongly communicated.” (PLC)

“It keeps tending to be top down, even though there is the intention to hear and open up. The result is enough frustration to go around. We have not done a good job at being intentional. We need to have listening valued and allow people to see more response to expressed needs.” (PLC)

“I think we need to become intentional (we are not now). I think we operate from ‘the Spirit will provide’ and forego the work of leadership.” (O)

“Offering suggestions and asking questions, but you give up after a while.” (O)

I. Emerging Future Models of Pastoral Leadership

Symposium participants were asked to identify the future models of pastoral leadership that are emerging in their faith communities. The majority of participants described these models as increased reliance on lay involvement. Still others indicated that small faith-based communities are an important emerging model for their faith communities. A few participants also identified their parish leadership models as in transition or experiencing significant change.

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

The majority of participants described their parish leadership models as increasingly one of lay involvement and dependence on the laity rooted in their baptismal call to ministry. The following comments reflect this priority:

“Probably parishes administered by laity with priest or sacramental chaplain to parish staff and parish leaders. Primarily pastor/priest to spiritually govern mission of the parish rather than materially administrative with pastorally trained laity in different areas of responsibility.” (P)

“Inter-parish cooperation in essential areas of ministry” (P)

“We are seeing less of the priest running things and more educated laity helping organize events.” (P)

“A continuing collaboration of priests and lay ministers” (P)

“I see the community beginning to surface much of the leadership, especially in prayer leaders and pastoral ministers.” (P)

“The model that seems to be emerging is that of stewards of the church.” (P)

“A more active lay leadership in the different committees not depending simply on staff directing, but staff facilitating.” (P)

“Two deacon candidates from our parish; more parishioners trained in theology to take greater role in formation, especially RCIA. Youth are increasingly forming their peers.” (P)

“Future models now being attempted; in addition, we are also putting into place a deanery council that will be linked in purpose to all of our parish pastoral councils. It is my hope that such councils will develop an ‘internal dynamic’ much like that of a neighborhood association, since many of our members energetically want to be Catholic, want to remain in the community, rather than move and want our values of faith to make a difference in the community.” (P)

“I see more lay expertise in areas of management, finance, and education and allowing the priest to be a shepherd and spiritual leader, not a manager.” (D)

“Leaders are beginning to open their eyes and ears to the needs of the parish and local community. They are beginning to brainstorm, propose workable scenarios, and then take on the work of making it happen. (Part of this comes from the fact that I cannot handle another project at this point and I’m willing to give them support and trust them to do it well.)” (PLC)

“We are only 17 months into our new leadership of PLC/sacramental minister/canonical pastor. Of the two areas in the diocese to have a PLC, we are the first to have a lay woman. Our parishes see themselves as laying groundwork for the future. I think that calls us to regularly evaluate what we are doing, why and how. We all want to do it well – not only for ourselves, but for other parishes in the diocese who will undergo change in the near future.” (PLC)

“The collaborative model is growing among the staff. I suspect the people in the pew often see me as ‘helping Father out’. Paradigm shifts take time. Our pastor is very collaborative.” (PLC)

“There is continued collaboration with pastoral administrator and sacramental priest in consultation with the pastoral council. We need to increase staff response and engage the community in leadership.” (PLC)

“As we begin to share our priests with two others parishes, the priest will take on a more sacramentally focused role. We will see more collaboration between the three parishes and more shared staff positions.” (PC)

“We are empowering lay leaders with education and formation.” (PC)

Inter-parish collaboration; parochialism/silo-busting; consensus” (DR)

“Having worked with youth on a deanery level, I see the need for parishes to work together to train and hire qualified personnel/leaders.” (O)

“We as a parish, poor as we are, made a commitment this week to subsidize two lay persons to attend the ‘Fashion Me A People’ Conference in Orlando in January, a conference sponsored by the Center for Ministry Development. I see this as an opportunity to nurture the leadership potential of two people who have been and probably always will be leaders in their church. These two may be the one or two leaders who follow us. However, because we are in a poor and depressed parish, we may need richer, more

prosperous parishes to subsidize or assist financially poorer parishes like ours to pay a lay leader.” (O)

“Collaborative complementary leadership between the office of the clergy, the lay ecclesial ministry, and the office of the laity” (O)

“Priest stepping back from ‘front-line’ pastoral ministry to a greater degree than most places.” (O)

Small Faith-Based Communities

A few participants also indicated that small faith-based communities are significant elements of their emerging models of pastoral leadership as reflected in the following comments:

“Moving from clustered parishes to area faith communities (two clustered parishes join with two other clustered parishes to become a community of communities.” (P)

“Our diocesan plan is ‘Area Faith Communities’, a number of parishes with one parish pastoral council (individual finance councils) and some form of shared ministerial staff. This model is just beginning.” (P)

“Small faith-sharing groups (several are going very well). More efforts to be justice-focused, as well as charitable. Women in professional ministry roles are working to teach the community about lay ecclesial ministry (it’s not easy!)” (PA)

“We are becoming part of a four-parish area faith community with two priests and two PA’s. The goal is to eliminate duplication of some things and to maximize the resources of all parishes for the good of all parishioners.” (PLC)

A Model in Transition or Experiencing Change

Some participants also identified their pastoral leadership models as in transition or experiencing significant change due to community demographics or changes in parish leadership. The following comments reflect this reality:

“Perhaps the frustration we are experiencing will force more open and responsive pastoring.” (PLC)

“Outreach ministries to the diverse ethnic communities settling in and around the Cathedral, addressing particularly the Hispanic and among communities.” (D)

“That all depends on our new pastor and what he insists on changing.” (PA)

“We are anxious for a new pastor who will be collaborative, address problems openly, and deal with people in a pastoral manner.” (DR)

“Shared ministry with neighboring parish; for us to survive and thrive, it will depend on greater collaboration and less parochial way of thinking and acting.” (DR)

“Revitalize parish neighborhoods; stronger, deeper, more varied faith formation; hope to incorporate a ‘witness model’ to stimulate and create a community of disciples” (O)

“Limited – The pastor doesn’t see how he ‘manages’ and we’re starting to see a drop-off in volunteering and people signing up for spiritual formation programs.” (O)

III. PARISH BEST PRACTICES:

After hearing a second set of case studies outlining individual examples from local parishes, participants were asked to describe and discuss the best practices that are evident in their parish communities.

A. Relationship of Total Ministering Community to Healthy Parishes

Overwhelmingly, participants in the North Central Symposium indicated an essential link between a total ministering community and healthy parishes.

Essential Link between a Total Ministering Community and Healthy Parishes

The following comments reflect consensus on this connection between a total ministering community and health parishes:

“No choice – without working together, they won’t survive.” (P)

“The church of the past, present, and future will continue to depend on such ministry.” (P)

“It will be essential.” (P)

“This is a necessity. We must work together.” (P)

“It is clear that this is what we are called to do. I think this is the practical application of the universal call to holiness.” (P)

“I believe it is a given, unless we simply what to be content with small sacramental communities that are not highly ministerial. However, I am afraid that there may be a growing ‘disconnect’ between many bishops and other church leaders on this point.” (P)

“It seems clear that the dependence of healthy parishes on the ‘ministering’ of various parties in the parish is not equal with all. Some have more influence. Clearly, the parish life coordinator or the pastor has the opportunity to exert more influence than others.” (P)

“Parish Council as visioning body; staff creates and implements staff vision that supports parish vision” (P)

“Need to evangelize the ‘pew sitters’.” (P)

“We must recognize the gifts of all the baptized. Our focus must shift out to the world. The idea of shared ministry must take hold in every faith community.” (P)

“To a large extent! We have to bond together to do the work of the kingdom. We are all enabled then to grow in holiness.” (P)

“Parishes will become extinct if this does not occur.” (PLC)

“The only hope for the church is the general adoption of a new vision with new and diverse models of ministry.” (PLC)

“My goal in ministry is to co-create the Kingdom of God. I do that in relationship with others. The above appears to be the only way transformation personally and globally will be effective. Passivity does not work in a pluralistic, secular culture – we must be the Body of Christ consciously to heal.” (PLC)

“To a great extent, parishes of the future will depend on a total ministering community. As populations grow in some areas and greatly decline in other regions, as the number of clergy diminishes, we will need to think in new ways and engage the gifts of all.” (PLC)

“With a more educated laity, fewer ordained leaders, greater diversity, and larger faith communities – it is the best way to have vibrant parishes.” (PLC)

“I would say that the only way to have a healthy parish will be to be a community that utilizes total ministering – a reality of compassionate servant leaders who work in cooperation with one another. Staff will need to be well-educated. Parishioners will need to be well formed. All will be called out of the waters of baptism to serve.” (PLC)

“Yes – we have no choice.” (D)

“Completely” (D)

“Total ministry and a collaborative effort on the part of the whole church leadership, along with the parish” (D)

“A healthy staff will be essential in order to have a healthy and vibrant community. I loved the models we heard in the symposium.” (PA)

“Totally...I think one of the ‘gaps’ in present leadership is that there often is not a continuity of planning and visioning and is spearheaded by pastor and staff. Folks in the pews don’t have a clean sense of where we are going and this is the how and why, so when there is new pastoral leadership, often there is a deviation in purpose and intent. For the ongoing health...this totality must be present.” (PA)

“The more this is achieved, the more ‘healthy and vibrant’ a parish will be.” (PA)

“The responsibilities are growing and a new level of cooperation and delegation will be vital.” (PC)

“It is absolutely necessary. The parish of the future must take a look at alternative ways of running them.” (PC)

“It will be essential. Without them, we will perish. We have already witnessed parishes that thrive with team leadership and sadly seen those that are dying...for some it is a self-fulfilling prophecy.” (DR)

“We are completely dependent upon this model if parishes are to survive.” (DR)

To exactly the same extent that healthy parishes have always depended on this, i.e., complementarity of roles, fundamental identity of community is Eucharistic/prophetic, all the gifts are used, no needs are overlooked. See Acts of the Apostles” (DR)

“The complexity of social injustices and bringing about the Kingdom will require us to work together. As we become more globally minded and educated, we will expect more. The church, in order to be relevant in people’s lives, will be challenged to grow.” (O)

“Parishes are absolutely dependent upon the leadership working together. We are reminded that ministry is to, with, by, and for the people.” (O)

“For the ‘long haul’ working together is a must – with strong charismatic leadership, individual leadership effort can succeed, but it won’t be institutionalized and will suffer with change of leadership.” (O)

“With the clergy shortage, it will be the only way for parishes to survive to embrace this model.” (O)

“Completely” (O)

“I think it’s the only way – practically and theologically.” (O)

“Obviously, can only enhance it, but if one element is missing, I believe a parish can still be healthy.” (O)

B. Best Practices of Parish Leadership

Pastoral leaders were asked to identify the best practices they experience in building vibrant faith communities. These best practices include a commitment to collaboration and shared ministry; active listening and sharing of information within and beyond the parish; an emphasis on prayer, spirituality, and faith formation; and hospitable and welcoming communities.

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

A significant number of participants indicated that parish best practices in building faith communities are largely based upon a commitment to collaboration and shared ministry as defined in the following comments:

“Leadership that is invitational and creates space for the initiative of others; leadership that is relational – facilitating the giving of gifts and the receiving of the gifts of others; respect and trust mark this practice. Leadership that prays together – to engage ministry as a team is very energizing!” (P)

“Collaborative, complementary – not competitive or exclusive and too often defined as what it is not. Observable objectives and goals; pastoral council went to committee with vision building faith-based community versus social club/cliue – personal invitation.” (P)

“Collaborative ministry – also, small church communities where the faith can be shared is important. They must, however, be connected to the larger parish/church.” (P)

“Shared ministry – clarity in how things are done. All have gifts – we all know we have gifts. Pastor not threatened to share ministry.” (P)

“Vision agreed upon modified by parish leadership and parish with structure that animates gifts of parishioners or use gifts in support of each other and for world outside of parish – faith community to be vibrant must reach out beyond parish into the community to those in and out of parish boundaries always respecting parish charism and discerning individual parishioners gifts; assuming good affirmative honest relationships entered in Eucharist, education and formation, and mission.” (P)

“Leadership that enables people in general to share ministry, not just church professionals; volunteer commitment or shared ministry; calling, forming, supporting” (P)

“Prayer and central nature of Eucharist, as well as Mass and the Eucharistic nature of the people of God and the necessity of their active participation; gifts to the common good” (P)

“Personal and invitational leadership; using pastoral imagination; peer ministry that flows from communion; goal-oriented; clarity of roles; mutual trust” (P)

“Consultative process; trust and delegation of ministries; understanding different ways of exercising authority; know where the ‘bus’ is going – direction of the mission; project a vision that everyone knows and understands; ability and willingness to challenge and handle conflict; collaboration of the parish team – modeling it for parishioners; finding people’s gifts; training leaders from within the parish” (P)

“Attitude – think of opportunities not obstacles; communicate vertically and horizontally; deal with conflict in healthy ways; be accountable and transparent to all” (PLC)

“Trust of the pastor in delegation of ministries, tasks, etc.; consultation with parish leaders; stated vision that all can understand; ability and willingness to challenge people and be OK with conflict; discovery of giftedness of the community; training/formation of leadership; appreciation – express it and do it!” (PLC)

“Do a ‘gift inventory’ rather than a ‘ministry survey’. Pastor continually projects the vision and uses delegated authority rather than all on shoulders of priest/pastor; good communication; sharing resources across parish boundaries (area faith communities)” (PLC)

“There are many – it seems intentionality to offer self as a transparent conduit of the Spirit of God that is manifest in loving, healing, compassion, honesty lived in cooperation with others holding a shared vision that energizes the mission.” (PLC)

“Priests and pastoral administrators who trust their people – empowering them to do the work of the Gospel -- best practices include collaboration, discernment, trust, dialogue, listening, communication, and care of one another.” (PLC)

“Consultative; willing to delegate; parish understanding of four types of decision-making: executive, delegative, consultative, and consensus; buying into a common vision; ability and willingness to challenge people; finding people’s gifts and promoting own people to parish leadership roles.” (D)

“Empower/enable; define the vision; staff cannot become another level” (D)

“Communication; effective leadership; vision or mission statement; effective pastoral care” (D)

“The examples given were great! I love the model of collaborative leadership. Father’s trusting that the staff will make some right decisions; lay ecclesial ministry is allowed to flourish.” (PA)

“Theological reflection; dinner with the pastor or staff; programs or experiences which help people discern their gifts/charisms and how God is calling them to live the Gospel.” (PA)

“I see an expanding role of parish priests to take on a sacramental role and the coordinated efforts of more staff and volunteers to assure a coordinated effort.” (PC)

“Partnership, collaboration, hospitality, and welcoming; gift discernment; accountability; common vision/mission; collective empowerment; creative use of technology; liturgy; outreach; whole community catechesis” (PC)

“Spiritual collaboration with pastor, staff, and parishioners” (DR)

“Serving; recognizing; empowering” (DR)

“Support and appreciation for others; collaborative leadership rather than ‘lone ranger’ approach; time for spiritual growth and social connection among staff and team; shared vision and a zeal for the ideal” (O)

“Utilizing the gifts of the people; cultivating a culture of welcome and all have gifts to minister; regular care of the staff (retreats, prayer, inservice)” (O)

“Do a gift inventory instead of asking people to perform jobs. Eliminate the ‘silo’ by working together. Effective communication is necessary all ways. Work in collaboration with other parishes. Don’t focus on the negative. There is growth in faith.” (O)

“Consultative, seeking the wisdom of the community; decisive, need to eventually reach conclusion; collaboration working together; clarity of roles” (O)

“Affirming; consultative; consensus; parish needs to have a vision of where they are going; ability and willingness to challenge; discern gifts of parish leaders (not necessarily hire consultant); clear lines of basic responsibilities; inviting and attractive; conflict resolution” (O)

“Active involvement of parish body into leadership of the parish mission; structure of leadership needs to support parish vision; discernment of the parish’s charism; utilizes the gifts of the parish to address the needs of the parish” (O)

“Collaboration between churches; acceptance that each person is unique and has unique skills; shared ministry leadership” (O)

Active Listening and Sharing of Information (inside and outside parish boundaries)

A few participants also indicated that active listening and sharing information are part of their best practices in building faith communities. This is reflected in the comments below:

“Diocesan leadership – vibrant bishop leads to vibrant communities. Also, vibrant communities can help vibrant bishops to come forth. Need to focus on strengths – it’s easier to focus on weaknesses.” (P)

“Trust and risk on the part of the ordained, bishop, priest, and deacon. Willingness to take time to listen to the expressed needs of the people in different situations/contexts. Ability for all to see our tradition as continually open to change and adaptation for the future needs of the people.” (PLC)

“Planning and visioning based on parish mission statement; communication; awareness of a parish’s particular culture; creative thinking which involves the whole.” (PA)

“Collegiality; compassion; people-centered and Christ-centered; differing, but valued gifts; kindness, open discussion of issues” (DR)

“Listen regularly and sincerely to needs and charisms; clear vision; articulate the vision; inspire and motivate about the vision; be very relational...skills of building healthy relationships; ability to ‘read’ charisms in others and how/where they can serve within the church and in the world (related to volunteers in ministry and hiring staff)” (DR)

“Pastor invited 25-30 adults for dinner at a time. No agenda; nothing was asked of them; just to get to know each other. This was tremendously successful – increased ‘vibrancy’.” (O)

Emphasis on Prayer, Spirituality, and Faith Formation

The following comments were offered indicating that their best practices for parish leadership are rooted in their spirituality, prayer, and faith formation as the core:

“Identifying strengths and building on them as opportunities; reflection and planning for the future; finding charisms and enhancing them; emphasizing worship, prayer, and spiritual formation. Not relying upon parishioners to carry out roles for an excessive time.” (P)

“Surely some best practices include leadership with clear theological vision. They must know reasons and motives for aspects of parish mission rooted in faith. Structures that permit ease of communication among all members of parish, especially among staff and parish leadership.” (P)

“Practical issues (how to identify and use the gifts present throughout the community) cannot overshadow spiritual issues (how to support interior conversion toward perfection of Christ-like virtue) e.g., Eucharistic adoration addresses both.” (DR)

“Worship and prayer are at the core; be intentional in worship and service” (PLC)

Hospitable and Welcoming Communities

A few participants also described their spirit of hospitality and welcoming as part of their best practices of leadership as indicated below:

“There is a need to provide personal invitation or way to grab the attention of parishioners to take ownership – create an environment of gratitude and come as you are invited. We need to articulate the vision with lots of input and then move forward. There is a need for accountability.” (P)

“People feel welcomed, accepted, invited to share gifts and are appreciated.” (PLC)

“Vibrant parish will be hospitable, accept change, and be committed to a common vision. Mutual respect, trust, creativity, collaboration; sense of humor as a balance in their lives; self-reflection, evaluative, personal spirituality – all traits of the leaders” (DR)

“The parish that prays together stays together. Be hospitable and welcoming, inviting full, conscious and active participation. Be open and receptive, flexible to adapt to the changing needs and roles; be creative; espouse a servant leadership style.” (O)

C. Challenges for Leadership in Building Vibrant Faith Communities

Participants were asked to describe the challenges they face in building vibrant faith communities. These challenges include overcoming parochialism and the resistance to change; systematic and structural issues in church leadership; the dominant culture of individualism and busyness; and issues of theological, cultural, and multi-cultural diversity.

Overcoming Parochialism and Resistance to Change

Participants frequently mentioned parochialism and a resistance to change as part of their challenges in building vibrant faith communities as indicated below:

“Some challenges: resorting to maintenance mode in providing ministry; succumbing to polarized or ideological motives for mission and ministry in the parish; fleeing the paschal mystery and denying the power of the cross when dying of the old ways and using the new could be the way to vibrancy.” (P)

“Emphasis on individual over community; focus on what I get rather than what I give as church; messiness of ministry; conflicts about values; internet culture that is connected, but not in relation” (P)

“Assimilation versus integration; multiculturalism; part-time parishioners; hesitant to accept new ways and ideas or alternatives; breaking down cliques; social expectations versus church faith a priority; lone ranger leader – lone ranger follower (it’s me and God).” (P)

“Fear holds back change from taking place... ‘we’ve never done it that way.’ People don’t have parish/faith community as priority – hard to do outreach to younger families who are focused on children, sports, school, etc. Takes time...will not occur quickly. We need to look at our commonalities rather than what is different.” (PLC)

“We are in a time of transition and there is not an experience for parishioners to model a faith community. Our community looks different than the one they grew up in. The culture of busyness and consumerism is a challenge. Fear of change is a challenge and there is a challenge in creating a shared vision. There is a need for a system and resources to form lay ecclesial leaders which now seems disjointed.” (PLC)

“Parochialism; lack of financial resources; need for better catechesis, especially of our adults; willingness to settle for mediocrity; growing Hispanic population, lack of trained ministers, and an abiding prejudice. Most people do not live a life of stewardship which is why we have too few religious vocations.” (PLC)

“Shared ministry; letting go and allowing others to do it” (D)

“We can no longer be satisfied with mediocrity. We need to have the best that we can have. The ‘we always did it this way’ mentality is gone, especially in bringing multiple parishes together. The process of building will be more complex and over a longer period of time, at times, it will be very arduous.” (PA)

“Overcoming parochialism and resistance to change; need for formation – training and education of laity” (PC)

“Non-collaborative people; financial resources; strong sense of parochialism and unwillingness to look beyond their own parish; different theologies; resistance to change; fear and misunderstanding; formation of those who lead.” (DR)

“Dealing with conflict; pastoral presence – being there; intentionality – what are we about? Delegation; excellence; dealing openly with problems; understanding from the Chancery – support” (DR)

“Willingness to be uncomfortable and ongoing death/resurrection in personal and communal life; preparing the ‘receiving culture’; being present to the ‘harsh’ emotions when change occurs” (O)

“There is a definite lack of catechesis in the adults my age – 50. We were in elementary school during Vatican II and they didn’t know what to teach us, so they didn’t. We glued macaroni on poster board and sang songs with Sister, but we didn’t learn anything. Also, financial constraints, a habit of accepting mediocrity, unclear roles, and personal agendas” (O)

“Ongoing paradigm shift of bishops and young priests; inclusivity; delegation without micromanagement; ‘snowbirds’; wisdom to deal with divergent views (inclusivity); organized to follow up on people with gifts and interests” (O)

“Some clergy feel threatened by strong laity; getting people involved; competition for time (in the culture)” (O)

Systematic and Structural Issues in Church Leadership

Others described their challenges as systematic and structural issues in church leadership they encounter as indicated below:

“It will be important to recognize that the church should not just give people jobs or have ministries/organizations just to have them. A challenge will be to identify the necessary aspects and necessary people. Not all are called to have leadership positions, and not all ministers are equal (Quilters/Eucharistic Ministers).” (P)

“The process takes time to get people on board. Patience is required. Lack of pastoral imagination and not looking outside the box; fear that it has never been done this way before. Connecting faith with what we are doing; including everyone in the community and including some and not others; different theologies (shopping for a parish); communication and connection between parish and diocese (decisions being made without a lot of dialogue); challenge to know and use the gifts of parishioners; taking time to evaluate and be reflective.” (P)

“Geographic differences – some live 20-30 miles away. Time demands – lots of competition for the parishioners’ time; pastor is the most transitional part of the parish. He needs to fit his style to the parish rather than vice versa.” (P)

“Having a shared sense of responsibility; delegation; refusal to micro-manage; expressed appreciation; holiness modeled, as well as preached; genuine efforts to provide opportunities for development and strengthening of faith of all.” (PLC)

“Lack of pastoral imagination (example, failure to expand St. Vincent DePaul); ministry to accommodate excess volunteers; fear – not looking outside the box; Catholics not very evangelical – not incorporating faith into life; cafeteria Catholics; lack of communication between diocese and parish (example, dictating accounting practices); decisions without dialogue” (D)

“Modern culture (busyness); need for micromanagement by clergy; too dependent on the ordained male clergy; lay ecclesial ministry seen as a temporary solution for a temporary solution.” (PA)

“Priest must delegate and deacons must work to the limits of their ‘legal’ capacity.” (PC)

Dominant Culture of Individualism and Busyness

Perhaps more pronounced than in other regions, participants in the North Central Symposium identified issues of the dominant culture, including individualism and busyness as part of their challenges to building vibrant faith communities. This is reflected in the following comments:

“Getting people in a very busy culture and society to give of their time; getting people to accept ownership of their own parish community.” (P)

“Communicating a shared vision to the whole community; the culture of frenetic activity – in the parish, as well as out” (P)

“How does one relearn methods, be flexible, and creative in trying to meet needs and create a vibrant parish. The challenge is to bring people together to ‘intentionally’ live their faith and live in the parish.” (P)

“Modern technology – We communicate with e-mail, phones, and text messages and are satisfied with that and do not demand we meet face-to-face.” (P)

“Invite people where they are at and invite them to grow. No particular model to ask the parish to develop; Christian imagination” (D)

“The lifestyles of parishioners who spend time attending sporting events over weekends; the mobility of parish members – never in one place long” (PLC)

“The demands and drain of cultural messages, such as individualism, materialism, and capitalism - Being relevant to young people and young adults; ministers are being stretched to the max. Laity are still picking up where religious sisters left off.” (PA)

“Too many programs; too many activities” (DR)

“People’s lives are so busy that they are unable to commit to serve; participate in order to serve in the world...such a mobile society...difficult to create a community of relationships. Lack of trust between ordained and lay ecclesial ministers; different ecclesiologies and definitions of being Catholic” (DR)

“Society is a huge barrier to success. Challenges will be keeping spirituality in the forefront and helping members to understand what a vibrant faith community will look like.” (DR)

“Busy people; overworked people; providing quality training and adult education; articulating the mission to all members; consumer oriented.” (O)

“A challenge is part-time parishioners – parishioners who are only in the parish for a portion of the year and then go south for the winter. (We call them snowbirds.) We even have two buildings, one for winter which seats 325 and one for summer worship which seats 650.” (O)

“Keeping in focus that the purpose of a parish is for the faith formation and development and that the parish is not a poor man’s country club.” (O)

“Getting so bogged down in the day-to-day tasks that time and energy are not devoted to envisioning and moving forward to a new future. Evangelizing – drawing in more people to relationships with Christ through the church.” (O)

*“No particular model for how the parishes are being asked to develop; to name what are not gospel values to bring people into Catholic leadership; develop models and tools that foster pastoral imagination; to get everyone on same page; American cultures”
(O)*

Emerging Issues of Theological, Cultural, and Multi-Cultural Diversity

Participants also identified emerging issues of theological, cultural, and multi-cultural diversity as contributing to their challenges in building vibrant faith communities as indicated below:

“Part-time parishioners – those gone in the winter; those gone all summer; lack of trust; different theologies; different prayer forms; paradigm shift to more traditional church; talk more about what good that is working and not what is not working.” (P)

“Fear and lack of trust in the diocese and/or pastor and staff; multiculturalism; geographic distances can prohibit effective formation and meeting; good leaders are sought after in so many areas that they are often tied up.” (P)

“Enabling the people of God to be leaders in their community without active models of church that can be modeled” (P)

“Growing diversity in parishes – cultural, theological, economic; time management (presence versus availability 24/7); number of part-time parishioners (vacationers, snowbirds, commuters); many demands on parishioners’ time” (PLC)

“A lack of knowing how to vision for the future; that when a vibrant faith community is fostered and then another pastor comes in and his theology, etc. gears apart the fabric of vibrancy; incorporating Native Americans or any ethnic group into the life of the parish. This includes welcoming them. The many ways sports in schools and other demands in society draw people away from full, active, and conscious participation in the church.” (O)

*“Geography, time, and energy; priorities; part-time parishioners; changing leadership; formation of LEM’s; connecting faith to life”
(O)*

D. Opportunities for Leadership in Building a Vibrant Faith Community

Pastoral leaders were asked to identify the future opportunities they see for building vibrant faith communities. Participants most frequently described these as calling forth the gifts of others; ongoing formation, education, and evaluation; and demonstrating the relevance of faith in the lives of people.

Calling Forth the Gifts of Others (lay and ordained working together)

A significant number of participants identified calling forth the gifts of others as a major opportunity for building vibrant faith communities as indicated by the comments below:

“There is in many communities today such a multiplicity of gifts, talents, resources, and educational backgrounds.” (P)

“Use of best of our culture to enhance relationships within the parish faithful and with other agencies concerned for the well-being of citizens. Engage gifts of laity in coordinated efforts with others for life needs outside the parish. Formation times for those who desire to be formed in the mission of Christ. Use of secular professional tools in formation of community; work with lay movements; use marketing skills.” (P)

“Attitude; this symposium with its shared ideas and experiences. Don’t start with needs, start with talents and the passions of the people. Personal contact – we have what we want – a point of hope. Sacraments; worship; tradition – culture of the Saints – Mary.” (P)

“People, parishes, and present ministers clearly want to build a vibrant faith community, but don’t know how.” (P)

“The opportunities are wide! With a current shortage of ordained and lay leaders, there is much potential to make a difference. Furthermore, the people generally long for vibrant parishes and will respond to initiatives toward this end.” (P)

“People have a hunger to learn and serve...to use their gifts.” (PLC)

“Our church is abundantly blessed with talented faith-filled persons who desire a vibrant faith community.” (PLC)

“Identify the gifts of all; encourage and invite; empower the laity in their role; build on the desire of the people.” (PLC)

“The sense that an open future awaits our creative approach to needs carries within it the reward of seeing our efforts fulfilled. Anyone willing to risk leading can lead with a sure knowledge that our church has survived and thrived precisely because of such risk in the past.” (PLC)

“Seeing and using the gifts that immigrants bring; doing things in new ways that bring new life; prioritize, clarify vision; empowering people” (PLC)

“Vision of ‘shared ministries’ coordinating volunteers; opportunity to let go of some responsibility; an educated laity who is willing to participate in ministry; area faith communities sharing resources and programs; growing Hispanic population can bring new life to a parish.” (PLC)

“The people of God are more educated than ever. There are great team leadership possibilities with lay and clergy using gifts to serve communities. A new model of servant leadership is emerging. Opportunity to bridge the gap between lay and ordained.” (PA)

“Lay people will claim anew what it means to be baptized. We are going to need to ‘think out of the box’ at how parishes are going to respond to needs.” (PA)

“For a lay person like myself, they are wide open and are primarily limited by the efforts we are willing to expend.” (PC)

“Calling forth the gifts of others; evangelization; modeling what we preach” (PC)

“Greater acceptance of lay ecclesial ministers in the parish and in other Catholic institutions. Many understand the servant/leader model and feel they are called to that.” (DR)

“There are many motivated, well-qualified people in the parishioner ranks – we need to call them forth.” (O)

“Recognize that each ministry is unique and that they complement each other – they do not compete with each other – they fit together as a whole.” (O)

“Identifying gifts and calling them forth regardless of where they are found: ordained, religious, or lay; young or old; highly educated or not; married, single, gay or straight.” (O)

“One area is the creation of a shared ministry position. This could be very effective with a pastor who is willing to delegate and then let go.” (O)

Ongoing Formation, Education, and Evangelization

More specifically, other participants described their opportunities for building faith communities as requiring further formation, education, and evangelization. The following comments reflect this priority:

“There is an enormous amount of opportunities for gatherings, statistical analysis, educational, and spiritual opportunities to support and expand the horizons of those in leadership positions. This change and flux in society and church is an opportunity as well. When you reach a point where it can’t be done as before, it creates the opportunity to do something new and creative.” (P)

“We have opportunities in the desire of people to grow in holiness. We have the most educated church (ordained and laity) in history. These things, coupled, can make for great leaders.” (P)

“Ongoing formation from the diocese; enthusiastic youth collaborative efforts with local colleges.” (P)

“Opportunity for ongoing formation; set term limits so they know there is an end to their commitment.” (P)

“Find what we have in common (in cooperation with them) not in competition. What technology is available to train and network with people. We have an opportunity to break away from the status quo and the way things have always been done. Collaborative attitude allows better programs and ideas. Conversion to a deeper personal relationship with Jesus and sharing that with others; renew; personal witness of their faith journey; becoming more mission-minded” (P)

“The technology is a tool to inform/educate persons theologically and provide resources.” (PLC)

“Do strategic planning...learning strengths and weaknesses. Where do we want to go? How can we get there? Cooperation between people, parishes, leaders, etc.” (PLC)

“Starting with cooperation and collaboration; economic and demographics shifts are causing us to find new models of leadership – shaking us from the status quo. Build up our number through evangelization, especially to marginalized and alienated. More mission-minded – a missionary parish – sending people out” (D)

“Masters in Ministry Program in our Archdiocese is helping to professionalize the Lay Ecclesial Ministers. This formation will tremendously help to build vibrant faith communities.” (PA)

“People tend to get themselves into new ways of thinking, therefore, teach and train new behaviors.” (DR)

“We have a highly educated Catholic people with diverse cultural communities reviving the dominant community.” (DR)

“Use technology available to train and network people; ‘go and make disciples’, invite the inactive; mission orientation; ‘can do attitude’; immigrant incorporation (family, social, intergenerational); ministry of ‘asking’ (what do you want and need); connection of faith with mission; exploit commonality of belief and experience” (O)

“Use all available tools to catechize; to think outside the box; coordinate with other agencies; leverage existing secular leadership in church; prayer; called and gifted; one to one visits, building community one person at a time; lay movements; Cursillo” (O)

“Ongoing formation of leaders and parishioners; challenges are opportunities; positive attitudes; fluidity of leadership; growing desire/search for spirituality” (O)

Demonstrating the Relevance of Faith to the Lives of People

Still other participants identified the need to demonstrate the relevance of faith to the lives of others as an important opportunity to build vibrant faith communities. The following comments reflect this evangelism theme as an opportunity for faith communities:

“Gift of Asian and Hispanic families to our church; desire for communion, hope, and peace; hunger for truth with charity; emergence of lay ecclesial ministry; wisdom of pastoral agents” (P)

“To be a leader in this is to ride a great wave and to be part of the movement to become what God calls us to be – to be one and to love. To be alive – to be made alive – to be part of a parish that gives you life.” (P)

“Take people where they are.” (P)

“To build communities that invite God into their midst” (P)

“Disciplines like psychology and business has studied organization leadership that can be adapted to faith communities. The culture creates an atmosphere in which communities based in hope are attractive and a community whose mission is to transform the world gives life meaning. We need to tell this Catholic story.” (PLC)

“Embracing the Hispanic community” (DR)

“Every challenge is an opportunity. Respond to Christ’s invitation to ‘be Holy like my Father in heaven.’” (DR)

“Unending as long as we are open to the spirit in all we do.” (DR)

“Hunger for spirituality; watching the signs of the time, their relevance to everyday lives, and responding to them” (O)

“To be intentional in reaching out to welcome the marginalized – other cultures; rural parishes have a strong quality or asset of being ‘relational’. Everyone seemingly knows one another. Yet, this knowing is superficial or based on their history in the community. We in the rural community have an opportunity to build on this asset of ‘relationality’ by helping people to reflect on their lives in light of the gospel message and thus drawing people to ‘know’ each other as they know Christ – at a faith level. This relationality will be one then that contributes to the vibrancy of the spiritual life of the people, church, and community. It will also foster within them an ability to move out of a zone of past and present to one of futuring.” (O)

E. Parish of the Future

Participants were asked to identify their expectations for the parish of the future. North Central Symposium participants most frequently mentioned increased lay leadership, inclusion of diverse people and forms of leadership, and small faith-based communities.

Increased Lay Leadership (rooted in the gifts exercised by its members)

Clearly, participants believe that increased lay leadership will be characteristic of their parish of the future as reflected by the following comments:

“More lay leadership; more cultures represented as leaders; large parishes; fewer priests; more deacons; more pastoral administrators and parish life coordinators” (P)

“Hopefully, we will continue to see the ascendancy of the laity and the renewed confidence in the indispensable ministry of lay and clergy ministers. I would hope we would be communities driven by a clear mission to continue the work of Jesus Christ to sanctify, teacher, and lead persons to faith and eternal life. Concretely, this occurs, hopefully, through vibrant liturgy, education, and mission.” (P)

“People empowered, not just delegated to serve Christ in each other; larger geographic boundaries.” (P)

“A community of servant leaders with an outward look” (PLC)

“People united around a common vision; adults and youth energized and committed to faith community; seeing our parish as part of the ‘big picture’ – the global church with all called by our baptism to serve.” (PLC)

“Servant leadership; married clergy/women deacons; everyone working together; all Mega churches; the parish community being seen as part of the Body of Christ – not the puppet of clergy” (PA)

“It will be more sacramental (the sacramental life of the parish will be the heart). More community oriented; more mission-minded globally and locally; more lay-led through a variety of ministries; not based geographically (it might span a county/deanery rather than a specific locale).” (PA)

“Lay leaders taking ownership; increased leadership; diversity in leadership; small faith communities led by well-formed leaders. Increased use of technology; clustering and changing structures of parish” (PC)

“Empowering trained lay ecclesial ministry, e.g., geographical boundaries” (DR)

“The parish of the future will be pastorally served by a team of ‘formed’ lay ministers who are responsible for day-to-day life of the parish (some paid, some volunteer) and will have a priest assigned to serve them sacramentally.” (DR)

“More lay leadership; inter-parish cooperation; more sacramental priests, fewer pastors, more PLA’s” (O)

“Shared ministry with pastor providing spiritual direction” (O)

Inclusive of Diverse People and Forms of Leadership

Some participants also indicated that the future of their parishes will include more diverse people and more diverse forms of leadership, including multi-culturalism, changing church structures, and new ministries.

“A lot more inter-parish cooperation; more sacramental priests; fewer pastors and more parish life coordinators; probably married couples or religious brothers/sisters; probably large geographical areas within which are small communities, all of which are served by one priest; use of high tech for education/formation of small communities” (P)

“Less top down management; more consolidation; men and women looking at lifelong commitments” (P)

“The parishioners will have a far greater sense of ownership of the parish with various appointed ministers responsible for many more aspects of parish life. Many ministries, unheard of and unthought of now, will have emerged. Clustering for parish strength will have taken place years ago, and one priest with a number of deacons and lay ecclesial ministers will share responsibility for each parish.” (PLC)

“Less top down management; more business-like organizational structure; more consolidation and specialization” (PC)

“It may be several ‘parishes’ grouped together with a collaborative team of leadership. We will have greater ethnic diversity with more emphasis on the adults rather than children.” (DR)

“Multicultural” (DR)

“Full service church – drive toward ‘mega-church’; likely to be more ‘hierarchical driven’; lay staffed; more business oriented (organization, staffing, mission); outreach to all (the marginalized); focus on community faith formation” (O)

“I hope that parishes will have women and married people as their ordained leaders, as well as celibate men. And I hope that being more inclusive at this level will naturally flow throughout the parish.” (O)

Smaller Faith-Based Communities for the Church and the World

Smaller faith-based communities are indicated by some participants as an expected mode of the parish of the future as indicated below:

“Priest being more of a circuit rider – being sacramental ministers to a number of parishes and pastor of none” (P)

“Perhaps smaller, but with more commitment on the part of those who remain. To always be concerned with inviting and evangelizing intentionally. The parish will need to be a place that brings disciples to serve in the marketplace.” (P)

“It will be a community, but more open to the world and other parishes. More porous walls – no silos; outward looking; mission; interparish cooperation” (P)

“I see a lot more small church communities and a lot more programs for the entire parish. I see more evangelization and a return to a smaller, more doctrinal church.” (P)

“Parishes will either be huge or small. It depends on how leadership is perceived by bishops. If leadership is broader, then parishes can be real communities and not mega centers.” (PLC)

“Faith will be lived in small faith communities that interact with other faith traditions to make a positive difference in the world. The lay person’s role will move from dependent to independent – from childish to adult living of the faith. The parish of the future will be less priest-focused – though the priest will always be a valued person.” (PLC)

“In a rural community, I foresee a partnering of parishes in order to support and share resources. If intentional effort is not made to foster and nourish Catholic identity, then I foresee people turning to other alternatives and a parish may no longer exist. I wonder how the dichotomy of communal and sacramental life will adversely affect parishes and perhaps be the deciding factor to close a parish.” (O)

“The primary community in which people encounter Christ, supplemented by other movements and institutions in the church. To meet more specialized needs of people of diverse maturities of faith, ecclesiologies, education, and piety.” (O)

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

To conclude their discussion of best practices, participants identified how close or how far they are from realizing their preferred vision. Participants most frequently characterize their parishes as working toward a preferred vision, but not there yet or significantly far from the vision.

Working Toward a Preferred Vision (but not there yet)

A number of participants believe their parishes are making steady progress toward their preferred vision, but are not quite there yet. The following comments reflect this sense of progress with future growth expected in the future:

“Getting closer – few priests have only one parish responsibility.” (P)

“We are not too far, actually. We have a large number of highly trained professionals who are competent.” (P)

“Half way there. As a parish of 500 families, we have three deacons. The fourth will be ordained in June. We are forming leaders from the Mexican and Guatemalan communities. We spent over \$15,000 on training for our lay leadership.” (P)

“Not as far as one might think. People are generally of good will and desire vibrant parishes. But, they must be led. Perhaps this optimization says more about me than the parish members in general, but I do not think so.” (P)

“Most of the times, it seems, we are just getting by. But people seem to be happy for the most part and those in the core community are part of the same thing – alive.” (P)

“We’re on our way, but have a long way to go.” (P)

“In practice, with my responsibility for four parishes, with my responsibility as Episcopal Vicar for nine parishes, and personnel board, the reality is my increased absence which in fact becomes the opportunity for my staff to be the pastoring body for the parish, for corporate thinking with a COO model. This pastoral COO has

the responsibility for coordinating pastoral staff in the implementation of parish vision with my roll as pastor/chaplain celebrating and empowering the body through liturgy and appropriate pastoral care for and with staff.” (P)

“We are a small parish in which lay leaders are empowered and work with the PLC in keeping the parish centered in worship, service, and outreach. However, our Archdiocese at this moment does not recognize that we are viable in all areas (we have vitality). Priests are seen as the main leaders and if there can’t be a priest/pastor, then the parish needs to be consolidated or suppressed.” (PLC)

“We are moving in this direction. Our pastor and staff appreciate this model and we have a large number of the parishioners involved. However, we continue to spread the idea of church as transforming the world. We do have some whose gifts are untapped. We (the staff) need to continue to be intentional in facilitating this vision.” (PLC)

“We are on the way! We have a growing number of people actively serving in various ways. We are attempting to teach and ground people in faith, but I think our vision needs to be more clearly articulated. We do have active parishes when it comes to outreach – to other parishioners, to community-at-large, and to global church. We have a connection to U.S./Mexican border at Nogales. We have participated actively in our diocesan sister relationship with Homa Bay, Kenya.” (PLC)

“We are on the road, but have a long way to go.” (PLC)

“In process – on the way – building for the future with a mindset that the work of the Gospel is never done” (PLC)

“We are moving in this direction and there is a glimmer of positive ‘breaking open’ the spirit in our midst relative to this.” (PA)

“We are taking steps in the continuous transition.” (PC)

“We are moving, but have a long way to go. Finding ways to deal with the challenges – I would say we are slow to move beyond the visioning stage.” (PC)

“I think we need to look up from the plow and take a look at the horizon. The long-term investment of education, resources, and money towards lay leadership may be a stumbling block by both the cleric and the pew population. It’s a paradigm shift.” (O)

“We are full service (cradle to grave); we are ‘hierarchical driven’; our ‘business’ is wherever there is need. We are outreach oriented. Ministry to the sick and homebound: parish nurse, extensive counseling services for ‘hurts’ of the community, not just

the Catholics; extensive ministry to nursing homes; anointing liturgies, etc.” (O)

“We are heavily into faith formation and service. Lifelong intergenerational faith experiences (200 people); Why Catholic (80 adults); First Communion (75 children (and active parents); Bible Study (4 groups total 50 adults); middle school (40 with teachers); Confirmation (40 with teachers); liturgical ministers (240); funeral (30 drawn from various groups)” (O)

“We are challenges to bring together this diversity of Christians into one parish community as the one Body of Christ.” (O)

Significantly Far from this Vision

Other participants indicated that their parishes are significantly far from their preferred vision of parish life as reflected in the following comments:

“We are a long way off. We have to move beyond the territorialism of our old parish boundaries and the rampant individualism and relativism of our society, but we are headed in the right direction.” (P)

“We have a lot of work ahead.” (P)

“While 20 years is not far off, we are not prepared and, I fear, not preparing for the necessary paradigm shifts to make this vision a reality. We are still clinging to a sense that only ‘Father’ can do far too many things, and ‘Father’ is not being prepared to relinquish power in order to share power. There is no organized effort to acknowledge value in shared leadership and shared responsibility. Vatican instructions do not help, but actually for both lay and ordained leaders, hinder the necessary perceptions. Images speak loudly and clearly and our liturgical practice from preaching to vessel cleaning clearly locates power in one worn-out model.” (PLC)

“We already have parishes that are sharing a pastor and some who are led by parish life administrators. Soon we will have more parishes without resident pastors than parishes with one. I don’t see as much sharing of personnel and resources between parishes and that will have to evolve.” (DR)

“We have a long way to go.” (DR)

“Probably 10-15 years away” (DR)

“We have a very traditional structure.” (O)

“Far” (O)

IV. PARISH 2025 EXERCISE:

North Central Symposium participants worked in small teams on a Parish 2025 Futuring Exercise. In these teams, they identified the nature and structure of the parish they expect to exist in 20 years. 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 Services**

A. Parish Structures of the Future

Symposium participants were asked how they believe parishes will be structured by the Year 2025. They most frequently characterized these as changing parish structures and roles and more involvement in leadership of the laity.

Changing Parish Structures and Roles

A number of participants identified that they expect significant changes in their parish structures and roles to characterize the church in 20 years as reflected by the following comments:

“Essentials will be Eucharist, community, mission, non-resident pastors and the role of pastors” (P)

“Pastors will serve larger parishes with multiple sites for worship. Deacons will handle much of the non-sacramental care of the faithful.” (P)

“Pastors who continue to administer the sacraments and shepherd assisted by local staff and parishioners.” (P)

“In the rural areas, it will be a ‘missionary’ model where the priest joins the community for sacraments and the community conducts church in his (or her?) absence.” (P)

“The essentials will remain Eucharist, scripture, etc., but there will probably be sacramental priests.” (P)

“More linked and clustered parishes in rural and small town settings. Fewer parishes will exist.” (PLC)

“Decentralized communities of word and service who come together on a regular basis (not necessarily weekly) for Eucharist” (PLC)

“More consolidation; more sharing of ministers; fewer schools” (PA)

“Parish councils will be mandated. There will be women deacons and non-resident pastors will become the norm.” (PC)

“Canon Law will be revised to reflect the reality of parish life administrators and governing teams with regional parishes. Right now, Bishops aren’t as flexible about emerging forms of leadership because of Canon Law restrictions.” (DR)

“Ordained clergy will be more sacramental ministers; more deacons; focus of church will be more service and mission-based; the roles of ministry will be more inclusive.” (PA)

“Canon Law will be revised. Pastoral councils will be mandated, not recommended. Formal recognition of BCCs and SCCs; role of pastor will be more like a dean or Episcopal Vicar. The one parish/one pastor model will be extinct.” (O)

“We believe the definition of parish will change. Bigger geographic areas with several worship sites. Pastor will celebrate Mass for a few every Sunday possibly on different days of the week. Virtual mass; use of technology; women will be deacons. Deacons will be animators of communities. Regional Catholic schools – not parish schools” (O)

More Involvement and Leadership of the Laity

Clearly, participants also believe their parish structures will be heavily dependent upon the involvement of laity in leadership as indicated below:

“The laity will have more responsibility, delegated authority, and appointed authority. Perhaps these panels will be smaller simply because the 60% who are not there now will be totally out of the loop and unsupportive.” (P)

“I imagine we will continue along the trajectory of greater lay involvement. I would hope we can find ways for the discernment and formation of lay ministers. All we must do is compare another 25-year period (1975-2000) to see that it’s tedious work projecting these things.” (P)

“Laity will be responsible for the administrative reality of parish.” (PLC)

“A lot of lay involvement in all areas of ministry and activity; a community of communities; a pastoral council for the entire area; large groupings of worship sites under leadership of pastor and his staff, perhaps as a single geographical parish.” (PLC)

“More team leadership – priests, lay ministers, deacons. Parishes will let go of traditional boundaries. I see more cooperative ventures and sharing of resources – human and material.” (PLC)

“Several/many faith communities within an area (parish) each overseen by local lay leadership. Priest (probably skill entitled pastor) will travel around for sacramental life.” (DR)

“More involvement and leadership of the laity; larger and clustered parishes” (DR)

B. Models of Ordained and Lay Ecclesial Leadership

Symposium participants were asked what forms of ordained and lay ecclesial leadership they believe will emerge by the Year 2025. They most frequently characterized these as increased dependence on the laity and deacons, more diverse forms of orders, and greater reliance on ethnically diverse priests.

Increased Dependency on Leadership of the Laity and Deacons (lay and ordained working together)

Clearly, participants believe that lay ecclesial leadership will play a stronger role in the future of parish life as reflected by the following comments:

“Continued consultative bodies to pastors; strong staffs to assist in ministry” (P)

“The gifts each brings will be better utilized and priests will have more the role of the Bishop – present only sacramentally and holding the community together by seeking the Gospel and church tradition central truths.” (P)

“Lay involvement will be the primary driver of ministry with a more inclusive model of ordained ministry.” (P)

“Perhaps a more ‘missionary’ model will be necessary for priests, at least for a while. I hope for a stronger spiritual formation and discernment of lay ecclesial leadership. Sometimes I think we short-change lay leadership by not affording them the chance to discern whether or not they are called to public ministry.” (P)

“I see a large increase of lay ecclesial ministers who are well-trained and active. They will make up a strong core of many parish staffs. The ordained will be called to their role of servant to meet the needs of the people sacramentally, spiritually, and in pastoral care.” (PLC)

“PA’s and PLC’s will be written into new code of Canon Law, perhaps most often as ‘animators’ of the local community; deacons’ roles will be more clearly defined; small Christian communities will be common.” (PLC)

“Again, I see teams of ministry, more laity serving as PLC’s and pastoral associates; more priests serving as sacramental ministers. More ownership for local events/programs/ministries by the people, the church” (PLC)

“Lay ministers will be more educated and formed; women deacons” (PA)

“More ethnically diverse; more male deacons” (PC)

“More lay involvement; laity already outnumber the ordained. I also think the lay apostolate will become more organized, informed, and active. Women deacons” (DR)

“Greater collaboration; more lay involvement in governance; priests with greater emphasis on sacramental duties and traveling like ‘missionaries’” (DR)

“It is vital to establish at least a working definition of the sacramental identity of deacons and of lay ecclesial ministers, not what they do, but who they are in Christ.” (DR)

“Dependency on the laity and deacons; more openness to women’s ordination; shared leadership” (DR)

“If ordination tradition of male, celibate priests continues, our model for 2025 of ordained ministers will be more sacramental and the model will have a stronger presence of lay leaders administering parishes.” (O)

“Clergy and lay ecclesial ministers will be more focused on service to others and more mission-oriented.” (O)

Greater lay involvement in the governance of the church.” (O)

More Diverse Forms of Orders

A few participants expect the future to also include more diverse forms of orders, including married clergy. The following comments reflect this belief:

“Ordained clergy will be more ethnically diverse, but a smaller number. More deacons – maybe women deacons; clergy and lay ecclesial ministers will be more focused on service to others and more mission-oriented.” (P)

“Married clergy; more ordained deacons; more lay ecclesial leaders” (P)

“A model expressing equality in ministry that permits each to function in his appropriate sphere unthreatened by the other; definitely distinct yet communally united.” (PLC)

“I must remain in a hopeful stance that women and married will have the opportunity to be ordained in my lifetime – it’s what keeps me going.” (O)

“Priest will be primarily sacramental. Married clergy becoming present; lay (qualified and authorized)” (O)

“More inclusive models of leadership” (O)

Greater Reliance on Ethnically Diverse Priests

It is interesting to note that a few participants from the North Central region also characterized the future of ordained leadership as requiring greater reliance on ethnically diverse priests as indicated below:

“More priests from around the world will be ordained in the USA. We are a mission territory of Asia and Africa. Women will help these priests learn and live in our culture.” (P)

“There will be more foreign priests and sisters. The idea of ‘Catholic’ will be clearer. I don’t foresee structural changes save for recognition of lay positions by bishops.” (P)

“Ordained clergy will be more ethnically diverse.” (O)

C. Leadership of Parishioners

Symposium participants were asked to indicate the leadership that will be exercised by their parishioners in the future. Many refer to this as a realization of the baptismal call of the laity, while others believe small Christian communities will play a more active role.

Realizing the Baptismal Call of the Laity

Symposium participants believe that greater co-responsibility and lay leadership will be necessary for the future of parish life as indicated by the following comments:

“Continued cultivation of (lay) responsibilities in Word, Worship, Service, and Community” (P)

“More catechists leading” (P)

“Most leadership will come from two sources – young Hispanics and Asians who bring their different cultures; elderly Caucasians who are wise and energetic.” (P)

“Lay ministers will become more diversified – that is, their pastoral work will be more generic – not so much concentrated in a particular office overseeing other lay people and their departments.” (P)

“The parish with lay leadership and sacramental leadership from the ordained will become more relevant in the world while continuing to invite all Catholics.” (P)

“Much like today, but I think the people will accept the lay ministers more than. Often, it is not the priest who does not welcome the lay leader, but often lay people.” (P)

“PA/PLC’s; catechists; coordinators of ministry” (PLC)

“There will be all types of lay leadership except administration of the sacraments and oversight of the church’s ministry.” (PLC)

“Greater ownership of the vision; greater leadership of the various ministries” (PLC)

“Finance directors; program directors; governance/administration directors” (PA)

“There will be significant contributions from parishioners.” (DR)

“Better use of talents and gifts of parishioners” (DR)

“More consultative; much greater than presently” (DR)

“More lay leadership in a teaming relationship with the ordained. Complimentary roles and responsibilities – recognition of each other’s gifts” (O)

“Parishioners will take more responsibility for the pastoral needs of fellow parishioners and the community.” (O)

Small Christian Communities (leading through faith formation)

A few participants also believe that small Christian communities will be an essential component of the leadership exercised by parishioners in the future. This is evident in the following comments:

“Trends seem to indicate a smaller and hopefully more vibrant ‘lean’ church. I believe this could remain largely constant – service to other parishioners and to the larger world.” (P)

“Leadership based in small Christian communities where the faith is lived and fed. Parish leaders will benefit from lifelong faith formation. Parishioners will take responsibility for pastoral ministry.” (PLC)

“There will be a huge increase in lay formation. Pastoral councils will be made up of members formed in Catholic identity, spirituality, and theology.” (PLC)

“More parental responsibility by parent in religious education of the youth” (PC)

“Small Christian communities will come together to pray, play, study, and reach out to those in need, their faith sustained this way and passed on to future generations.” (O)

“Leadership is based in small Christian communities who come together to celebrate Mass. The small Christian communities meet regularly to break open the Word, pray, serve, and play.” (O)

“Strong advisory presence; workers in the field” (O)

“Parishioners will have access and avail themselves of lifelong formation both spiritual and educational.” (O)

D. Future Trends in Parish Worship Ministries

Symposium participants identified their expectations for the future of parish worship ministries. These include more diverse forms of worship with an increased use of technology and a deeper commitment, appreciation, and ownership of worship by parish members.

More Diverse Forms of Worship (increased use of technology)

Clearly, symposium participants believe that more diverse forms of worship will be necessary in the future, including an increased use of technology to more effectively reach people. The following comments reflect this expectation:

“Daily prayer services, some with Communion will become normative. Weekly or monthly Eucharistic celebrating will be common.” (P)

“In rural areas, Eucharist may be only celebrated monthly. Urban and suburban churches will be larger to accommodate fewer masses. Technology will help us celebrate multi-culturally.” (P)

“More use of Eucharistic worship outside of Mass – more use of the Liturgy of the Hours – more entrenched rubrics.” (P)

“Weddings at weekend Masses; reconfiguration of form and penance; national hymnal; liturgy of the hours utilized more” (P)

“I hope and pray we never rely on technology for Eucharist. God help us if we do. We are a people that gather. We are a people that break bread together. There is something of that we must not lose.” (PLC)

“Worship will remain Eucharistically-centered, but will provide for new forms also that are not specifically Eucharist-centered that can be administered by lay ecclesial ministers.” (PLC)

“Liturgy of the Hours will replace S.W.A.P. Not all faith communities will have Sunday Mass.” (PLC)

“More technology; more communion services” (PA)

“Technology will help bridge the distance for the presider. I think people will still gather face to face.” (DR)

“Less availability of Sunday worship” (DR)

“High-tech, shared preaching; mega churches; increased role of the laity” (DR)

“Greater appreciation for the Eucharist; more boundaries to music content; more weddings combined with weekend Mass” (PC)

“Exploring ways to make greater use of Form 2 Penance and Reconciliation” (O)

Deeper Commitment, Appreciation, and Ownership of Worship

Additionally, a few participants believe there will be a deeper appreciation of worship and prayer as essential to the future of parish life. This view is reflected in the following comments:

“I don’t think we’ll make it much further in parish vitality without a deeper commitment to liturgy, especially music. I’m hoping we can discern more music ministers who discern this as a calling.” (P)

“Greater appreciation for the Eucharist and increased Eucharistic devotional practice in public and private with additional proper catechesis” (P)

“Full active participation by all! People truly coming to pray and praise as faith community. Worship with our entire beings – all senses used!” (PLC)

“Same as today with greater understanding and ownership of ministries” (O)

“Deepened appreciation for full, conscious, and active participation” (O)

“Increased guidelines for music ministry” (O)

“Increased praying of the Liturgy of the Hours” (O)

“Greater frequency of weddings within regular weekend Masses” (O)

“Increased participation of women in worship ministries” (O)

“Greater multicultural expression in worship” (O)

E. Future Trends in Ministries of the Word

Participants expect parish ministries of the word to include increased formation and opportunities for the laity, especially in preaching; greater use of technology in ministries of the word; and small, faith-based communities.

Increased Formation; Opportunities for Laity (especially preaching)

A few participants believe there will be an increase in formational opportunities for the laity, especially through preaching as part of the future of parish ministries. This belief is evident in the following comments:

“Ministry of the Word will become primary, while traditional teaching will be infused as well.” (P)

“More liturgies of the Word for children; better homilies as we all refine education and skills” (P)

“Formation will be handled more by family units and they will seek the sacraments when ready multi-age sacramental celebration.” (P)

“It seems lay preaching will be a trend in the variety of situations where ordination is not a requirement for the specific preaching task. This development could be disastrous without proper education, discernment, and formation.” (P)

“Greater emphasis on adult formation, family, and intergenerational catechesis; proclamation of the Word done well, more training in homiletics” (PLC)

“Creative, word-centered prayer experiences led by lay ecclesial ministers” (PLC)

“Women will preach.” (PA)

“More will be allowed to preach; increased web sites for reflection and study of the Word” (DR)

“Interactive preaching” (O)

“Improved homiletic training” (O)

More Use of Technology, Internet, and Media

A number of participants also expressed the belief that there will be increased use of technology, internet, and media in ministries of the word as reflected by the following comments:

“Utilization of technologies” (P)

“Better use of media.” (P)

“Technology will help us hear and learn the Word. Multi-media to appeal to the younger, technology-savvy Catholics.” (P)

“More use of technology both in evangelization and in religious education. Religious education will be done in the home with computers, iPods, etc.” (PLC)

“Greater use of media/technology used in teaching, evangelization, and homiletics” (PLC)

“Expanding proclamation using multi-media; interactive teaching” (PLC)

“More use of Internet – technology; more biblical studies” (DR)

“Expanded proclamation of the Word through ‘means of social communication’ (media)” (O)

“Greater media presentation of the Catholic church to the outside world” (O)

Small Faith Communities

A few participants reiterated the belief that small faith communities will be an integral element to ministries of the word in the future as indicated by the following comments:

“Small faith communities that gather together to break open the Word.” (PLC)

“Stronger presence of small scripture-based groups” (O)

“Intergenerational small Christian communities as way to pass on the Word, facilitated by technology to be developed in the next 20 years” (O)

F. Future Trends in Parish Ministries of Services

Participants were asked to identify future trends they expect in parish ministries of service. The expectations of North Central participants are an increased role of service as part of parish identity and a greater emphasis on social justice and Catholic social teaching.

Increased Role of Service as Part of Parish Identity

Participants also indicated that they expect an increased role of service as part of the overall identity of the parish and essential to its mission. The following comments reflect this priority:

“Service integration will be a part of prayer life. More advocacy; responding; adoration; root causes” (P)

“People will be more alive and active in church because of greater ownership” (P)

“Service will become more core to the belonging. Stewardship as a disciple’s response will become the norm. Smaller, but more focused parishes with a purpose defined more narrowly.” (P)

“Considered more integral to parish identity” (P)

“This is quite weak right now. I suspect it might not yet get better in the short run. Parishioners are generous, but not necessarily in the name of the parish or the church. Perhaps the ‘restricting’ of the church will cause us to become more introspective rather than outward looking and service oriented.” (P)

“Service to the poor and marginalized will be the hallmark of Catholic life and identity.” (PLC)

“Social justice becoming a part of our mission – not seen as an add-on, but a flow from Word to Service to Word to Service. Intergenerational service; local, regional, and global justice and charity” (PLC)

“We will be understood as the primary sign of faith. We will focus on gifts more than on the things we need to find someone to do.” (PLC)

“Diakonia in the biblical sense – administration overseen by deacons, but conducted largely by lay ecclesial ministers.” (PLC)

“Deacon will be stretched in their service as parish administrator.” (D)

“Mission work to Third World Countries will be more prominent. Immigration issues will continue to be prominent.” (PA)

*“Social justice outreach; global church; ecumenical collaboration”
(DR)*

“Parishes will continue to use community resources and at the same time be a community resource. If we have several sites grouped into one larger ‘parish’, we might be able to provide more services, i.e., consulting, parish nurse, etc.” (DR)

“Service integration will be part of prayer life” (O)

“Ecumenical – majority of issues – ability to do more together” (O)

*“More advocacy – responding and addressing the root causes”
(O)*

“Service will be mission of the church and will be practiced within and outside the doors” (O)

“As our government seems to be on a track to provide fewer and fewer services, parishes must provide more and more.” (O)

More Awareness and Emphasis on Social Justice and Catholic Social Teaching (Service to the Poor and Marginalized)

Clearly, some participants believe that a greater understanding of Catholic social teaching will be part of emerging ministries of service. The following comments reflect this belief:

“Greater understanding of Catholic social teachings; more advocacy toward change and causes of injustice; integration of prayer and service since today’s youth already have the experience.” (P)

“Understanding Catholic social teaching; Catholic voice will be focused on advocacy – a voice for the most vulnerable. Service will be integral to parish life. Service will be an extension of parish community.” (DR)

“Greater understanding of Catholic social teaching” (PC)

“Greater understanding of Catholic social teachings” (O)

V. MARKS OF PASTORAL LEADERSHIP:

The sponsoring partners of the Emerging Models Project identified a number of marks of pastoral excellence to be discussed during the symposiums. These marks of pastoral excellence were intended to identify those behavioral practices of leaders emerging in the church of the future. Participants were asked to identify how they believe these marks of excellence will be evident in day-to-day parish life.

To discuss the marks of excellence, participants worked in peer groups (i.e., priests, deacons, pastoral council representatives, parish life coordinators, pastoral associates, etc.) during this part of the symposium to prepare their reflections on the theme. The following section summarizes the individual reflections of participants on these marks of pastoral excellence.

A. Ethical Behaviors of Leadership

When defining the ethical behaviors of leadership participants anticipate for the future, pastoral leaders most frequently mentioned just organizational practices; respect for the dignity of others; and personal ethics, integrity, and honesty.

Just Organizational Practices and a System of Checks and Balances

A number of participants believe there will be greater emphasis on just organizational practices with a system of checks and balances as part of the ethical system in parishes of the future. This is indicated by the following comments:

“Transparency of our mission, purpose, finances, and clear expectations. Empathetic, clear boundaries, and treatment that is just. Compensation, time expectations, evaluations. Mission of service not entitlement (authority versus power). Walk with the people through change.” (P)

“Justice on staff; reasonable assignments (not 5-6 parishes); lack of entitlement; be honest and up front” (P)

“Transparency; trust; respect for dignity of all; justice (money, time, job descriptions); service rather than entitlement” (P)

“Honest; forthright; humble” (P)

“Justice compensation; time expectations; accountability; transparency; prayer life; honesty; faithfulness; forgiveness” (PLC)

“Transparency in all we do; trust; mutual accountability; pastoral care for all; justice; work with parishes during closings, clustering, etc.” (PLC)

“Honest, respectful, just, compassionate, loyal, aware of richness of various cultures, transparent and accountable. They are servants, not emperors.” (PLC)

“Transparency – lead and serve in the light (finances); justice of staff (salary and job descriptions); walk with the people of closing and clustered parishes; servanthood (service) versus entitlement attitudes” (D)

“Authenticity; recognize; justice; mutual accountability; service/ servanthood (not entitlement) (PA)

“Trustworthiness; transparency; equality; justice” (PC)

“No secrets – transparent; trustworthy; reliable; committed to the Mission of Christ.” (DR)

“Transparency – even in something as small as minutes; trust; respect; mutual accountability; pastoral care; ethnical treatment of staff; up front and open; different educational circles; out of socioeconomic regimentation” (DR)

“Personal and professional transparency; be up front; trust; equal dignity; different roles; accountability; human mediation of compassion – boundaries, listening, empathy; justice: reasonable job descriptions and compensation” (DR)

“Transparency; trust; mutual accountability; respect for one another’s roles; just treatment of parish staff and volunteers; servant leadership” (O)

“Honest; transparency” (O)

“Transparency; mutual trust and respect; dignity, accountability, compassion, integrity” (O)

Respect for the Dignity of Others (be inclusive)

A few participants identified respect for the dignity of others as a significant attribute of ethical pastoral leaders as indicated below:

“Accepting the equality of every person – male or female; open and honest with the parishioners” (P)

“Respect the dignity of each; relational and transparent; justice” (P)

“Respect, respect, respect; contemplative listening” (PLC)

“Being a living example for our parishes; treating others with dignity, including both personal and business relationships” (D)

“Welcoming; acknowledging; and respect for all. Flexibility; accessibility – be inclusive” (DR)

“Respecting dignity of other staff and people; servant leadership; justice oriented; trust; transparency” (O)

Personal Ethics, Integrity, and Honesty

Personal ethics, integrity, and honesty were also identified as important attributes of the ethical behaviors of pastoral excellence for the future as indicated below:

“Trust – information is fully disclosed and relationships are created for dialogue and partnered ministry. Not showing favoritism – treating all equally. Keeping a humble attitude rooted in service.” (P)

“We have an ethical obligation as public ministers of the church to represent the church and its tradition. This is not a slavish obedience, but we are obliged to serve the spirit as it has moved through the body of believers throughout the ages.” (P)

“Integrity; servanthood not entitlement” (P)

“Positive and supportive; what’s shared is privileged to you. Love is more important than justice.” (D)

“They maintain good boundaries with individuals, as well as the community as a whole. They are willing to deal with their ‘shadow’ – have a spiritual director/counselor to help them see ‘honestly’.” (PLC)

“Honesty; faith-filled living; ministry grounded in authentic relationship with God; transparency” (PLC)

B. Pastoral Behaviors of Leadership

Symposium participants were asked to identify pastoral behaviors of leadership which they believe will characterize faith communities of the future. They most frequently mentioned a strong relational presence with people and a commitment to shared responsibility and empowerment.

Strong Relational Presence with People (affirming presence)

Symposium participants identified an affirming presence and a strong relational presence with people as important attributes of pastoral excellence in the future. The following comments reflect this interpersonal priority:

“Being aware of those who are our members in need, sick, etc.” (P)

“Affirm all the prophets; care for all; speak the truth; collaborate with lay and other ordained; ministries inclusive of all people” (P)

“Work to be done, yes, but care for the people who are involved. Be pastoral with one another. Caring – how do we all do that. People are hurting. How can we help them?” (P)

“Listening; communication; dialogue; consensus; meet people where they are.” (PLC)

“Take risks that encourage the life of the community. As people are taken seriously and have a sense that they are heard, they will continue to nourish one another and delve into new areas where they recognize needs.” (PLC)

“Dependable; availability” (D)

“Empathy for your community with open communication; willing to change and implement parish ideas with your own” (D)

“Listener; healthy self-awareness and empathy; hope-filled; non-judgmental; hospitable and approachable; organized and a good delegator” (DR)

Commitment to Shared Responsibility and Empowerment

A few participants also mentioned a commitment to shared responsibility and empowerment as important attributes of pastoral excellence for the future of parish life as indicated below:

“Empowering; recognizing/confirming; serving; providing a framework for the community’s vision of the future.” (P)

“I have serious concerns that those laity who serve in the name of the church do not enter into a process of discernment with the church body. We must discern parish ministry. Is it fitting for an individual to serve in a certain way and is the person prepared and competent to serve?” (P)

“Keeping the broad mission and ministry of the church in mind and before the parish; bringing the tradition of the church to light in the local situation; making sure we live in communion with the universal church” (P)

“Servant...they are with the community, not above it. Willingness to walk with the community in its struggles, joys, etc. Ability to recognize and to call forth the gifts of others – who can share in the ministry of the community.” (PLC)

“Communicate, communicate, communicate; invite others to share in their ministry; reflect and evaluate; are compassionate and direct; project a vision for the parish; call people to accountability; are stewards themselves; connect what we do to the scriptures.” (PLC)

“We are sent out from Mass to go and spread the good news; go in peace to love and serve the Lord.” (D)

“Commitment to shared leadership and empowerment of the laity” (DR)

*“Build relationships within and outside the confines of the church”
(O)*

C. Prophetic Behaviors of Leadership

Symposium participants were asked to identify those prophetic behaviors of leadership they believe will be evident in the parish of the future. They most frequently mentioned a faithful and prophetic stance toward justice; a commitment to a shared vision; and fidelity to the gospels as those marks of prophetic leadership and pastoral excellence.

Faithful and Prophetic Stance toward Issues of Justice (speaking the truth)

Similar to participants in other symposiums, participants in the North Central region identified a faithful and prophetic stance toward issues of justice as an important priority for prophetic leadership. The following comments reflect this belief:

“Be a prophet of hope; continue to be transparent and honest in all interactions.” (P)

“To be a prophet of hope (we are not dead). We are moving forward differently through change. Maintain your roles. Be realistic and we don’t know the future, but God is acting right here and now. Can we dialogue with whoever it is no matter what socio-economic condition may be? Call to look at ourselves beyond our boundaries – universally. Ministry becomes a partnership.” (P)

“Analyze and serve local socio-economic needs – not just within the parish. Outreach to unchurched. Ecumenical social services; awareness of larger church – universal church; being counter-cultural.” (P)

“Voicing – especially around justice issues – the need for diversity; the role of women in the church. How do we use the giftedness of all persons? Listening to others and the Holy Spirit.” (PLC)

“Build relationships with other Christians and with non-Christian persons in the area. Seek out the alienated, the hurting, and the uninvolved. Project a vision and direction for parish life. Promote education for justice and activity for justice. Prayerful and instill in others the desire to grow in holiness. Open to movement of the spirit themselves.” (PLC)

“Be the prophet of hope; have positive attitude; present opportunities; stay in your roles and don’t usurp responsibilities of others; be realistic of what we know and don’t know. Identify God here and now. Voice what we hear in a life-giving way. Have a global perspective! We are on this journey together; a partnership. Builds relationships with others – ethnic, religions, etc.” (PLC)

“Prophet of Hope – keep laity involved not imposing on them – opportunities; realistic in our inability to forecast; ability to voice the spirit (maintaining a relationship with the Holy Spirit); ministry as a partnership (priests, deacons, and lay together); building ecumenical relationships” (D)

“Be the prophet of hope to a grieving parish; acknowledge a call to a larger sense of parish.” (PC)

Be hopeful; positive attitude about opportunities. Transparent – where we are; what we know and don’t know; where/how God is present, even in the midst of ambiguity. True collaboration and true conversation are prophetic in today’s world.” (DR)

“Ecumenical sharing – reaching outside Catholic boundaries; we are called to be prophets – moving to action and out of comfort zones” (DR)

“Keep asking the questions and pushing forward for a more just church; more inclusivity at all levels” (O)

“Prophet of hope – positive attitude; transparency; connected to, listening to, voicing God’s spirit; life giving, building up; communicate with and love all – each of God’s people; relate to all differences; partnering” (O)

Commitment to a Shared Vision

Other participants referenced a commitment to a shared vision of justice as an important priority and attribute of prophetic leadership. These participants believe that understanding the environment and building a shared commitment among parishioners is essential to their prophetic role. The following comments reflect this belief:

“Vision of parish must have counter cultural components; create strategic initiatives to offer folks alternate lifestyle to dominant lifestyle” (P)

“Opportunities; hope; stay in your role; be realistic in what we know and don’t know.” (P)

“Stay in roles – role as PLC or role of sacramental minister; associate with both poor and rich, those in the ‘in’ group and those in the ‘out’ group” (P)

“Preparing the people of God for pastoral changes by offering information – everything is up front. Providing warm welcome to new parishioners and seeking out non-practicing persons. Point out areas of hope ahead. Being proactive and not reactive. Reminding the community how things in the past came through difficulties.” (P)

“Being able to broaden the community’s vision – outside themselves; challenging; willing to take a stand and hold up a vision of justice and peace even when the world/society acts/speaks against it.” (PLC)

“Need to survey the geographical area and the sphere of influence of the parishioners and then make visible the parish as a vibrant, involved community.” (PLC)

“Challenge the structures that hold people down; lead by example.” (PLC)

“Risk takers; courageous; visionary and realistic; listen to the prompting of the spirit; reflective practitioners.” (DR)

Fidelity to the Gospels

Additionally, participants in the North Central Symposium mentioned that the heart of the ministry of justice is rooted in fidelity to the gospels as evident in the following comments:

“Positive and hopeful attitude for the future – in the midst of uncertainty, an awareness of the presence of God” (P)

“Bring the reality of every day life to the spoken Word; challenge complacency and the segregation of the Gospel from our social lives; collaborate with other people of good will.” (P)

“Prophets are people who speak God’s word, but we must discern that it is God’s Word we share.” (D)

“Be able to identify where God is working and challenge people to move toward a culture of life; contemplatives in action; challenge to be church with new ethnic group and move to unity in diversity” (O)

D. Collaborative Behaviors of Leadership

Participants were asked to illustrate the collaborative behaviors of leadership they believe will indicate pastoral excellence in the future. They most frequently mentioned opportunities for shared prayer and discernment, as well as delegation and facilitating opportunities for others to share their gifts.

Creating Opportunities for Shared Prayer, Collaboration, and Discernment (listening)

It is interesting to note that in this particular symposium, some participants rooted the question of collaboration in an environment of shared prayer and discernment. The following comments reflect this formational view of collaborative behaviors of leadership:

Have a listening ear; no power struggle; accepting others; openness to others' gifts" (P)

"Listening – sharing; non-competitive; we can be different, but respect our differences." (P)

"Actively listen; appreciate inquiry; accept the pain and exclusion of the past; goal setting with objective results" (P)

"Formation for collaboration; discernment; national and moving meeting conduct" (P)

"Invite and yet discern. Is this for me? Am I prepared and formed? Lead so all can do their part in the parish work and we all grow to become better at what we do here." (P)

"Help folks discern call, give formation opportunities; collaborative – strong pastor supports a strong deacon, supports strong DRE, etc. We compliment each other. Inclusivity, listening skills, sharing; work at healthy means of solving conflicts, healthy arguments, and conversation" (PLC)

"Providing discernment opportunities for the lay; lot of listening and sharing; avoiding an argumentative (shouting) approach to arrive at the truth" (D)

"Need to provide better spiritual formation and discernment skills for the baptized. True dialogue/discussion to arrive at the truth" (DR)

"Formation that permits people to perform their own ministry; strong pastors support strong deacons and staff; you can't collaborate if you don't know what people are about – listen." (O)

"Take seriously the idea of 'called and gifted' and acknowledge all vocations. Help people discern their gifts. Model the behaviors for others." (O)

“Listen, listen, listen, and speak. Invite and take seriously the input of all. Take seriously and live out the ‘called and gifted’.” (O)

“Importance of offering training to assume the leadership roles; need to listen, accompanying people through their struggles and joys; help people to find common ground around divisive issues – to carry on conversations.” (O)

Delegation and Facilitating Opportunities for Others to Share Their Gifts

As in other symposiums, participants identified delegation and facilitating opportunities for others to share gifts as an important attribute of collaborative leadership for the future as indicated below:

“Calling upon parishioners to help convey information and formulate decisions; respect for clergy and baptized and taking on proper roles; willingness to serve and labor together; selflessly and not over-concerned for self-care” (P)

“Willingness to work along side with others” (PLC)

“We help to discern gifts. We invite and form them for ministry. We minister with and we delegate. We reflect with and we evaluate. We affirm and we redirect. When necessary, we correct or admonish.” (PLC)

“Openness to all; qualifying gifts; calling gifts; adequate training” (PLC)

“Shared vision; respect; understanding roles; listening; shared accountability” (PLC)

“Communication – making sure we are all on the same page.” (D)

“Willingness to support other leaders in the parish to strengthen and maximize their efforts” (PC)

“Willingness; value each person’s identity and contribution; good at networking; connector and animator; promote dialogue” (DR)

“Listening; sharing” (DR)

“Good listening! Open to the gifts of others. Empower the spirit. Consultation and collaboration” (DR)

E. Inclusive and Welcoming Behaviors of Leadership

Participants from the North Central region were asked to describe the welcoming and inclusive behaviors of leadership they consider to be hallmarks of pastoral excellence. They most frequently described these as welcoming, inviting, and listening communities.

Welcoming, Inviting, Inclusive, and Listening Community

The following participant comments indicate an overwhelming view that welcoming and inclusive behaviors of leadership are important to the future of parish communities:

“Being careful to consult young/old, rich/poor, married/single, man/woman, and trying to make decisions by thinking of the impact on these various groups.” (P)

“Hospitality to all, especially the disenfranchised; recognize the damage that has been done by clergy and church workers and be open to absorbing their pain.” (P)

“Offering personal invitation and seeking out needs; networking or connecting people in similar situations; call to accountability and participation in the parish” (P)

“This calls for conversion – a change of heart – because some communities are so unwelcoming.” (P)

Smile and be joyful at the presence of all the children of God. Be intentional about welcoming people to our community of faith; receive hospitality from the other members of the Body of Christ.” (P)

“Integrating not assimilating; emphasis on the gospel, traditional teachings: Holy, Catholic, Apostolic” (P)

“Without listening, we waste our time.” (P)

“Ways of receiving new parishioners, including young adults and young parents; instructing people in Mass – behavior – i.e., in church on Sunday, that is welcoming to the stranger.” (P)

“Learning what are the central symbols of culture that speak to people; inviting people to share their food, music, and language in the social gatherings of the parish” (P)

“I am called to bring people into the animation of their discipleship no matter what the distinctions may be.” (P)

“Gifts are welcomed regardless of gender or ordained/lay vocations.” (PLC)

“To truly invite all people – no matter their strengths and weaknesses” (PLC)

“We seek ways to recognize, welcome, listen, minister, and share ministry with those of various cultures, age groups, and socio-economic groups.” (PLC)

“Handshakes and smiles; meals and socials; inclusive language; doing what is possible in other languages when needed” (PLC)

“Simple hospitality – hospitality is an attitude as much as an action. Frontline staff formation (secretary, maintenance or staff). Invite people to more fully live the Gospel.” (PLC)

“Begins with a desire to meet each as Christ – the Benedictine charism” (PLC)

“We are attempting to implement ‘radical hospitality’ in all parish events.” (PLC)

“Scriptures being translated into inclusive language” (D)

“Be receptive to give and take. Look at the bigger picture – What’s God’s plan not my focus.” (D)

“Baptism is a dual sacrament – the removal of original sin and welcoming into the community” (D)

“Scripture inclusivity language; better training of front line staff (receptionist, maintenance, bookkeeper); welcome into Gospel message” (D)

“Focus on welcoming; bishop’s document: ‘Communities of Salt and Light’ gives great ideas about how to be an inclusive parish. This document says the entire parish should be focused and paying attention to diverse cultures, languages, ethnicities, being respectful, etc.” (PA)

“More inclusive language” (PC)

“Hospitality; encourage involvement” (PC)

“Open to differences; empathic; perceptive (insight); work to build relationships” (DR)

“Move beyond issues of gender, ethnicity – model openness. Affirming, showing mutual trust and respect. Create opportunities for shared prayer; welcoming and inviting community” (DR)

“Welcoming parishes; closing parishes; being together; the way we use language; offer yourself; welcome them into gospel values.” (DR)

“Be aware of the power of language; be inclusive in prayer and ministry” (DR)

“Hospitality; create space and time for fellowship; open to self-disclosure when appropriate; think about things, such as signage, office hours, etc.” (DR)

“Affirm, Thank, Grow, Learning, and Believe!” (DR)

“Gracious hospitality” (DR)

“Language in scriptures to reflect inclusivity; welcome the strangers/ minority into our Eucharistic community and incorporate their symbols and their gifts” (O)

“Listening to everyone to understand their diversity” (O)

“Listening to all includes all” (O)

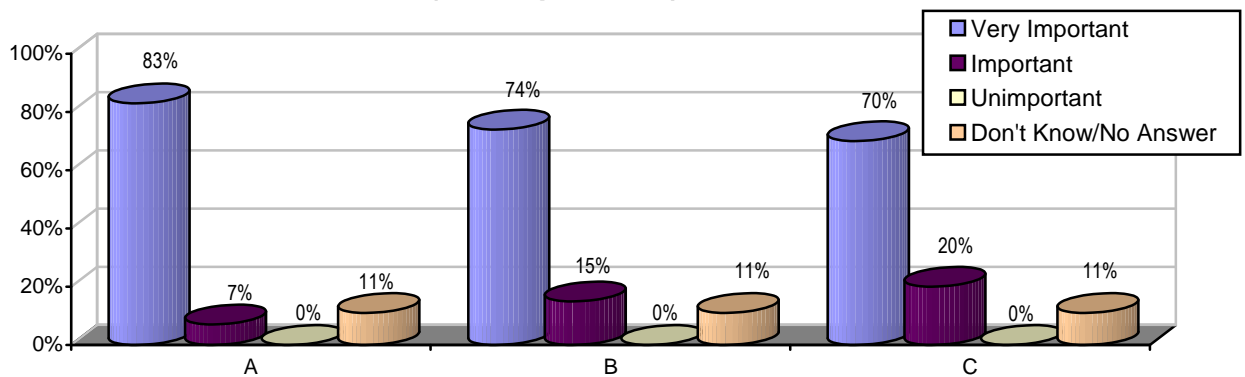
“Hospitality as a priority all the time; at our parish it means food!” (O)

VI. CONCLUDING ASSESSMENT:

To conclude the symposium, participants were asked to privately evaluate their parish ministry on a number of factors. The summary below is for this region's report/symposium only. Data will be aggregated across all regional gatherings for more detailed analysis by cohort groups and a number of detailed demographic factors.

Figure 1 below indicates the importance of the three major elements of pastoral leadership evaluated during the symposium. Among the North Central Symposium participants, all three of these elements were identified as very important to building vibrant faith communities.

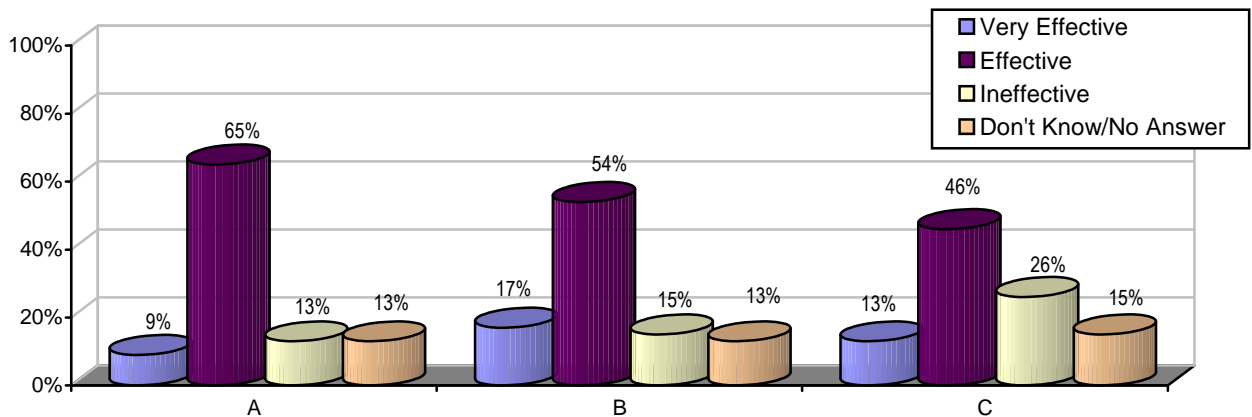
Figure 1
Importance of Pastoral Leadership Elements
(All Respondents)



- 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 an evaluation by pastoral leaders of their current effectiveness in realizing the same three critical dimensions of pastoral leadership. Similar to other symposium participants, North Central pastoral leaders rate their parishes as effective in the three dimensions of pastoral leadership listed below. Unlike their peers, however, North Central participants have higher ratings of ineffective as compared to very effective on these dimensions of pastoral leadership than was expressed by participants from the other symposiums throughout the United States.

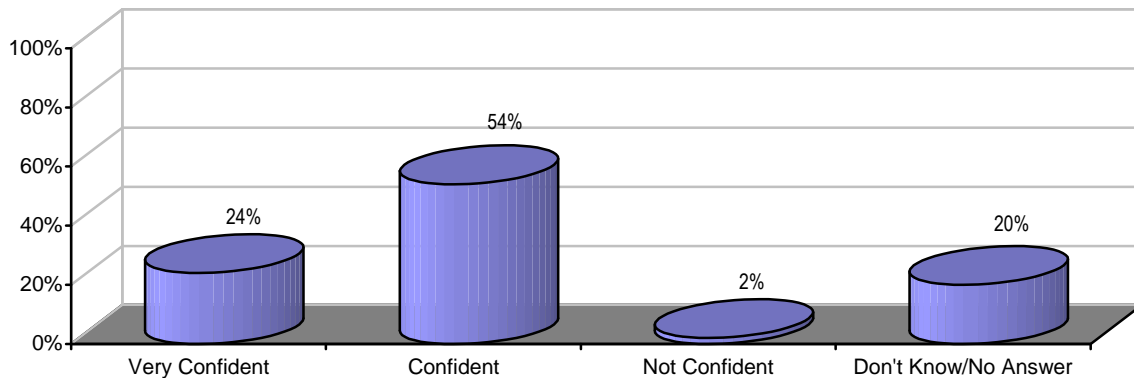
Figure 2
Effectiveness of Parish in Pastoral Leadership
(All Respondents)



- 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 confidence expressed by symposium participants that their parishes will become vibrant faith communities in the future. Similar to their colleagues throughout the country, the majority of these respondents are confident or very confident that their faith communities are in the process of becoming more vibrant faith communities.

Figure 3
Confidence in Parish becoming a Vibrant Faith Community
(All Respondents)



Participants were asked to comment on the confidence rating of their parishes as vibrant faith communities. They offered the following explanation of their views:

“Don’t know the future of the parish and how the other priest in our area faith community will go along with this model of ministry. He is dragging his feet now and does not favor this model.” (P)

“I am the 5th pastor in 10 years. Many have been emotionally abusive. They are healing at a rapid rate. I’m very confident.” (P)

“The shift from ordained priests and consecrated religious to more lay leaders and deacons has highlighted the universal call to holiness. The trend will continue to shape parish culture.” (P)

“We are in the suburbs and have a high number of dedicated and educated people. Moreover, there are many seminarians (61) for the diocese.” (P)

“We have a very talented and committed group of staff and parishioners who aren’t afraid. Yet staff needs to grow in letting go of certain responsibilities.” (P)

“We have just been established as a new parish in the deanery that is still quite transitional demographically, especially regarding age, race, and economic status.” (P)

“There is always hope, but it’s a long process.” (P)

“The parish is new, resulting from a four-parish merger. Much was problematic and has been a developmental barrier, but it’s on the way!” (P)

“It’s a big group to move – need people (core group) to feel this and want it.” (P)

“We were on a positive track and the community was coming alive again – people were committed to a vision, were taking ownership of the parish, their own gifts, etc. The Archdiocese just came in and told them that ‘they weren’t good enough’ and could only be a real parish if they had a priest pastor in charge (from another parish, linking, yet not linking us). The people are angry and feel betrayed. I don’t know if they will joyously work with this new form of leadership since they were not consulted and had no input in the decision.” (PLC)

“There is a learning curve on this for all involved. It will take time. It will take trust and work. We will make mistakes. We must continue to evaluate and then make adjustments to be faithful.” (PLC)

“With the help of the conference experience, knowing for sure that change has to come, I now have hope that though painful, we will respond to new fresh movements of God’s spirit.” (PLC)

“We have recently formulated vision and mission statements. As we use these statements to energize our ministries, we will have a more vibrant faith community. We will be creating a new model and this is difficult and that is a challenge that keeps one from checking the ‘very confident’ box. The desire to be vibrant is there. The process getting there is challenging.” (PLC)

“Clustering planned for 2007 will force us to move from the status quo.” (D)

“Parish leadership and parish are committed to it through our strategic plan and implementation of our plan.” (D)

“At one time, the parish was a vibrant community with a collaborative leader. I know that after the current pastor leaves, it will become vibrant again. The people are just waiting knowing it will come.” (DR)

“With new pastor” (DR)

“Parish has moved from great pain and hurt over the previous pastor. Parish growing, healing...plus, now becoming a suburban-type parish with many, many young families who bring freshness, energy, enthusiasm – making us more vibrant and faith-filled.” (DR)

“We continue to vision ourselves as a vibrant faith community. Hopefully, we can implement the vision with a new bishop.” (DR)

“We are gifted with educated and committed people. Our rural parish has been strengthened through the years with Catholic school education and educated nuns.” (O)

“We now have a pastoral team that is committed to the vision we’ve been articulating this weekend.” (O)

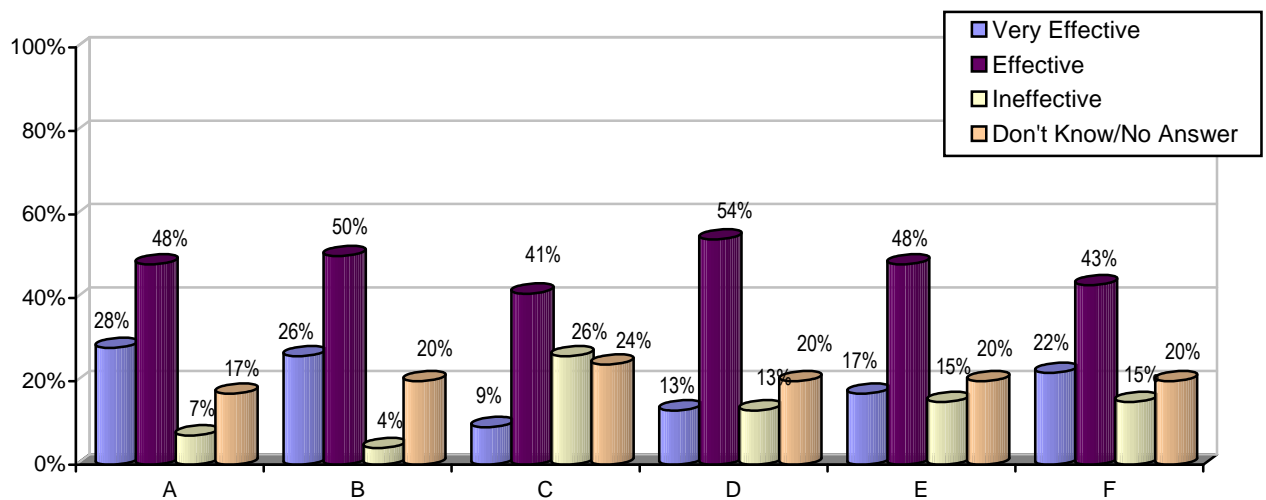
“The elements are in place and we continue moving in that direction. Some years are stronger than others, but the commitment stays strong regardless. The one concern that could stall the parish is a change in the key parish leadership – the pastor. He still has the power to continue the direction or wipe out the structure.” (O)

“We are too top down and too ‘staff do everything’ to involve and empower the parish.” (O)

To conclude the symposium, participants were asked to indicate their effectiveness in demonstrating the concrete behaviors of pastoral excellence. Figure 4 below indicates their rankings on each of these specific behavioral areas.

Participants in the North Central Symposium rated themselves as effective to very effective in the ethical behaviors, prophetic behaviors, inclusive behaviors, and welcoming behaviors of pastoral excellence. They further rated themselves as effective or ineffective in the prophetic behaviors of leadership and the collaborative behaviors of leadership.

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 7-9, 2006, 55 participants from the North Central region of the United States participated in a symposium on the Emerging Models of Pastoral Leadership. The symposium was one of eight regional gatherings sponsored by six leading national Catholic organizations for the Roman Catholic Church. These symposiums were sponsored 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 of Pastoral Leadership**

When discussing the current vitality of their parishes, symposium participants in the North Central region most frequently defined their parishes as:

- **Spiritually alive and healthy**
- **Spiritually alive and healthy with some challenges to address**
- **Struggling to realize their full potential**

When asked to describe how their parishes express a visible commitment to building the life of the faith community, these pastoral leaders most frequently mentioned:

- **A visible and balanced commitment to word, worship, and service**
- **Signs of a visible commitment with areas of needed attention**
- **Outreach and service within and beyond the parish**
- **Whole community catechesis through education and formation**

Symposium participants were asked to evaluate the extent to which their parishes reflect a total ministering community involving pastors, staff, and councils working together. These participants most frequently characterized their efforts as:

- **Collaborative among pastors, staff, councils, and parishioners**
- **Making steady progress**
- **Struggling or hurting to realize this reality**
- **Dependent on the wishes of the pastor**

Participants were asked to identify their current parish leadership models. They most frequently mentioned:

- **Collaborative with shared ministry**
- **Traditional, hierarchical model of leadership**
- **Centered on a core team of professional staff**

Participants were asked what type of leadership their pastors or parish life coordinators provide. They most frequently mentioned:

- **Strong centralized leadership**
- **Engaged leadership involving others in envisioning the parish**
- **Role in transition or change**

When asked to describe the emerging roles of pastoral staff in leading parishes, these participants described:

- **Team planning, program implementation, and training approach**
- **Empowering, facilitating, and allowing the gifts of others to emerge**
- **Hindered by various factors**

When asked to define the types of leadership provided by lay parishioners in the community, participants most frequently mentioned:

- **Active and engaged communities of leadership**
- **Engaged communities, but in transition**
- **Passive and not well-engaged parishioners**

When invited to comment on the intentionality of their parish leadership models and why they function as they do, participants identified the following reasons:

- **Leadership of the pastor and staff**
- **Intentional model for parish life**
- **Necessity and present needs**
- **Openness and involvement in parish life**
- **Unintentional approach to parish leadership**

When asked to describe the future emerging models of parish leadership in their faith communities, participants most frequently mentioned:

- **Increased lay leadership and dependence on the laity**
- **Small faith-based communities**
- **Model in transition or experiencing change**

As in other regional symposiums throughout the United States, participants clearly identified an essential link between a commitment to a total ministering community of pastors, staff, and parishioners working together as part of a healthy future.

When further identifying their best practices for leadership in a vibrant faith community, participants most frequently mentioned:

- **Commitment to collaboration and shared ministry**
- **Active listening and sharing of information within and beyond the parish**
- **Emphasis on prayer, spirituality, and faith formation**
- **Hospitable and welcoming communities**

When describing their challenges in building vibrant faith communities, pastoral leaders from the North Central region most frequently mentioned:

- **Overcoming parochialism and resistance to change**
- **Systematic and structural issues in church leadership**
- **Dominant culture of individualism and busyness**
- **Emerging issues of theological, cultural, and multi-cultural diversity**

When asked to identify opportunities for the future of parish leadership, participants most frequently mentioned:

- **Calling forth the gifts of others**
- **Ongoing formation, education, and evangelization**
- **Demonstrating the relevance of faith to the lives of people**

When asked to describe the parish of the future, participants most frequently mentioned:

- **Increased lay leadership**
- **Inclusive of diverse people and forms of leadership**
- **Smaller faith-based communities**

When asked how close or how far they are from their future vision of the parish, participants indicated they are either:

- **Working toward a preferred vision, but not there yet**
- **Significantly far from the vision**

As part of the symposium process, participants worked in small teams to imagine parish life in the Year 2025. When asked how their parish structures will evolve, participants most frequently mentioned:

- **Changing parish structures and roles**
- **More involvement in leadership of the laity**

When asked to further describe the expected evolution of ordained and lay ecclesial leadership roles, participants most frequently mentioned:

- **Increased dependent on the leadership of the laity and deacons**
- **More diverse forms of orders**
- **Greater reliance on ethnically diverse priests**

When participants were asked to indicate what forms of parish leadership will be provided by parishioners in the future, they most frequently mentioned realizing the baptismal call of the laity.

When describing future expectations for parish worship ministries, participants in the North Central region most frequently mentioned:

- **More diverse forms of worship, including the use of technology**
- **Deeper commitment, appreciation, and ownership of worship among parishioners**

When asked to describe future trends for parish ministries of the word, participants most frequently mentioned:

- **Increased formation opportunities for the laity**
- **More use of technology, internet, and media in formation and education**
- **Small faith-based communities**

When asked to define future trends in parish ministries of service, participants most frequently mentioned:

- **Greater awareness and emphasis on social justice and Catholic social teachings**
- **Increased role of service as part of the parish identity**

When asked to define expected ethical behaviors of pastoral excellence, participants described these as:

- **Just organizational practices**
- **Respect for the dignity of others**
- **Personal ethics, integrity, and honesty**

When asked to further define the pastoral behaviors of leadership reflecting excellence, participants defined these as:

- **Strong, affirming, and relational presence with people**
- **Commitment to shared responsibility and empowerment**

When asked to define the prophetic behaviors of leadership emerging in their local communities, participants most frequently mentioned:

- **Faithful and prophetic stance toward issues of justice**
- **Commitment to a shared vision**
- **Fidelity to the gospels**

When asked to illustrate the collaborative behaviors of leadership, participants most frequently mentioned:

- **Creating opportunities for shared prayer, collaboration, and discernment**
- **Delegation and facilitating opportunities for others to share their gifts**

When defining inclusive behaviors of leadership, participants clearly expect the future of parish life to be characterized by welcoming, inviting, inclusive, and listening communities.

This North Central Symposium Report represents a detailed analysis of the findings and themes from the North Central Regional Symposium. These findings should be understood as representing one of eight regional symposiums scheduled throughout the United States between 2004 and 2006.