



Creating Consensus on Vision and Strategy

EMERGING MODELS OF PASTORAL LEADERSHIP
NORTHEAST REGIONAL SYMPOSIUM REPORT

JUNE 23-25, 2005

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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**
- **South**
- **Mid-Atlantic**
- **North Central**
- **Southwest**

On June 23-25, 2005, pastoral leaders throughout the Northeast participated in a regional symposium at the University of Connecticut in Storrs. Participants attended from the states of New York, New Jersey, Vermont, Massachusetts, Connecticut, New Hampshire, Maine, Rhode Island, and District of Columbia.

A total of 72 pastoral leaders and symposium sponsors participated in the Northeast Regional Symposium with 50 participants completing reflection guides. The responses from these guides were used to formulate this report.

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

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

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

Table 1
Northeast Leadership Symposium
(Total Respondents = 50)

Respondents	No.	%
a. Pastors	8	16%
b. Parish Life Coordinators	2	4%
c. Deacons	2	4%
d. Pastoral Associates	5	2%
e. Parish Pastoral Council Representatives	5	2%
f. Diocesan Representatives	13	26%
g. Others	7	14%
Left Blank	8	16%

Table 3
Age Range of Respondents
(Total Respondents =50)

Respondent Age Range	No.	%
a. Under 29 years of age	0	0%
b. 30 to 39 years of age	2	4%
c. 40 to 49 years of age	3	6%
d. 50 to 59 years of age	22	44%
e. 60 to 69 years of age	13	26%
f. 70 or above	2	4%
Left Blank	8	16%

Table 2
Gender
(Total Respondents = 50)

Gender	No.	%
a. Male	20	4%
b. Female	22	44%
Left Blank	8	16%

Table 4
Size of Parish Households
(Total Respondents = 50)

Size of Parish Households	No.	%
a. Under 500 households	4	8%
b. 501 to 1200 households	14	28%
c. 1201 to 2000 households	14	28%
d. Over 2001 households	7	14%
Left Blank	11	22%

Table 5
Highest Level of Education
(Total Respondents = 50)

Level of Education	No.	%
a. High School	3	6%
b. Associates Degree	0	0%
c. Bachelor's Degree	7	14%
d. Master's Degree	26	52%
e. Doctoral Degree	6	12%
Left Blank	8	16%

Table 6
Diocese in which you Serve
(Total Respondents = 50)

Diocese	No.	%
a. Albany, NY	5	10%
b. Boston, MA	3	6%
c. Buffalo, NY	1	2%
d. Burlington, VT	2	4%
e. Hartford, CT	5	10%
f. Manchester, NH	3	6%
g. New York, NY	1	2%
h. Norwich, CT	1	2%
i. Providence, RI	4	8%
j. Rochester, NY	3	6%
k. Springfield, MA	4	8%
l. Syracuse, NY	3	6%
m. Washington DC	1	2%
n. Worcester, MA	3	6%
Left Blank	11	22%

The following symposium report captures top level issues and observations of the Northeast Symposium participants. It is important to note that the findings of this symposium may not be normative across all eight regions of the United States convened by the emerging models project. In 2007, a concluding report will be published summarizing the themes for all eight regional symposiums.

II. FUTURE OF PARISH LEADERSHIP ROLES:

Participants in the Northeast Symposium listened to brief case study presentations by their colleagues describing current experiences of parish life and leadership roles. In small group discussions and through comments in their symposium reflection guides, participants were asked to describe their parish communities based on a number of factors, including a spiritually alive and healthy community; a visible commitment to building the life of the faith community through word, worship, and service; and a total ministering community, including the leadership of pastors, staff, and councils working together.

A. Spiritually Alive and Healthy Community

A significant number of participants indicate that their parishes are spiritually alive and healthy as evidenced through their liturgy, worship, and strong community identity. Other participants believe their parishes are making steady progress toward becoming spiritually alive and healthy. A few participants indicate that their parishes are currently weak and in need of greater vitality.

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

Participants who indicate their parishes are spiritually alive and healthy often indicate that liturgy, worship, and strong community identity are the essential elements of their vibrancy. The following comments reflect descriptions of parishes that are spiritually alive and healthy:

“I think that we are there in some areas more than others. But, there is a great vitality in our staff/leaders of seeking the promptings of the spirit wherever they are and nurturing them. Moreover, we try to help people nurture the ‘holy desires’ they have inside.” (P)

“The Gospel is preached. The poor are served.” (P)

“Our parish is growing in numbers and in a building program. We have good liturgy and work at it with an active liturgy committee. We had good preaching.” (P)

“It is alive because in the past two years we have brought prayer to the council which has transformed from a parish council to a pastoral council. As a result, there is visioning instead of deliberation. Focus is more on the spiritual and pastoral topics. Vibrancy is the topic. The parish must be vibrant in area of religious education, evangelization, justice, worship, and service.” (P)

“Community is growing in health and spirituality as people of the parish has been invited more and more to take part in the life of the parish and ownership of what church/parish is.” (P)

“Evidence of spiritual welfare of the parishes is exhibited in fairly regular Mass attendance and people’s satisfaction with preaching and music at liturgies. Small group of active parishioners is growing. Continued efforts to build community as a parish family.” (PA)

“Yes, my parish is spiritually alive and healthy, but there is always room for growth.” (PA)

“Our spiritually healthy community has its roots and nourishment in Sunday Eucharist. When nourished by the Word and Communion, parishioners focus on their baptismal call.” (PA)

“Our parish family continues to be spiritually alive with excellent liturgies, opportunities for faith formation for all, and opportunities for outreach. It is a warm and welcoming community in which many visitors (2 hotels nearby) comment on the vibrant and inclusive feeling. Young families feel the welcoming tone for their children. Parishioners and staff feel nourished within and through community. Despite the uncertainties of reconfiguration of parishes, parishioners and staff continually focus on trust in the Lord and the presence of the spirit in the process.” (PA)

“Using the model of small Christian communities, I would say we are moving from a set of ungrouped committees (Cursillo, charismatic, catechist, rosary society, etc.) to a community with an inner and outer circle where those involved in spiritual ministries are in the inner circle and those ‘Mass goers’ in the outer circle.” (PA)

“My parish’s pastor is a humble individual who enables his community members to use their gifts, as well as their talents to their fullest extent. He attempts to encourage each member to become an active participant in the community for those who are willing to do so to come forth at a point when they feel ready. Others do not so ‘visibly’ shine forth. There are many individuals, as well as community (by and large) for all to become involved with which the pastor’s support people become engaged.” (PC)

“Accurate description per national statistics, but only 40% attendance at Mass. Those who are involved are very involved. We need a plan to reach out to the others.” (PC)

“Completed Renew 2000 and has created a more spiritually alive and somewhat healthy community.” (PC)

“Very well – St. Francis has a long tradition of prayer and spirituality. Our church is the only RI church I know of that is open 24/7 – people may (and do) stop by at any time, day and night.” (PC)

“Everybody’s welcome; diverse opportunities that serve the different spiritual needs of people; willingness to evaluate – able to look at successes, as well as failures.” (DR)

“The parish is more concerned with the needs of others, especially the elderly, homeless, and sick and alienated.” (DR)

“Yes. The community is not perfect, but there is more enthusiasm than discouragement.” (DR)

“We have perpetual adoration (24/7). We have created a retreat ministry called Mission Renewal. It is an 8-evening program with speakers, liturgy, activities, and social gatherings.” (DR)

“Our pastor’s gifts lie in liturgy, homiletics, and personal interactions. He is not a good manager. However, the community, in spite of the many logistical, organizational difficulties, is well fed spiritually. If we had more available funds, a parish team might complete the picture.” (DR)

“Discipleship...people making a commitment; generations of faith...a genuine community; makes for a wide diversity of spiritualities; just faith...Project Rachel...a wide variety; resilience – the ability of the pastor to delegate, invite, and empower, involving lay leadership. Involved – how about a parishioner directed parish retreat in the spring and fall (Dominican model). Quality of Liturgy – presence – music.” (DR)

“Our parish is spiritually alive and healthy. The liturgies are well done and many liturgical ministers are involved. The homilies are well thought out and inspiring. There are multiple opportunities for devotions, adoration and community prayer. There is energy in our parish.” (O)

“We are truly a spiritually alive parish community. My concern is (and seems always to have been) that community, the real doers, is only a percentage of those who claim to be a part of the parish. Many are content to ‘get their sacraments’ and ‘go to church’ (or not) and ‘be Catholic’, but contribute very little to the life of the community. But, we do have a vibrant community and people are happy to be ‘associated’ with it. I just want them to have and to be more!!” (O)

“We have numerous ministries with lay leaders and pastoral support by pastor, deacon and a Franciscan Sister. We collaborate with a local Protestant parish by sharing our two nurses with them for check-ups. Support for our elementary school.” (O)

“Our parish is one that is spiritually alive and growing in many ways. It has a sense of enthusiasm and empowerment.” (O)

“Integrates a range of spiritualities from Eucharistic Adoration to Just Faith and all in between. Liturgy is important – well-prepared homilies and very good music.” (O)

Making Steady Progress

While not ready to fully claim the label of spiritually alive and healthy, a number of participants indicate their parishes are certainly making steady progress toward a greater spiritual vitality and health as a community. The following comments reflect this transitional, but growing stage:

“What exists is so different for each place. I cannot think of any indicator that would be helpful. I know dirt poor people and parishes that are alive and healthy spiritually and otherwise, I know parishes that are only 20 families that are vibrant as well. My community is growing in these areas – getting better.” (P)

“A work in progress. All ready, but not yet. Grace building in nature; generally well-rounded, diverse and moving to collaborative style; hesitant to stop and ‘smell the coffee’, reflect and pray in non-formal ways and settings; healthy diversity of opinions and theologies and spirituality” (P)

“The answer to this question would be different based on who you ask. I believe we work very hard to put together liturgies that speak of God’s love, but the unhealthy element of the community comes out in the non-welcoming spirit of some of the members. This would especially be true of those members who have been involved for many years. New members are welcomed to get involved as long as they do things the way they have always been done.” (P)

“I would describe my community as moderately spiritual and healthy. The dynamics are changing. The elders are still quite pious. I suppose that is more or less the same as spiritual. The young families are strong church goers, but many lack meaningful ways to nurture their spirituality (as a community) outside of Mass. There is a strong sense of family here – something very pure, honest, and holy. But, we could do better. We are very generous, love our liturgies, etc., but typically as New Englanders, aren’t comfortable reflecting and praying together in bodies such as parish councils, etc. Room remains for further growth as everywhere else.” (P)

“We are waiting to be born. I feel like we are on the brink of something great.” (PLC)

“Is waiting to be born” (D)

“Will this bring people closer to God? Will this make us holier? There are many ‘seekers’ in our parish. People who know they want something, but are not sure what they want. We have good liturgies and there are other spiritual programs. We are headed toward a vibrant spiritual community.” (PC)

“We are on the early stages with a new pastor. After thirteen years of no pastoral committee, no finance committee, and just a lot of ‘gorilla tactics’. The new pastor is opening things up, but the community is reluctant.” (PC)

“Sundays – yes – very much alive. Monday through Saturday – not as much or as strong. People don’t really understand what ‘baptismal call’ means, so they don’t see a need to participate actively.” (DR)

“We have many signs of vitality, but a ways to go. For example, small Christian communities, well attended missions, a core involved in Cursillo or charismatic renewal, good preaching, but some worship sites struggle to provide good music. Many just go to Mass.” (DR)

“Alive and healthy, but in need of spiritual renewal. Our parish needs more active participation of its members at Sunday Mass and in various ministries that it offers. Our parish is implementing whole community Catechesis to educate and nurture faith formation for its members.” (O)

“We have a traditional Polish parish rich in liturgies, processions, and hymns. We are lacking to a large degree in ministries and community experiences. We are healthy in some areas and in need of spiritual health in others.” (O)

Weak and In Greater Need of Vitality

A few participants indicate their parishes are still in need of greater vitality. This less optimistic view of participants is often described as a missing critical element to being spiritually alive and healthy as reflected in the following comments:

“I am a member of a merged parish. It has been less than a year, therefore, we are still at the point of trying to heal and rebuild.” (DR)

“Would not refer to my parish community, but at the beginning of the process to make it healthy.” (DR)

“Not really healthy – one assistant is ‘at war’ with the Bishop and the Pastor. This has divided the parish. People are siding with the assistant and withholding contributions to the parish.” (O)

“We have ‘pockets’ of life, but it’s pretty individualistic. The staff fails to bring much of the individual ministries together to form whole community.” (O)

“As someone said, ‘If you aren’t dead...’, so there is life. The question is about quality. Our liturgies are not vibrant, our community is not close. However, there are groups that are alive – prayer groups, small Christian communities, the marriage prep group, and the Rosary group. I do not see us as healthy because we are losing people and we are not doing things to welcome and attract new people.” (O)

“Meets the needs of the community sacramentally and theologically, but missing the healthy part by not having a more in depth involvement of the laity.” (O)

B. Visible Commitment to Building the Life of the Faith Community (word, worship, and service)

Participants were asked to describe the visible commitment of their parishes to building the life of the faith community through word, worship, and service. The majority of participants indicate that the prayer, worship, and Eucharistic life of their communities are very strong. Others indicate they are building the life of the faith community through inclusive ministries involving many members. Only a few participants indicate their parishes demonstrate a lack of visible commitment to building the life of the faith community through word, worship, and service.

Effective Prayer, Worship, and Eucharistic Celebration

Among participants who describe their commitment to building the life of the faith community through prayer, worship, and Eucharistic celebrations, worship appears to be the center of their community development activities as reflected in the following comments:

“Worship – sacramental life essential; word – study, education in holistic way is beginning to emerge; service – pockets of service, however, beginning to intentionally develop stance of justice and action beyond charity; significant lay ministry development and use.” (P)

“My pastor’s mantra is that ‘we’ must proclaim and live the Gospel on the Essex (our town) community. Liturgies are realized as being critical. Preaching and the music ministry are given special emphasis. We are also a stewardship parish. Service (especially hands-on staff) opportunities are offered quarterly at least. Our sense of ourselves is that we need to be more welcoming and inclusive as a faith community and are moving toward this.” (P)

“Working models of prayer and worship committees are a visible commitment to the building up of the faith life of the parish.” (PA)

“This describes our larger parish (4,000 families) well. There’s a growing attentiveness to the Word and a thirst for scripture studies. Good liturgies attract many back to the parish. Involvement in outreach is shared by many, usually in response to directives/initiatives of the Parish Social Ministry Committee.” (PA)

“A commitment to excellent liturgies through the presence of visiting presiders with excellent preaching, focus on active participation of the assembly, and music liturgy committee continually evaluates liturgies and offers new ways to improve liturgies for all. Service within community and to broaden community is prevalent and there is wide participation. There is not currently a strong social justice component though. Through a variety of methods, the community is offered insights to how their life is reflected in the word of God. Status quo is not engrained in the leadership model.” (PA)

“Our pastor works well to bring forth the faith of his community by presenting faith moving homilies in this preaching that reach the community members. The community as a whole carries on many services to our own community, as well as others in the surrounding areas; however, a mechanism is needed to involve more of our members.” (PC)

“We have tried through Renew 2000 to build up the faith community in word, worship, and service. We do a good job of worship and service. We are slowly building ‘word’. A more inclusive environment needs to be developed. Everyone should be invited to be part of the life of our faith community. Each of us needs to be accepted at the place we find ourselves.” (PC)

“Liturgy and preaching in our parish are wonderful. Gospel is made present to everyone. Service in our parish consists of tithing to Haiti and various needy communities. Our parish has a busy food pantry. The parish helps many people with financial support. This is not known by most people in the pew.” (DR)

“Liturgies are alive. Homilies are well developed and challenging. Opportunities to live out the word through service and social justice activities.” (DR)

“Liturgy is the top priority. It makes all the difference.” (DR)

“Three daily Masses; confessions three times a day and weekends; processions on Corpus Christi, feasts; there are lectors, EM, ministry to the elderly and homebound. We are lacking in ministry to youth, couples, singles and the starving for personal relationship with God.” (O)

Inclusive Ministries Involving Many Members

Other participants describe their visible commitment to building the life of the faith community as more effectively engaging people in the mission of the parish, involving many members in ministry. The following comments reflect this inclusive approach to including the parish as a whole in building the life of the faith community:

“Our parish worked for months on a new mission statement which included word, worship, and service. It took a collaborative and prayerful effort to derive the mission statement. It will take collaboration to live it!” (P)

“Many involved in various ministries in all areas” (PA)

“Our current pastor’s strength is keeping us focused on our faith community. He and the parishioners share this focus. New efforts focus in this area.” (PC)

“The parish council has spearheaded a stewardship program which at first was seen as a means of assisting the parish financially. At the same time in conjunction with that program, the Faith Formation introduced Stewardship in a whole community catechesis approach. In a year’s time, many of the parish council see stewardship in a broader sense as time and talent as well as treasure. This concept has spread to a broader sense within the entire community.” (PC)

“Very strong commitment to stewardship, e.g., in a parish of 1500 families, we have 150 Eucharistic ministers. The title (10% of annual collections) to needy organizations in the area.” (PC)

“We are presently in the educational phase of becoming a stewardship parish which I believe will be the visible commitment to enhancing the faith life of the parish community.” (DR)

“Effort to build community; visible leadership of laity; focus on evangelization/ stewardship; great fellowship” (DR)

“Visible signs include moving to whole community catechesis – using word, worship, and service as curriculum.” (O)

“As a parish, we spent a year and a half defining prayerfully what we need, want, and desire. From that, we developed programs, processes, and facilities that would meet them. To do this, we had about 150 people involved in a variety of committees.” (O)

“Our parishioners are involved and generous. Our church was renovated recently. A parish center was built and people respond abundantly with food and gift donations.” (O)

“Once again, that percentage (30 or 40%) are very committed. Our often articulated question – ‘How will this help to bring us all closer to God?’ – permeates all we do and keeps us on track. I wish more people were more generous with their time, talent and treasure, however. But, we are very visible with our ministries – big on social service, education, visiting the sick, etc. We are well known and appreciated, but we’d like that appreciation to be more visible in the time, talent and treasure!” (O)

“Our parish is very much committed to building the life of the faith community. Through our Pastoral Council’s vision and commitment, we plan to implement whole community Catechesis, small faith sharing communities, and promote stewardship.” (O)

Lack of Visible Commitment

Only a few pastoral leaders indicate their parishes have a weak or limited visible commitment to building the life of the faith community. The following disappointments are noted by those participants:

“Is on hold because of external concerns” (D)

“There may be a visible commitment, but some would say there is almost an underlying attitude by the pastor to have things fail (by virtue of his lack of promotion, attention, presence, etc.). Actually, this statement used to apply to our parish, but under the current leadership, it doesn’t.” (O)

“The parish has such a commitment, but is handicapped by the divisions.” (O)

“Little is done here, especially in the area of liturgy which is often staid and boring. This is a huge change in the past few years as we used to have vibrant and spiritually alive liturgies.” (O)

C. Total Ministering Community (including the leadership of pastor, staff, and councils together)

Participants were asked to what extent their parishes demonstrate a total ministering community. Participants further define their communities as collaborative, involving pastors, staff, and parishioners together in ministry. Other participants indicate their parishes are making steady progress, while a very limited number of participants indicate their parishes are struggling or hurting to realize this reality.

Collaborative Effort among Pastor, Staff, and Parishioners

Among those participants who describe their efforts as a total ministering community, there is much enthusiasm for the collaborative effort evident among pastors, staff, and parishioners as a whole. The following comments reflect this optimism:

“We use the table approach – everyone around the table having input to come up with a vision, a plan, and a way to implement.” (P)

“Why not the whole community? Pastor, staff (small), and council are helping and exploring the possibilities of what can be. TMC – there is movement and a desire to have more competencies and develop a vision that way.” (P)

“As a PLC, I have developed an active council and mentored our ‘secretary’ into an administrative assistant. Together, we have traveled with our community through this clustering process. It has been noted that our parish is the only one really ready to make the step.” (PLC)

“Pastor is just one member in the round table of leadership. The pastor is a collaborative personality and works to bring forth a community that shares its gifts.” (PA)

“Yes, the pastor, staff and council work together in leadership. The pastor still views himself as the spiritual guide and encourages the staff with himself to lead the parish. We are in the process of encouraging parishioners to become more involved and become leaders themselves.” (PA)

“There is a beginning of a more inclusive ministry community in our parish. Using the model of Renew 2000, our leadership is looking at ways to include the whole community. On the other hand, I think that the old way of doing business where the pastor is in total charge is still present. Lay ministry is still not being taken seriously enough.” (PC)

“Strong staff that works well, prays well, and delegates well. Open to the gifts of the parish community.” (DR)

“Role of pastoral council as visioning body; tithing parish...give grants for social service...have a Latino sister parish. Service is a constructive area for all parishioners from community – includes kindergarten and up.” (DR)

“Each core group, youth, staff, etc., takes responsibility for ensuring that some aspect of seasonal liturgy is continued. There is consensus and collaboration.” (DR)

“Yes, this is us. Active outreach from the parish to the civic community.” (DR)

“While I do not have a leadership position in the parish, my perception is of a total ministering community.” (O)

“We have a great pastor and good staff. We work together well and are moving forward. Our challenges are there, however. One is to better merge our Anglo and Hispanic people and ministries.” (O)

“We share the load for all.” (O)

“The DRE, Deacons, and Music Director do work together. Parish Council is committed to the welfare of the parish.” (O)

“Very good. Our pastor and his staff have done remarkable ongoing work with the Holy Spirit to total ministering to the community. Prayer is first and foremost important followed by empowerment and action.” (O)

“Pastor encourages parishioners and supports our efforts, but has the ultimate say so. There is a move to work together, to share ideas, but I believe we have a long, tough journey ahead of us.” (O)

Making Steady Progress

Among those participants who indicate their parishes are struggling to implement a total ministering community, they often describe their efforts as in the early stages or just beginning as indicated by the following comments:

“End times! We all hope to be there. We are working toward that kind of model.” (PLC)

“We are trying to make the cross (vertical as well as horizontal leadership). Some thinkers, some doers, but at the same time, we try not to exclude anyone.” (PA)

“With the events in Boston over the past several years, it is obvious to me that the faith community accepts their leadership role in various ways along side the pastor and parish staff. In many ways, the leadership ministers to one another.” (PA)

“Areas of ministry divided between pastor and pastoral minister according to interest and talents. We could use more in the area of the elderly and infirmed.” (PC)

“This ministry concept has grown with the stewardship concept. There seems to be a need to break down barriers and compartments so that more people within the community will feel comfortable using their gifts.” (PC)

“We could do better here. The pastor is new in the last year. We need a little more time before we are all sowing in the same direction.” (PC)

“Not yet, but I believe we are on our way.” (DR)

“At the beginning of the process” (DR)

“Not total, but significant awareness of the call to service.” (DR)

“We are developing a sense of ‘total responsibility’ community that involves this – all working together.” (O)

Struggling or Hurting to Realize their Reality

A few participants indicate their parishes are struggling or hurting to realize the reality of a total ministering community. The following disappointments reflect this reality for some participants in the Northeast:

“A slow growth in process” (P)

“Somewhat this describes us. We do some things very well – children’s and youth ministry for example. Yet, there are whole facts of parish life that receive little staff support (our financial constraints are growing). I would say that our parish council is one of our most dissatisfactory areas. It is largely ineffectual and has no real vision and hasn’t been able to keep itself focused to the tasks it sets for itself. Its meetings are numbing. Our stewardship (recently) initiative has been exciting so far – visionary, grass roots oriented – ministers versus the old volunteer model. We need more interns and effective (non-staff) lay leadership that is truly response to our people and goal/task oriented.” (P)

“All three have points that describe my parish. I feel we as church have not healed enough for all of this to happen.” (D)

“We fall short here.” (DR)

“The parish council is limited by a depressed staff that tends to stifle creativity.” (O)

“Not quite – we are very similar – no critics among us – not good!” (O)

“No, splinter groups, but the mission of the church is at its heart.” (O)

D. Current Parish Leadership Models

Symposium participants were asked to indicate the leadership model that best characterizes their current parish communities. In a distinct regional flavor, the majority of written comments indicate their parishes are still traditional, demonstrating a hierarchical model of leadership. While a number of participants indicate their parish models are collaborative with shared ministry, this is to a lesser extent when compared to other regions. Still other participants indicate their current parish leadership models are dominated by a core team of professional staff. Finally, a few participants indicate their leadership models are weak with no specific model present.

Traditional, Hierarchical Model of Leadership

Among those participants who describe their models of leadership as traditional or hierarchical, some participants indicate that pastors function with a significant degree of openness to the participation of others. A few also indicate that the model of parish leadership is heavily controlled and dominated by the pastor. In either approach, the common denominator for leadership is the style or approach of the pastor as indicated by the following comments:

“Pastor still is seen as essential leader even though part-time. Growing sense of ownership (i.e., lay leadership and new stewardship director). Parish Council needs to develop a visionary stance.” (P)

“As a pastor, I see myself as open to shared responsibility, but am not able to do it in a full way because of some practical reasons. 1) Lack of individuals who are qualified and are trained in pastoral leadership. 2) Making the commitment to set the stage for working out of a new model. Time is always a major constraint.” (P)

“Pastor does set the tone, but does enable others to take ownership.” (P)

“Priest pastor – all lay groups report to him.” (D)

“If you present the pastor with an idea he agrees with it will happen. If he does not agree, it will never happen.” (D)

“Very active pastoral council; consensus-based; a pastor who likes to do things himself.” (PC)

“Our model is still very much in control by the pastor. The pastoral council is partly hand-picked by him. Others are invited, but he is in total control.” (PC)

“I’m the boss! Collaboration; team building where the priest is a member of the team.” (DR)

“Traditional: pastor, associate, deacon, DRE, certified parish financial administrator” (DR)

“Pastor of multiple parishes; clusters; team; collaborative; Parish Life Director; traditional pastoral model. Attitude counts, especially from the pastor. Pastor needs re-education for the new organization.” (DR)

“Currently, the pastor is in charge.” (O)

“As a parish community, we follow and respect the ideas and vision of our pastor, yet he empowers his people in ministries as needed and guided by the Holy Spirit.” (O)

“While our pastor is very open and truly seek input from his two pastoral associates, his staff and the community at large, he nevertheless operates from a hierarchical model all ‘from the books’. But, it works for us. If the pastor was different – personality-wise – I don’t think it would work.” (O)

“We have a ‘typical’ model of pastor, lay deacon, office staff (religious education coordinator, youth and adult ministers). In addition, part of the model is responsibility based, that is, if you come up with an idea (anyone in the parish), you also need to begin the thinking and planning of executing that idea.” (O)

“Pastor is leader. (Father knows best.) Pastoral council of 17 people in charge of different areas. Sister is in charge of RCIA. Brother is in charge of finances. I think we have the traditional hierarchical model.” (O)

Collaborative with Shared Ministry

A number of participants indicate their parishes have moved to a more collaborative model with shared ministry, engaging others in the effort of building the community and service beyond the community. Among those participants who present this collaborative model of ministry, the following comments reflect their parish circumstances:

“As pastor, I am working to develop and build a team. This was not their experience prior with a different idea from the pastor and as members of separate communities. This team building of the staff I would say is a main focus for my work.” (P)

“Recognize God’s prompting model; think outside the box model; lay, staff, pastor collaboration model; inter-cultural diversity model; orchestra/symphony model” (P)

“We are using a community of faith approach which clusters (groups) 4 parishes together with a common staff (a pastor, two priest associates, a full-time deacon, Director of Religious Education, Faith Formation Director) who serve the parishes and even reach beyond the cluster to other parishes.” (P)

“People tell me that life with the parish before used to be pretty quiet. They weren’t committed to most anything. Leadership models emerging invite collaboration and input from any segment of community that seeks to be heard. Pastors seeking to get them to discern their gifts and roles.” (P)

“Collaborative mentoring – We learn together and get better everyday.” (PLC)

“Collaborative with pastor as spiritual guide” (PA)

“Pastor is creative and often initiates activity/programs and ‘encourages’ staff to implement plan and invites individuals to participate in event or program. He trusts staff to carry out roles. Priests’ presence is appreciated at functions.” (PA)

“We are intentional on being an empowering community that calls forth the gifts of the parish members. The parish is incorporating a covenant model. For several years, we have worked on a model of a parish with only a part-time pastor needing leadership from within the community. The recent pastor promoted this as he drew near to retirement.” (PA)

“Emerging leadership by staff and others that see a need and bring the idea forth. The pastor is a ‘bottom up’ leader who guides the process by giving experiential and spiritual input.” (DR)

“There is a conscious attempt for collaboration. The pastor readily delegates, but finds it hard at first to get those willing.” (DR)

“A collaborative model is most in evidence.” (DR)

“Pastor and team = collaboration” (DR)

“Both ordained, religious, and lay share with support from ordained and religious” (O)

Centered on a Core Team of Professional Staff

A limited number of participants indicate their leadership models are primarily led by a core team of professional staff involving the pastor and other ministry professionals as indicated below:

“Pastor (full time resident) for two parishes; faith formation director (full time) lives with family as other rector; parish council (reps from both parishes); stewardship committee (sometimes in tension with parish council); part-time parish secretary for both parishes; part-time music minister; two part-time maintenance people” (P)

“Pastor – staff – parish council” (PC)

“The pastor, DRE, and pastoral associate – lay people who are members of the parish (pastoral council; RCIA team members)” (PC)

“Pastor, pastoral assistant, RF director for middle school RF director, campus minister (priest) and a PPC.” (PC)

“Variety of models present in a parish that has ‘one foot in the future’...enabling pastor, school principal, pastoral associate for faith formation, pastoral council, finance council, variety of committees, etc.” (DR)

“Pastor who works with sizeable staff: newly ordained priests, extern (all three priests share in providing sacramental ministry to all six worship sites), two pastoral associates and one pastoral minister, director of faith formation, director of sacramental preparation, and business manager.” (DR)

“Pastor in collaboration with parochial vicar, pastoral associate, DRE with active involvement of parish council and other working groups.” (DR)

“Pastor – Pastoral Staff, Deacon, Director of Faith Formation (traditional), Directors of Stewardship Council – empowering” (O)

“In our parish, we have a pastor and a senior priest who helps on weekends. In addition, we have a deacon, several catechetical leaders with responsibility for specific levels, and a director of music, as well as a business administrator.” (O)

Weak or No Specific Leadership Model Present

Only a few participants indicate that the leadership models of their parishes are weak with no specific or intentional model in place for moving the community forward. The following comments reflect this less-focused or less-structured approach to the future:

“What we would like to see is a good leader – one you do not know is leading; servant leadership; emerging leadership; changes with pastor – old guard goes; new comes in.” (PLC)

“I would say we are trying to do ‘pastor role at table’ with lots of ‘laissez faire’, but keeping everyone accountable.” (PA)

“One pastor – one parish with fledgling parish council, established individual groups, but no real alignment. Our parish is more an aggregation of activities rather than a community pursuing the mission of church.” (PC)

“Many ministry heads are not open to welcoming new members. They also stay with a ministry longer than they should.” (DR)

“I feel that the leadership the parish has a right to expect just isn’t there. The new pastor is overwhelmed by the ‘muting’ of the assistant he inherited and has no idea of what he should do.” (O)

E. Leadership of the Pastor/Parish Life Coordinator

Pastoral leaders who attended the Northeast Symposium were asked to define the type of leadership provided by their pastors or parish life coordinators. Participants mostly describe their pastors and parish life coordinators as empowering and calling forth the gifts of others, a pastor-centered form of leadership, and engaging the parish in envisioning the future. These trends are consistent with other regional symposium findings.

Empowering and Calling Forth the Gifts of Others

Participants who describe their pastors or parish life coordinators as empowering and calling forth the gifts of others tend to emphasize the facilitating, collaborating, and nurturing role of pastoral leadership. The following comments reflect this intentionality of pastoral leaders:

“A facilitating leadership” (P)

“Shares ideas, encourages prayer and dialogue, and participates as an equal in programs offered.” (P)

“Pastor delegates, nurtures, stewards, and orchestrates. He is aware of all aspects and resources all ministries without extensive micro-managing.” (P)

“Exceptionally good. Collaborative. Empowering (mostly). Welcoming and visionary. His motto is to live the Gospel and proclaim it to our Catholic town community, not just our parish community. The broader vision has made the partnering of our two parishes (unpopular at first) more than palatable. However, we need more lay ministers for training recruited and given charge of parish responsibilities in areas of need that pastor/staff cannot meet on their own.” (P)

“(Same as Question #2) As pastor, I am working to develop and build a team. This was not their experience prior with a different idea from the pastor and as members of separate communities. This team building of the staff I would say is a main focus for my work.” (P)

“Enabler; shepherd; prophetic stand for life and justice; collaborative; listener; a leader who is sometimes not perceived to lead because others take ownership for mutually formed decisions.” (P)

“He tends to delegate, but keeps his thumb on the pulse of things.” (D)

“He listens and responds to situation or directs it to staff person who is able to take it on. Having talked about a need with others he is apt to make a decision. Regular staff meetings provide a means of conversation.” (PA)

“The pastor was the spiritual leader who empowered staff and community members to share their gifts. His vision of a lay empowered staff and community called forth the gifts of many. He promoted that individuals see desires and needs and take leadership roles to address or engage others in the process.” (PA)

“We don’t have a PLC, but pastoral associate (me). The pastor determines the ‘pastoral decisions’ and the pastoral associate sees that it gets carried out and oversees different ministries (liturgy, faith formation, social justice, outreach).” (PA)

“Pastor’s leadership is a collaborative model that works to engage others in ministry.” (PA)

“The pastor is an excellent open-minded, as well as communicative leader who works at building community relationships and skills. He is a person who delegates authority and duties. To some extent, he is overloaded with other duties and, thus, has to do this. The parish life coordinator is our DRE. She is trained and has had many years experience in our parish, we all we in our diocesan office. She provides a very caring presence in all the functions she enters into.” (PC)

“Animator – communicator” (DR)

“He is an encouraging, inviting pastor. He clearly wants people directly involved and listens to what they have to say.” (DR)

“Bottom-up style. Does not initiate new ideas. He ensures that standard church seasons and liturgy is maintained. The tradition of the church is maintained and the opportunity for spirituality is present. Volunteer dinner for over 300 parish volunteers (aka Appreciation Dinner).” (DR)

“He attempts to delegate, but because of his outstanding organizational abilities, he tends to do too much.” (DR)

“Overall leadership, spiritual center for parish, pays attention to issues and needs identified by staff and parishioners and facilitates response, notices issues himself and brings them to staff, pastoral and finance councils, and parishioners.” (DR)

“Pastor steps back and allows the people to claim ownership of the parish.” (DR)

“Our pastor is our shepherd, but he leads by example more so than by words. Peaceful, humble, moderate, gentle, and kind are his ways. He is present at most important events/meetings. First and foremost, he leads liturgical services and administers the sacraments to his people. Our Pastoral Associate is very active in all aspects of parish life and provides energy to our community with per personal exuberance and enthusiasm.” (O)

“Delegating, consultative, with the pastor serving as both canonical and spiritual ‘expert’. The process has developed over time with him being more controlling at the beginning of his tenure and lessening that over time.” (O)

“Pastor (no parish life coordinator) encourages and supports the pastoral council, but I think he still lays out the program and tasks that need to be accomplished.” (O)

Pastor-Centered Form of Leadership

A number of participants indicate that the leadership of the pastor is still centered on his impact and effort in the community. While some forms of pastor-centered leadership are benevolent and effective and others less effective, the central theme involves a leadership which is derived from the pastor. The following comments reflect this approach:

“Need for strength, but also being a servant to the people. Hard to balance and we need some models.” (PLC)

“Pastor centric, but open to most things. Community formation good; liturgy good; spiritually very poor; temporalities superb.” (D)

“Excellent pastoral leadership in areas of faith. When it comes to social justice and ministries, he tends to do things himself rather than delegate.” (PC)

“No parish life coordinator. The pastor has brought more spiritual activities to the parish, but he has the attitude that he needs to be in control for everything. He needs to be more pastoral and understanding of people’s situations. The pastor is a good liturgist and homilist.” (PC)

“The pastor has a lot of energy for a man in his 60’s, but displays symptoms of ADD. He is visible in the community at large (going to school plays, basketball games). He is attentive to environment; he supports the liturgy community and runs his desired changes through that group. He has spent a lot of time with the finance committee and is trying (but not focused) on building a pastoral committee. Much of his energy goes to high school faith formation. I think he works too much one-on-one and not more coordinated at the parish level or public to the community at large.” (PC)

“Although both priests would like to do more ministry and less administration at the present time, almost all of the coordination of the parish falls upon them. Parish Council is looking into the dual role of pastor and parish life coordinator.” (PC)

“In one experience, the pastor ‘calls the shots’ and invites those who think like he does to be members of various committees. That way, he is ensured success! In another experience, the pastor is a role model, wonderful listener, and an enabler to lay people he personally invites to ministry.” (DR)

“The pastor left for rehab and we are being served by an administrator who in the short term is doing well. The pastor was way overworked.” (O)

“Here I am biased because I’m talking about my successor. He lacks ‘people skills’. He had to be urged to greet people at the doors after Masses on Sunday. He startled parishioners by coming out to help with Communion wearing a cassock and a lace surplice.” (O)

“Administrative – Our pastor is an excellent business manager. He has kept our school on a safe footing. The parish physical plant looks wonderful. Inside many people are spiritually trying to stay alive on their own. I often think our parish is like the white-washed tombs in the Scriptures.” (O)

Engaged in Visioning of the Parish

A few participants indicate that the leadership of their pastors and parish life coordinators is heavily involved in inviting others to re-vision or create a vision for the future of their parishes. The following comments reflect this visioning role of pastoral leadership:

“Vision; calling individuals with talents forward; example of faith; mediate issues within the community” (P)

“Pastor provides a vision. Vision must be rooted in life of the people, then situation. Pastor provides a place where people can pray, reflect, offers their desires of what parish/church centers on.” (P)

“Vision/Direction” (PA)

“Vision – spiritual leadership; open communication; trusting the gifts of the community; mediating; encouraging; creativity” (DR)

“Our pastor genuinely understands the challenges and opportunities of a church in transition and of his unique role in nurturing a ‘rebirth’ of what it means to be church and Christ to each other.” (DR)

“Vision; recognition of permitting all gifts to come through; coordination; formation support; mediation” (O)

F. Staff Leadership

Northeast Symposium participants were asked to indicate the types of leadership roles provided by staff in their individual parishes. On the whole, these pastoral leaders portray a fairly traditional approach by their staff, leading various program ministries in the parish. Other pastoral leaders indicate that their pastoral staffs are hindered by various factors, including the dominance of their pastors.

Planning and Program Implementation (Planning, Executing, and Engaging)

A number of participants convey a fairly traditional approach to staff as planning and leading program implementation in the parish. In some instances, these planning and implementation activities lead to the formation of others in ministry. In other instances, they are more focused on the leadership skills of the staff. The following comments illustrate a more staff-centered approach to pastoral leadership:

“They lead individual areas, coordinate across responsibilities, offer encouragement and criticism, and seek a greater appreciation of God’s invitation to be builders of his kingdom.” (P)

“Nothing is done without prayer and consultation around the table with staff and priests all together.” (P)

“Staff provides departmental leadership working within their own departments. The current leadership model is trying to cross the departments to create a more decisive group.” (PA)

“The gifts and passions of the staff are also a key component of a collaborative model for the relatively small parish. The staff helped to create and promote the vision possible in parish life. As the pastor gave more responsibility to the pastoral associate, he promoted her to the community as the ‘real pastor’. This view was widely accepted within the parish family. Staff by their presence and by forming and educating parishioners continued to empower parishioners in the possibility of their role in parish life.” (PA)

“The pastor and I (pastoral associate) are the only paid staff. For discussion and decisions, we include the trustees to staff meetings and decision-making. Secretaries and trustees become the owners of the ball and the bat so I have to make the best of holding the glove.” (PA)

“We have three leaders – pastor, pastoral associate, and a DRE. They all provide great leadership and are excellent models. The latter two are very capable, but have a tremendous amount to do before the pastor is the director of family life for the diocese, so in a sense, they are spread quite thin. We have a trained finance staff member.” (PC)

“We have a director of music and a new director of religious education. They provide leadership within areas and hopefully they will provide some direction in the parish. Each person who is a paid staff member continues to do their jobs, but have no real leadership role.” (PC)

“Staff is skill and competency-based, i.e., professionals (principal of school, faith formation director, business manager, secretary, etc.). These people assist with coordination and enabling so that the work of the parish is accomplished.” (DR)

“Professionally-led training and development; must be enabled by the staff leader; faith formation” (DR)

“Initiates most programs/ministries. Staff defines new positions, new ministries, e.g., social justice. They sell ideas to pastor. Pastor approves when he is satisfied that there is support, that it will serve the parishioners, and can be continuously maintained.” (DR)

“Expertise in particular areas; recruiting, training and support of parishioner leaders. The two pastoral associates and pastoral minister each take responsibility for one or more ministry areas across the entire parish, as well as provide on-site presence at two worship sites each. Participation of priests and pastoral associates in visioning work of pastoral council.” (DR)

“The staff provides the necessary functionality to parish life, e.g., religious education coordinator, finances, etc., but are often overworked.” (O)

“Staff of five priests and one brother (in charge of finances). Two secretaries provide support and resources, organized and traditional.” (O)

Hindered by Various Factors

Symposium participants express frustration that the leadership of their staff is often hindered by a variety of factors, including the dominance of their pastors. The following comments reflect some of the obstacles encountered by these pastoral leaders:

“Pastor dominated” (P)

“Most staff direction is aimed toward the various children’s and youth programs. After five years experience (which isn’t much, I agree), I believe that more staff allows for more collaboration and empowerment of people; the more, the better (provided they are truly collaborative and are able to keep the bigger vision in mind). Right now, I believe our staff is maxed out – we’d like more, but money is scarce. It is a frustrating place to be.” (P)

“Some are working in the servant model while others are working in their kingdom model. They listen to what others have to say, but really don’t pay any attention.” (D)

“Traditional versus contemporary – gas station model – parishioners fill up and come back when on empty.” (PC)

“Staff is very thin – CCD coordinator, secretary, and deacon. Don’t think much leadership comes from this group.” (PC)

“In both instances, the staff expects the pastors to be the ‘boss’. There is some difficulty with staff taking ownership.” (DR)

“Depends on how (and if) the pastor empowers the staff.” (DR)

“Mostly input on questions/projects that the pastor raises. To his credit though, he does listen and processes that input.” (O)

“As much as they can until the reigns are pulled in. It is actually not so much that limits are put on our staff. It is the lack of involvement by the pastor in the wonderful things they are doing that limits the success of their hard work.” (O)

“Nearly none. One associate does provide leadership, but only when directed to do so. All members of the staff have depressive personalities.” (O)

G. Leadership of the Community

Pastoral leaders in the Northeast reflected on the leadership provided by their parish communities as a whole. These pastoral leaders often define their parish communities as active and engaged communities of leadership working toward the vision of the parish, heavily involved through the leadership of pastoral councils, or passive and not well-engaged in building the faith communities.

Active and Engaged Communities of Leadership (Engaged in Visioning of the Parish)

Among those pastoral leaders who indicate their parishioners are actively involved in envisioning and building the faith community, they often describe specific processes which have theologically and organizationally engaged parishioners in parish life. These views are illustrated in the following comments:

“Participants; leaders in certain areas; students/disciples seeking knowledge.” (P)

“Challenges leaders as necessary; responds to what church offers; sense of energy; great potential; openness to the spirit.” (P)

“More and more serious leadership is coming from these individuals.” (P)

“With pastor’s encouragement, there is movement to community ‘theology of laity’ mentality and sensibility. This will take time, prodding, and education.” (P)

“They are working to set the vision upon which all work will be based.” (P)

“We have had frequent consultations with the congregation through listening sessions, open meetings, general parish meetings, and joint parish council meetings of parishes in the cluster.” (P)

“With their feet – Marriages have tripled since I arrived, as well as baptisms. We went over the top with the Bishop’s Appeal. Mass attendance is stable and increases on weeks we do Generations of Faith.” (PLC)

“Little ‘parish that plays together, prays together’. Not afraid to bring forth ideas; taking a long time to move from pay, pray, and obey, but we are getting there. People are excited to be involved and bring wonderful gifts.” (PLC)

“The best that I was ever a part of was a sister from New York. It began with a lay leadership cadre of 12+ newly ordained from Rome. Model was to accept everyone where you find them, challenge them to be uncomfortable to remain there. Author Fr. Frank Gaeta, pastor ‘par-excellence’ developed that through ‘Parish that Plays Together – Prays Together’. We had 350 certified catechists, 100 advanced pastoral leaders.” (D)

“Taking responsibility for committee work; welcoming; participating in parish life; chiring events and committees; pastoral council; recruiting for services and ministries” (PA)

“Many diverse ways of assuming leadership. The latest is to spearhead the covenant model of community to educate themselves and the community and to promote it within parish life.” (PA)

“The parish provides its opinion about our current mission. There are many leaders in our community for various ministries, such as adult faith formation and respect life.” (PA)

“Pray, pay, and obey concept is dying. Opportunity to provide ways for community to give feedback – surveys and forums. Community members not afraid to take responsibility in a variety of ways, e.g., liturgical life, spiritual formation, and service projects.” (DR)

“Taking ownership of their parish community” (DR)

“Service to the local community; vitality, resilience remarks; needs common vision/goals; ‘empire models’ – ‘generations of faith’; formed by liturgy” (DR)

“The best example I can give is our ‘town meetings’ held yearly with this new pastor. We are currently preparing for our third such meeting. He takes seriously all concerns, criticisms, suggestions, etc. and with staff gives them consideration. The first one led to a survey on large/small issues. This led to the development of a strategic plan with the Diocesan Parish Planning Office. And each year we will review it with the ‘town meeting’. They made a big difference.” (O)

“Invites, encourages, and suggests involvement of all in parish activities.” (O)

“As mentioned previously, by definition, if the members of the community come up with a possibility, they need to ‘take charge’ of developing an implementation plan.” (O)

“Head up generations of faith (although we run it by the pastor first). I think we lead through prayer and support of one another.” (O)

Strong Engagement through Pastoral Councils

Other pastoral leaders describe their pastoral councils as a key vehicle for engaging parishes in leadership. Those participants who stress the importance and functionality of pastoral councils offer the following observations:

“Parish Council has in the last year developed more of a leadership role. They are encouraging more lay people to take on ownership of leadership. In the last year, more individuals have stepped forward to help with individual projects or programs.” (PC)

“The community provides leadership for the parish council and the other committees necessary to maintain parish functions (buildings and grounds, finance committee, K-6 school, principal and faculty, DRE assistance for CCD classes, teachers for confirmation process, and liturgy).” (PC)

“Pastoral council (visioning, etc.), finance committee, school board, other committees, liturgical ministries, etc.” (DR)

“Pastoral council is slowly becoming the visioning group for the parish. They spent the past year interviewing parishioners, visioning and setting priorities around two critical areas: building lively faith in parishioners and their active participation in mission of parish. Others serve as on-site coordinators for faith formation for children or youth ministry, they lead scripture studies, and serve on parish committees.” (DR)

“Bring forth ideas and suggestions either directly to the pastor or to a staff member. Some ideas come to the parish via the pastoral council. We ask for a proposal of new ideas. This ensures success as the ideas are developed.” (DR)

“Community (Pastoral Council and Finance Council are working as leaders to try to heal the division).” (O)

“Some. Strong parish council members do some of the big parish events, but little is done with liturgy.” (O)

Passive and not Well Engaged

Still, a few pastoral leaders express that on the whole their parishioners are not well-engaged in the leadership of the community. The following limited observations reflect this reality:

“If they don’t approve of the leadership, they will leave the parish or even change religions.” (D)

“Other than the same lay volunteers doing everything, I don’t think the community contributes much to the leadership of our parish.” (PC)

“We have several groups within the community who do provide leadership in different events. Community leadership will be as good as the pastor’s leadership. If he is not inviting and open to the diversity of the people, the community won’t respond. He needs to accept the gifts and talents of each person and not try to fit the task to the person.” (PC)

“People are still at the stage of looking to Father.” (DR)

“There is a need for leadership to ‘protect’ the roles community members have outside the parish, family, work, and neighborhood. When the community is balanced, many gifts are exercised and the parish does not become the escape from our primary commitments.” (DR)

“Again, depends on leadership style of the pastor – needs to allow, recognize and invite members of the community to participate.” (DR)

“The community vocalizes their discontent with certain issues. If they are not heard, they leave and find another Catholic community or another faith community.” (DR)

“Don’t seem to know ‘they’ are readers. Need to recognize where people are doing this. Don’t know they are. Need to recognize and label where folks are already acting as leaders.” (O)

H. Intentionality of their Parish Leadership Model

Symposium participants were asked to indicate why their pastoral leadership models work as they do. Pastoral leaders indicate a variety of reasons why their parish leadership models function in the current manner. These reasons often include necessity and present needs, the leadership style of the pastor, and an intentional model or vision for the future of parish life. In only a few instances do these pastoral leaders believe their leadership models are not intentional.

Necessity and Present Needs (Based on Local Needs)

A number of pastoral leaders indicate their current leadership models are often derived from necessity and present needs. While these needs vary, from the history of the parish in some past crisis to a shortage of resources, the common element which drives their intentional ministries is present realities. The following comments reflect this perspective:

“It must be a team or as pastor, I will die. I cannot do it all. I must give away, develop, and collaborate or ‘crash and burn’.” (P)

“My lack of ability and time to help transition my staff and parish council, and thus, the parish into a model where leadership is shared in a greater way. A need to look at our vision of what could be. Easier to delegate while maintaining a hands-on approach than to work with people to the point where they feel qualified.” (P)

“We are three parishes into one, since 1998. The merger went poorly. The bishop asked me to ‘enliven’ and ‘re-direct’ the parish toward a ‘vision of hope’. We stand at a point of nurturing our people in their hurts, being the target of their anger, and offering them a vision of what we might become.” (P)

“It was always done this way or rather things are changing, in transition, therefore we are open for conversion. Culture, history, comfort, yet spirit in our midst.” (PLC)

“It works for this community.” (PLC)

“Culture; history; inertia; comfort zone – We need a formal anthropological study of current church culture and its relationship to current secular culture. What adaptations do we need to make to engage, challenge, and provoke the world?” (D)

“It is a long story. We are mostly a Latino populated community and as we have gone from one church to another and one pastor to another, we have been trying to adapt our model to each circumstance. In the 12 years I have been a pastoral associate, we are in the third church (the other two were closed). We have lost priests through death and being removed from ministry, so we haven’t had time to implement our own model yet.” (PA)

“At this point, that is the way it has evolved, but the assumption is that it will change with time.” (PC)

“It is based on the people in place at any point in time. Also, circumstances in time dictate leadership action – culture, history, inertia, and comfort zone.” (DR)

“Because this is the way that works. If it didn’t work, the model would be changed.” (DR)

“Present circumstances of the merger” (DR)

“Our leadership model works this way because it always has. I don’t expect it to change until it absolutely has to.” (DR)

“I suspect that the model of pastor and secretary originated early on, then through necessity the pastor has empowered others to work with him.” (O)

“It’s what we know (pastor and parishioners). It’s what we’ve done. It’s what we continue to support (maybe because we don’t know any other way and there hasn’t been a need for things to change). We are comfortable for the most part with ‘status quo’.” (O)

Leadership of the Pastor (Derived from the style of the Pastor or Parish Administrator)

Some pastoral leaders indicate their leadership models are heavily derived from the pastor or parish administrator. The following comments reflect this centralized leadership role of the pastor in formulating a model for ministry:

“Set the people free.” (P)

“I have made choices and everything I do is in light of these choices. We as a staff have made decisions and we will use these as our focus.” (P)

“I recognize that in the long run, the shared leadership model is needed, but day-to-day responsibilities make it difficult to take that step.” (P)

“Keeping my heart open to the vision of Christ” (P)

“Tries to be responsive to people in their important needs. Tries to connect with them. Listening to people’s feelings.” (P)

“Expectations of pastor and history of parish; development of sense of ownership; growth of understanding meaning of Baptism; adjusting to the linking of our two parishes 2-1/2 years ago.” (PA)

“The pastor has set it up this way.” (PA)

“New pastor with inclusive model” (PA)

“Pastor has been there 24 years. It has evolved, been revised several times. If the pastor was transferred, it has an 80% chance of continuing on its own.” (PC)

“It automatically comes from the pastor.” (PC)

“Previous pastor set the model of non-participation for a long time. The only way things got done was by a few committed people – the same people – for several years, so it’s always been done that way. New pastor has yet to gain traction and focus around his operating model. I don’t feel there is a clear statement of purpose for our parish. What are our priorities and how do our activities measure up? Difficult to find the volume of volunteers needed to evoke real change.” (PC)

“The pastor seeks parishioner input, enables staff to work independently.” (DR)

“The pastor values communication and is rather a stickler for it. He encourages leadership, but wants to be informed about what you’re doing. He is supportive and helpful.” (DR)

“The pastor’s theology, ecclesiology, personality, education and attitude are future oriented and relational, thus he has the skills to be an effective leader in this transitional church.” (DR)

“To a large degree, this model just seems to emerge from what the pastor believes in. It has found a response in the community and I think just now is becoming intentional.” (DR)

“The pastor communicates his wish and desire that people...the staff, pastoral council, volunteers, etc., assume their right and role of ‘being church and Christ to each other’ as his preferred leadership style.” (DR)

“No – somewhat still influenced by the pastor.” (O)

“Not sure what this means. At one time, our parish had well over 20 active, vibrant ministries. Those eventually died down to 2-3 members each. The pastor did not revive or encourage those committees/ministries to reorganize. One wonders if he was regaining control that had been lost.” (O)

“Because the pastor does not want to give up control (my opinion)” (O)
“Fairly traditional model of this parish’s history; meets expectations of majority.” (O)

“Mainly because this method reflects the personality of the pastor and the others who are in leadership positions.” (O)

“Both pastors (32 years and 2 years) have been men who are very open to staff and community at large, but who also are present to ‘the buck stops here’.” (O)

“Because the pastor wants it this way. There have been, however, lay employees who have stepped forward to assist in ways that the pastor doesn’t. Although, no financial support from the parish – works to the needs of the parishioners.” (O)

Intentional Model of Parish Life (Vision for an Intentional Faith Community)

In some instances, pastoral leaders indicate their parish models of leadership have been formed through some intentional model or process, examining the future of parish life with a specific plan or direction in mind. The following observations reflect this intentional model of parish life:

“Our approach was to have several deanery meetings with pastors and lay people to come up with a joint plan and vision. We also had several cluster meetings to plan and vision together. Prayer, discernment, and visioning brought us to where we are.” (P)

“We decided to be proactive rather than reactive; to create what happens instead of just letting it happen.” (P)

“Our intentional approach is to build consensus, project the nostalgia and traditions of the past. While offering a view of the essential elements of our faith; following Christ and his crucifixion.” (P)

“By inviting people to participate at all levels by spending the time to make that invitation meaningful. By recognizing the value of the giftedness of people and to act respectfully.” (P)

“Trying to be driven by theology of laity sensibility out of common baptism rather than reactive to necessity and crisis.” (P)

“We are planning ahead – clustering – merging six parishes eventually into one parish and perhaps one worship site.” (PLC)

“Openness to spirit to move out of inertia; mission statement; get out to people; working very much as discovering people’s gifts and ways that they can be used for the community. This is not easy, but worth the effort. Everyone has gifts which are our passion and how can that be used for the community.” (PLC)

“Accept all people where I find them. Leave them uncomfortable to remain there. Look for where the ‘grass is green’ for that is where God is seeding and watering – support and encourage that. Allow the ‘dead grass’ to fade away.” (D)

“We are trying to set up the rules and structure and I think have enjoyed some success. Have multiple ministries, but meet once a month (on Wednesday) with a different cluster of ministry (parish council, liturgy, faith education, school board, social justice).” (PA)

“Presence to the community; intention of inclusion and collaboration; intention of respect for other parish leaders; offering new models” (PA)

“Intentional in prayer and education of staff persons to begin to see a more collaborative approach to ministry.” (PA)

“In the choices we make as staff – to build community, promote evangelization, respond to needs, be inclusive, and inviting and collaborating with parishioners to carry on a task, work through a project, study, or pray.” (PA)

“You bring the model in the attention of the parish in a quiet manner taking the individuals by the hand to help them arrive.” (PC)

“In the process of working on joining two parishes – some planning is happening.” (PC)

“Lay people seem comfortable with traditional model. There has not been enough education as to other models. There has been no demand for change.” (PC)

“Education on stewardship; development of monthly themes in faith formation on stewardship; dialogue regarding the role of pastor and the need for lay people to take on a more active role.” (PC)

“Took one year to develop the particular staff structure and new pastoral council covenant before the six previous parishes consolidated. Adjustments in job descriptions as people enter and leave the staff to take gifts and limitations into account.” (DR)

“We needed to create something new that fit the new parish structure. Worship sites are spread out over an entire county, 45-minute drive among most distant. We needed to balance the need to create one community of faith with maintaining each worship site’s identity, the need to bring parishioners together for some things, yet maintain liturgy and ministry at each site. We are still developing one vision and one community.” (DR)

“It is a model implemented by design, not accident. It has, no doubt, developed over time and is still developing.” (O)

“It has taken time, however. The model works because people have been both invited and educated as leaders. Also, they have been welcomed.” (O)

“Moving toward clustering as a directive from Bishop. Must create a plan for three parishes minus a priest.” (O)

“Particularly in the area of spirituality, we are very intentional. How will this help the people and all of us be closer to God?” (O)

Not Intentional

In only a few instances, participants in the Northeast indicate their models of parish leadership are not intentional as reflected by the following comments:

“We’re not. I feel that is part of our problem.” (PC)

“I don’t believe we are being intentional.” (DR)

“It would appear that some dioceses still have more priests than parishes and may not be really preparing for what will be happening to them down the road.” (DR)

“Too often see reactive, non-reflective approaches to the relationship between leadership and parishioners. This is the current struggle to make the model of parish intentional in each community.” (DR)

“I would say parish leadership has evolved and is not intentional.” (O)

“Almost non-existent” (O)

I. Future Emerging Models of Pastoral Leadership

Symposium participants were asked to identify the future models of parish leadership emerging in their faith communities. Pastoral leaders indicate that emerging models of pastoral leadership include increased lay involvement and dependency on the laity based on their baptismal call. In addition, they mention that emerging models include clustered or shared ministry with other parishes. Still others emphasize a team approach to leadership within the parish.

Increased Lay Involvement and Dependency on Laity (Baptismal Call to Leadership)

Participants in the Northeast indicate that increased lay involvement and dependency on laity are emerging models of pastoral leadership in their parishes. This model is far less prevalent than in other regions of the country. However, a number of pastoral leaders describe their emerging models as based in lay ministry and lay formation as indicated below:

“Small group spiritual gatherings with an emphasis on conversion. Model of intergenerational spirituality where there is openness to the members of our community which will help see God in his workings through all generations.” (P)

“For the most part, we are a servant model, but there are times when egos get in the way and we regress back to the dictator model.” (D)

“Parish led by lay leader and more and more people are becoming aware that God calls each one of us.” (PLC)

“One pastor for two congregations, shared staff, stronger in lay involvement” (PA)

“More people in the parish community are coming to realize that the changes in the ‘church’ as a whole are effecting how a church community will function because of the difficulties in leadership and, therefore, are becoming more curious and maybe more willing to ‘step up to the plate and go to bat’ for the parish community.” (PC)

“More involvement of lay members; extensive involvement of deacons.” (PC)

“While our diocese is using different models (yoked parishes and pastoral leaders). Our parish is in a growing, one church town. It is likely our model will stay the same (one priest, one parish) as long as the priest supply permits. Our issue or change opportunity for the future is to formalize our volunteer structure, clarify our purpose, and build our talents and services.” (PC)

“Lay ministry formation is being offered and some have been personally invited to participate.” (DR)

“The people can take whatever initiative is needed. Insofar as a parish is a Eucharistic community, when the day comes that there is no priest, there will be no parish – lay leadership not withstanding.” (DR)

“There is a ‘leveling’ of roles from vertical ‘top down’ to enabling and sharing of gifts and talents. Shared responsibility is taking hold.” (DR)

“Developing liaison between the pastor and the various church ministries. There are fewer priests and the ministries of the faith community must be continued and developed using the mission statement of the parish.” (DR)

“We had a New Beginnings program. We have made a start at generating enthusiasm, naming people’s gifts, etc. The potential is there for lay involvement, but we’ll see.” (O)

“More traditional ordained roles are now being accomplished by educated lay people. Diocese, parish and lay persons share 1/3 each of college course expense making this education available more when before we could not afford this.” (O)

“More lay involvement in the sacramental aspects of the parish, i.e., funerals, baptisms, etc.” (O)

*“Lay presence increasing in ministry; young priests usually take the lead.”
(O)*

“Albany team concept of ministry; priests taking care of sacraments and lay leaders take care of the rest; lay members and priests working together to build up the parish – sharing the responsibilities.” (O)

Clustered or Shared Ministry with Other Parishes

A number of pastoral leaders indicate their models of leadership are heavily based on a clustered approach to leadership in their diocese with more deanery or cluster-wide ministries being developed among their parishes. The following comments reflect this reality:

“A cluster leadership” (P)

“Variety of models in our diocese are energizing: priest/multiple parishes; lay leaders; teams” (P)

“More deanery-wide ministries” (P)

“We worked on a non-parochial approach to create communities of faith (clusters) consisting of several parishes where talents and resources were shared. We took inspiration from Acts II:44 – ‘They shared their goods in common’ and from the maxim ‘United We Stand, Divided We Fall’. Don’t do separately what you can do better together.” (P)

“Our parish has been clustered with four other parishes. Our mandate is to come up with a model that will function with three priests” (PA)

“I think for a few years we are stabilizing our present situation, but in the future, I see we might move to a cluster or mega churches with trying to return to small Christian communities or other model of praying and reflecting during the week and gathering together for Sunday worship.” (PA)

“Discussion has begun regarding pastoral assistant; discussion has taken place regarding restructuring of deanery parishes.” (PC)

“We still have one pastor to a parish. We are clustering with some difficulty due in part to pastor’s control and community fear.” (DR)

“As of July 1, we will be assigned a Spanish speaking priest and the parish will be asked to welcome the Latino community from a neighboring parish.” (DR)

“More collaboration among deaneries/vicariates. A need is to assist leadership that is stuck in old models, fearful of what is happening and do not have the resources to respond, losing parishioners because of poor leadership. Use present structures like deaneries/vicariates to cross-fertilize the good things that are happening through good leadership with those places where leadership is poor, paralyzed or stuck. The cross-fertilization that is happening here is a good model.” (DR)

“Only this move toward cluster parishes” (O)

“Now we are a cluster of five parishes. I am not sure if the cluster is activated to make and implement a pastoral plan. I believe that the five parishes have currently four pastors. I assume a plan for fewer clergy will need to be developed. I am not sure what it will eventually look like as far as a model is concerned.” (O)

More Collaborative Effort and Team Approach within Parish Leadership

Still other pastoral leaders indicate their emerging models of ministry involve more team ministries in their individual parishes as stronger collaboration among pastors, clergy, and staff to fulfill the needs of their parish communities in the future. The following limited comments express this collaborative and team approach to ministry which some believe is emerging in their parishes:

“Collaborative leadership – two priests; 1 PLC as equals” (PLC)

“Exploring decentralized, non-programmatic, theological reflection based on parish life – small Christian communities defining their needs – calling on the ‘pastoral support team’.” (D)

“Team model and parish life directors” (PA)

“A strong collaboration among pastor, other priests, staff, and other parishioner leaders.” (DR)

“Team leadership; collaborative efforts in various areas: RCIA, faith formation, etc.” (DR)

“Starting to see some efforts to be deliberate in overall mission/vision. Collaboration is occurring on some levels with action occurring.” (O)

“Eventually, I hope that the ‘Father knows best’ model will give way to more collaborative leadership.” (O)

III. PARISH BEST PRACTICES:

Northeast Symposium participants discussed best practices in their parish communities by listening to a series of case studies that outlined practices which contribute to the development of individual parish communities. Following case study presentations, pastoral leaders participated in table discussions and completed reflection questionnaires evaluating these case studies on a number of factors to determine parish best practices for the future.

A. Relationship of Total Ministering Community to Healthy Parishes

As in other regions, pastoral leaders in the Northeast reinforce an essential link between a total ministering community and healthy parishes of the future. It is interesting to note, however, that their comments are less specific regarding actual parish circumstances where total ministering communities are evident.

Compared to other regions, the descriptions of commitment to total ministering communities they offer are more theological or theoretical rather than rooted in specific parish circumstances or situations. The following comments reinforce the essential link perceived by pastoral leadership in the Northeast between a total ministering community and healthy parishes:

“Total ministering community is critical to a healthy parish.” (P)

“All three are necessary ingredients to be successful. However, leadership will be helpful to those who call facilitate/orchestrate shared wisdom as an operating system.” (P)

“A lot will be based on capabilities of pastor/leaders; as we move forward and more demands are placed on pastor, the greater the importance of team ministry with pastor, staff, and parishioners.” (P)

“Healthy, vibrant parishes will see pastor, staff, and parishioners working together collaboratively. The collaborative approach is the direction we are going. Discernment is important.” (P)

“To be healthy, a parish will need to enhance life as a total ministering community. To invite all people, including the participation of broad numbers of laity who feel no specific call now; encouraging them to consider new and/or broader categories of ministry.” (P)

“Completely” (PLC)

“This is our very salvation. People leave Catholic parishes and go to evangelical churches where they are given a job (ministry) to be involved in – gifts.” (PLC)

“Adapt or die – this will happen to guide the process or become victim.” (D)

“Total commitment” (D)

“It will be a necessity.” (PA)

“Pastors, staff, and parishioners will need a round table total collaborative ministry approach to leadership.” (PA)

“Collaboration and consultation will be key; acceptance of lay criticism of those desiring to build up the community; fostering adult relationships within the total ministering community” (PA)

“No doubt that most traditional models need to change. The parishes seem to need to look at several models, but also look at the needs of their own communities and develop most adequate model for their community. We must be a discerning community.” (PC)

“This is critical whether we have a priest shortage or not. We need to do R & D on the parish community on an ongoing basis. Even the good things need to be refreshed.” (PC)

“To a great extent” (PC)

“We will be more collaborative. We will know how to be respectful of others in the church community. We will respect diversity. We will act from the ground up not so much from the top down. Become a discerning community. Learn to listen to the members of the community. Use town meetings to allow members of the community.” (PC)

“Collaborative leadership is important regardless of the number of available priests. Active parishioners want a voice. Our challenge is to provide direction and focus to the voice. Empowerment only exists in an environment that supports it: vision, boundaries, skills, and commitment. We can share leadership within a model governed by a priest – where each leader works together based upon their gifts. All leaders must also demonstrate accountability for their part, even while acknowledging the priest’s overall accountability.” (PC)

“Jesus’ mission is one of unity, love, and community. All people of the parish will have to collaborate with each other to the work of bringing Jesus to the world. The pastoral plans will be difficult, but if we make our decision through prayer, we can make better decisions for the overall good of the parish.” (PC)

“Think that it is essential” (DR)

“I believe it is critical.” (DR)

“It depends totally on the collaboration of pastors, staff, and parishioners.” (DR)

“They will totally depend upon a collaborative ministry. If the pastor is taken out of the picture, the rest of the team must continue to function.” (DR)

“Almost completely! Without the cooperation of everyone in the community, people will simply not choose to be part of church. Parishes that are not intentional communities will not exist.” (DR)

“To a very great extent! We need to re-educate ‘all’ on our baptismal call and be church – not just go to church. If we can do that, then we’ll become Christ to each other if we’re enabled and ‘called’.” (DR)

“The only way parishes can be healthy is if they draw from the gifts of all the people.” (DR)

“Pastors, staff and parishioners should all use the gifts they are given. Stewardship time and talent is a big commitment. Focus on liturgies and small Christian communities.” (DR)

“Healthy parishes will be led by teams of people who are willing to collaborate and be open to others’ input and ideas. We will learn to partner with the priest, deacon, and pastoral associate rather than expect ‘blood’ from them.” (DR)

“Vibrant leadership enables vibrant communities. Leadership that involves to the total community articulates the vision and is willing to pay the price to make it happen.” (DR)

“No parish can be ‘total ministering’. Healthy parishes will be those in which the majority of members are aware of their baptismal dignity and respond to it as best they can.” (DR)

“There will no doubt be structural variations based on situations, resources, size, and diocese. However, the collaborative leadership model envisioned by Vatican II, the best practices of parish pastoral council, parish finance councils, DPCs, and staff development and pastor continuing education are essential for the future of the church in the USA and its vitality and resilience.” (DR)

“Total ministering of the parish community is strongly needed because the faith in general is not nurtured in the home. There has been a loss of two generations. The whole parish needs to be involved in order to educate, nurture, and form the faith to its people.” (O)

“Totally – There will be no other model or parishes will die.” (O)

“This will be vital and important to the parish of the future. The model of community successfully launches the Christian efforts.” (O)

“To full extent – discerning community going beyond individual; listening and responding; respecting each other and diversity; do circular model, bishop’s backing and teaching” (O)

“Healthy parishes will need the assistance of all to continue.” (O)

“It is clear that in a given parish community, 30-40% or less are actively involved in any type of ministry. We hope this will change as a result of mentoring, personally inviting and actively encouraging people to ‘own’ the vocation of their Baptism.” (O)

B. Best Practices of Leadership

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

Emphasis on Prayer, Spirituality, and Faith Formation

As in other regions, pastoral leaders believe that prayer, spirituality, and faith formation are essential best practices for leadership in parish communities of the future. The following comments emphasize the centrality of prayer, sacraments, spirituality, and faith formation:

“Liturgy that energizes, is welcoming and inclusive; good bereavement ministry; stewardship; 1 on 1 invitations by the pastor (etc.) for limited responsibility commitments; small Christian communities; dynamic youth and adult faith formation.” (P)

“Prayer and discernment is needed. Non-parochial approach; a moving toward communities of faith that are inclusive of two or three parishes. We respond to change with hope and creativity. Being open, recognize gifts in people, rotate ministries” (P)

“Lay ministry formation and development; small Christian communities; liturgy – vibrant, prepared, and engaging” (P)

“Based on prayer – intentional; minister to one another; parish town meeting – including asking parishioners to present topics.” (P)

“We must be a discerning parish that prays together, welcomes others’ ideas and criticisms; remember, we are ultimately guided by the spirit. All will be well!” (DR)

“Prayer; good liturgy; developing a stewardship committee – We will concentrate on time and talent.” (PLC)

“Foundation of prayer – shared prayer life; work towards authentic ministerial presence; develop a deep understanding of stewardship time, talent, and treasure; explore/undertake evangelization in the widest sense.” (D)

“Annual parish meeting – naming likes and need for changes; response to grieving families: funeral preparation, support group/moving on group; RCIA process; scripture studies; preaching that engages listeners; formation of lay ministers” (PA)

“Vibrant faith community – What is this really? Best practices will probably include engaging the community in ministry. Connecting to parishioners at key times in life – Baptism, funerals, marriage, etc. Reaching out to the need – evangelize.” (PA)

“Liturgy, liturgy, and liturgy. Everything else needed by the parish will develop from vibrant liturgy.” (DR)

“Be able to connect with young people. Provide an opportunity to participate in some ministries as part of their confirmation program. Be creative with speakers and others for young people, even at a bar. Establish a practice of prayer, i.e., staff praying together. Quality of liturgy – welcome, homily, music, energy, thought, well-defined liturgical committee. Renew, care, sense of humor – be authentic!” (DR)

“Prayer/faith-centered leadership of disciples of Jesus by/with disciples of Jesus. Multiple models of ministry coordinated according to local/national needs/gifts; flexibility, resilience, openness to spirit directed new visions.” (DR)

“Tithing to other parishes or organizations; ‘welcome home’ to inactive Catholics; beautiful, well-delivered homilies and liturgical experiences; small Christian communities; hospitality; ‘spiritual cards’ for sacramental moments” (DR)

“Much more prayer, Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, praying with people on the spot, accompanying people through their grief processes, small faith groups, town meetings where all are encouraged to share their ideas, ‘parties’ of appreciation for all volunteers.” (O)

“Homilies that address and explain what the scripture readings mean theologically, not talk about things other than scripture readings. Training of lay ministers regarding the spiritual meaning of those ministries for enrichment while doing this ministry.” (O)

“Explain and let’s assume little; strong liturgy with vibrancy; trained lay ministers (especially marriage prep and bereavement); small Christian communities; mentoring for young adults)” (O)

Commitment to Collaboration and Shared Ministry (Calling Forth the Gifts of Others)

Clearly, participants in the Northeast believe that commitment to collaboration and shared ministry, including calling forth the gifts of others will be essential best practices of ministering in the future. The following comments reflect the belief that collaboration is an essential best practice:

“Inviting participation through personal invitation; inviting people to share thoughts and dreams through surveys and town hall meetings; mentoring to help people discern and develop their gifts; intergenerational life for parish – to include the gifts of the entire community; help them realize they are leaders already.” (P)

“Invite people to share talents; have open forums and surveys with reporting sessions back to the community on what is happening; good liturgies; be welcoming on all levels.” (P)

“We must be welcoming and authentic. Our parishioners need to recognize the leaders they are.” (D)

“Calling from the community to use gifts for the benefit of the community; rotate ministries (time) terms.” (PA)

“Visionary; welcoming of all gifts – empowering, welcoming of all people; open-minded – willing to explore/understand all perspectives; collaborative – open to sharing leadership in every way; prayerful – continually centered on Jesus, discerning; deep sense of self (in a positive healthy way); resilient to change with ability to ‘hold’ community during change/uncertainty.” (PA)

“Identification of gifts – what they do well – what they don’t do well and find people to do the job. Communication – staff meetings; talk to parishioners; open parish meetings, town meetings, positive inquiry; outreach; courage and creativity; importance in flexibility” (PC)

“Stewardship – time is the greatest commitment. Affluent parishes – title 10% of collections and donate to local groups. Rotate masses at which people are lectors or Eucharistic Ministers to show a wide range of ministers. Limit the number of years you can be one of these ministers to get more people involved. Invite new members and fallen away members to an evening reception.” (PC)

“Model of all baptized being called into leadership based on their baptism; pastoral leader as the one who coordinates the work of others in the ministry of the parish, much like a conductor leads a symphony; leaders that encourage others to use their gifts, provide appropriate training and formation, promote creativity and risk-taking (i.e., allow failure); the parishioners’ ownership of the parish’s ministries; leaders who pray together as a group, modeling the life of prayer and teaching others to pray; leaders who are pastoral, compassionate, and ‘on fire’ in their faith and for justice.” (DR)

“Leadership is dependent on recognition and calling forth of people’s gifts and providing the formation that enables them to flourish. Communication – planning – accountability: Provide forums to identify people’s needs. Planning is done in relationship to the needs – opportunities to celebrate successes and acknowledge failure!” (DR)

“Identifying gifts and empowering others; keep as main focus the end goal of all ministry which is bringing about union with God of self and God with others. A warm, welcoming environment is the best way to draw out the gifts of others.” (DR)

Active Listening and Sharing of Information throughout the Parish

Finally, pastoral leaders express the belief that active listening, including hospitality and open communications are critical elements of best practices for the future. The following comments reflect their concern with a listening, hospitable, and welcoming community:

*“Open, collaborative, happy, healthy, willing to grow and be challenged”
(P)*

“Hospitality; vision; Gospel mandates to the poor.” (P)

“Listening sessions; cooperation of people over similar issues within our society; prayer – as the answer for all problems; looking for parishes as outposts in hostile areas for spiritual nourishment.” (P)

“Hospitality and follow up – visiting teams to those families who received a sacrament and/or funeral in family. Follow up with birthday cards on their sacraments. In the Latino community, we have a Novena for the dead and Rosary at homes in May and October. This helps a lot to bring people back.” (PA)

“Anticipate problems that could arise and thus act before the leader (pastor needs to respect all kinds of diversity and welcome into the parish community); respect older traditions/practices and develop new traditions; blend the old and new ideas; invite people to the parish community; work hard on the liturgy to be warm and welcoming; intergenerational community activities; tithings collected should be given to others; carry on good hospitality” (PC)

“Open communication, participatory decision-making, and proactive planning guided by prayer” (PC)

*“Bringing the young people to participate in parish ministry and liturgy”
(PC)*

“Bereavement Team – walk with folks grieving for a year, culminate an All Souls Day, Wake Services three times to reach people – baptism, wedding prep, funeral; follow couples after marriage, married couple reunions with food, keep track of addresses; priest, deacon – up and down aisle greeting people – know them. Ask visitors to stand. Dialogue – priest/laity relationship; mutual support model; small faith groups” (PC)

“Town meetings that enable broad visioning and goal setting; personal invitation to be part of what the parish is doing; opportunities to deepen spiritual life in a variety of ways; new membership orientations much like universities or large companies that see the need to introduce people to the ‘culture’ of the parish.” (DR)

“Good listening skills; ability to recognize and invite people to minister through their gifts; assure quality rituals and homilies – have the courage to stretch beyond what is normative; vision together – review together – pray together; accompany and affirm all along the way.” (DR)

“Sharing of information/communication; stewardship involvement; openness/welcoming of all; formation/educational support” (O)

“Listening and responding (not reacting); creativity – thinking outside the box – adapting to community needs; annual parish meeting/town meeting – a forum for dialogue; welcoming/hospitality – welcoming new parishioners; catechesis/adult formation; prayer – meaningful prayer before meetings.” (O)

“Listen; invite consistently; be open to new styles of leadership; pray often and depend upon God’s grace; share resources; respond to change with hope.” (O)

“Be vibrant yourself and share it with others. Stewardship is important time, talent, and finances. Invite fallen away back personally. Be prepared for what’s coming. Be flexible. Be aware and respectful of diversity. Be supportive of new people coming back.” (O)

“We have had programs focused on invitation with a sense of involvement and standards. We invite ‘fallen away’ Catholics back to rediscover their roots with a bent on helping them work through the issues. In another effort, we invite new people to become parishioners through a welcoming night. In both processes, we focus on the relationship between membership and active involvement.” (O)

“A discerning community; welcoming and integrating new members in intentional ways” (O)

C. Challenges for Leadership in Building a Vibrant Faith Community

Participants identified a number of challenges they experience in building vibrant faith communities. Among their concerns are overcoming parochialism and resistance to change, dealing with a dominant culture of self-centeredness versus collaboration, and finding appropriate outreach and invitation to service.

Overcoming Parochialism and Resistance to Change

A number of pastoral leaders indicate that resistance to change occurs at the personal, institutional, and cultural levels. In all these contexts, resistance to change and overcoming parochialism are challenges they encounter as indicated below:

“Leaders that were not trained to minister in this environment; a community that has not lived in this environment; the parochial attitudes we taught them in the 50’s and 60’s are coming back to hurt us. Staff development – They do not ‘want or need’ development and formation.” (P)

“May be difficult for some priests to be molded when they come to a new community. Exterior and interior pressures are a challenge to leadership. Being a ‘sometimes pastor’ is a challenge, e.g., seeing parishioners every other or third week. Blazing trails can be difficult.” (P)

“Business of family life; Sunday morning sports; personality of present leadership; working through resistance on all levels; responsibility of pastor which in turn makes it difficult to lay down the process of a new style of leadership because of lack of time and energy.” (P)

“Authenticity; recognize our skills and limitations; time to be retrained not to be parochial, but to be collaborative; what to do with priests who are not skilled, talented, and able to be a pastor; spirituality – time to pray each day.” (PLC)

“Overcoming our history; limited resources; dealing with variety of ecclesial models, competition of interests and needs; professional evaluation of RCC culture and how it can adapt to be relevant.” (D)

“Future planning; adult faith formation; convey image and experience of being church; involvement/conversion of community; unrealistic expectations; resistance to change” (PA)

“Some priests avoiding a new kind of clericalism; demands on young families; instant gratification society; parishioners who just want to go to Mass” (PC)

“Overcoming resistance to change; overcoming parochialism; re-educate the whole community, including pastors; time to make the change; get the congregation to realize that they can make the choice to join in the community as opposed to those who keep up with the Jones’; be faith filled about your community; help people to be open-minded; create the challenges for the community to rise up to the challenge; be able to be Christ to each other in a community; keep Christ at the center of our focus.” (PC)

“To be sure that ministers do not become clerical, thereby, creating another level of clericalism.” (DR)

“There is always resistance to change. How not to get discouraged. When bad news or loss is on the horizon, denial can set in – not wanting to deal with reality. Vibrant communities attract very diverse people. How to be pastorally present to diversity. Sports programs and the busyness of family life today.” (DR)

“Inability or resistance to deal with personal issues; insecurity – unrealistic personal expectations; articulation of a vision – managing the vision” (DR)

“Overcoming fear, resistance to change, parochialism; rigidity of leaders; different theologies, personalities and ecclesiologies; hanging onto things that can change, i.e., First Fridays, etc. at all costs; handling diversity; respecting traditions while moving forward; re-education of people on new realities of today, etc. Keeping Christ as the center...the focus” (DR)

“Any lack of personal energy, lethargy, and clinging to the past/present; resources, especially of trained personnel or fiscal resources; any sense of entitlement by any level of the community; unrealistic expectations” (DR)

“Fear of change; holding onto the past; confidence; resources; individualism; no recognition for the need for conversion” (O)

“Current situations; not building a new form of clericalism; working with diversity; resistance of both clergy and parishioners who do not see change as necessary; becoming secular in our approach versus spiritual” (O)

Culture of Self-Centeredness versus Collaboration (Trends in Dominant Culture)

A number of participants indicate that the dominant culture and its trend toward self-centeredness and busy lives are critical challenges to building vibrant faith communities. The following comments indicate their struggle with cultural issues and trends:

“Diversity; fast-paced society; reacting rather than reflecting on issues, scandals, original and continued sin; many options which ‘tickle our ears’, but have little real substance unlike our Gospel, secularization, and materialism.” (P)

“Mobility – turnover of people – lack of stability; distraction – consumerism – information; delegation versus ‘passing it off’; comfort levels different for pastors” (P)

“Authenticity; listening; multi-cultural; doctrine versus pastoral needs” (PC)

“Our society – our secular way of life – lack of formation of the young; aging of society; pastors” (PC)

“The shortcomings of human nature, the distractions presented by our ‘consumeristic’ culture, the difficulty involved in being a committed Christian.” (DR)

“To be aware of all the kinds of differences that contribute to people’s lives. To the extent we fail to recognize certain constituencies, we will lose them, e.g., marital status (especially singles), personality type, operative spirituality, gender, race, etc.” (DR)

“Parishioners who haven’t really been converted, for whom God is not the center of their lives, who do not understand and embrace their vocation flowing from baptism; the incredible variety of options people have in using their time; the individualistic, consumer-oriented tendencies of our society; the contrasting ecclesiologies present in the parish; those who seek themselves as watchdogs for the orthodoxy.” (DR)

“Reaching out to people of all ages and states of life; finding ways to make church seem relevant when faced with the competition of what society offers.” (DR)

Outreach and Invitation to Service (Training, Education, and Welcoming)

A number of participants indicate that their greatest challenges deal with outreach and providing appropriate invitations and opportunities to serve. This involves a variety of means, including training, education, and welcoming. The following comments reflect the challenges they experience in creating communities of outreach, invitation, and welcome:

“Working at hospitality – welcoming people; inviting people into active role.” (P)

“Help parishes cluster to share ideas, resources, and leadership; vibrant parishes attract diverse people – conflict resolution – how to build community with creative tension accepted; nurture people’s skill sets/tools to be better ministers; how to collaborate better when good people with diverse ideas get together.” (P)

“Parishioner turnover (which is constant); staff must be prepared to work with and for parishioners who might have very difficult theological viewpoints. We must get beyond our theological prejudices and realize that the Spirit is within us when we are truly collaborative. Don’t depend on a few people to do things. Mix with people as much as possible and recruit from a broad base.” (P)

“We need to find a way to get our parishioners out of the pew and involved. Parish ministers must remove the word ‘my’ and replace it with ‘our’ ministry.” (D)

“To keep Christ as the center of our ministry/prayers; skills necessary for leadership – pastors, staff, mentors; responsible laity willing to take leadership and own it. Develop lay leaders – training. Breaking through our New England attitude of keeping to ourselves – privacy. Two parents working and families’ over-commitment.” (PA)

“Educate about personal or private versus public issues. Establish a more relational community.” (PA)

“Education, communication, learning skills of collaboration, and discernment; liturgies help build vibrant faith communities.” (PA)

“Need for personal invitations to welcome and invite new and different people to participate in building vibrant faith community – giving everyone a voice; helping communities understand/accept the fluidity of change required for vibrancy to be present; educating Catholics on the possibilities of what vibrant faith communities can be; balance in personal and professional life.” (PA)

“Bishops - balance and health; empowerment; reaching out to everyone; respecting all differences; being family intensive; assist the singles and elderly. Need to engage the community, increasing commitment to ‘church’ and helping to identify gifts and calls. Need to remember that the community is very diverse (on many attributes). Faith activity should include and celebrate these differences – leveraging them to the community’ advantage.” (PC)

“One of the challenges is that many people are not trained within their ministry. Keeping Christ as the Center; sports” (DR)

“Learning to say no when we are being stretched too far; being willing to listen; being authentic. Learn what gifts and talents are available. Develop a sense of trustworthiness – overcoming distrust. Deal with multiple cultures. Minister to people who feel they are alienated with the church. Learn not to judge, but be pastoral. Be able to deal with conflict. Follow disciplines of church regarding sacraments while accepting those of other faith.” (DR)

“We as a faith community must be welcoming and open to others. We can no longer ‘own’ our ministry. Individuals involved in ministry must also be healthy and balanced in their personal life, as well as their ministry; finding a way to spark the person in the pew who only attends Mass.” (DR)

“Community-building skills; culture of the faith community – this is my church; we the church taught parochialism to the people now we need to break it down.” (DR)

“Ways of presenting music; ways of connecting; ways of connecting youth; leadership; great ideas” (O)

“Reaching out to all; intergenerational challenges; to come to know what the talent/gifts are of all; providing education/formation opportunities” (O)

“Evangelization to unchurched; lack of staff development time; lack of focus by pastor” (O)

“Finances; lack of people to minister as volunteers; how to work with diverse cultures in a single parish; how to encourage the young people (especially after Confirmation) to remain in the church and to serve.” (O)

“To keep Christ at the center; be a person of prayer (keep councils in prayer); be vibrant yourself and model; be excited, inviting, encouraging, supportive and open-minded; share leadership roles” (O)

D. Opportunities for Leadership in Building a Vibrant Faith Community

Pastoral leaders identified calling forth the gifts of others and ongoing faith formation and evangelization as the primary opportunities for building vibrant faith communities for the future.

Calling Forth the Gifts of Others

As in other regions, a number of participants indicate that the opportunities of the future primarily lie in inviting and calling forth the gifts of others to realize their baptismal call for service. The following comments reflect this approach to involve others in ministry throughout their parish communities:

“As a priest, getting to know my parishioners so that my homilies are relevant; affirm gifts” (P)

“Promoting/reaching on the individual’s baptismal call; stewardship that promotes the using and sharing of one’s gifts” (P)

“Collaboration; shared wisdom; wealth of talents; listening sessions” (P)

“The sky is the limit. The old paradigms are going away so we must look for new ways. I think and pray often about the Acts of the Apostles. We are building a new church. The old way is passing away. There is a new church coming.” (P)

“There is an opportunity for growth in the leaders and the people. Ministry days, commitment Sundays, and mission reflection days are opportunities to be seized in order to move toward vibrant parishes.” (P)

“More lay ministers will be involved. What ordained clergy are now doing, most likely lay ministers will be taken over some of the duties of the ordained.” (D)

“Guide others; lead by example; openness to learning from others; promote others to identify and use gifts; enable others to minister” (PA)

“Endless; in building the Kingdom, our work will never be finished. There will always be opportunities to deepen the faith life of individuals, of a faith community. There will always be options to help the marginalized in our world. The opportunity to help people recognize, grow, and share their gifts in furthering God’s kingdom and also to ‘rotate’ ways in which these gifts are shared will strengthen community and faith life of individuals.” (PA)

“How about establishing a leadership skills institute for those emerging as parish life coordinators, pastoral associates, etc.? Train enough ministers to be able to rotate ministries every two years or so.” (PA)

“Discernment opportunities; using gifts of the community; creative ideas; invitation” (PA)

“Pastors; the talent of the faithful; need for change; change agents; lack of priests; aging of society; demographic changes” (PC)

“Small faith groups; live the Gospel; get energy for faith; align with mission of the parish” (PC)

“Shared prayer/faith; ongoing communications; delegation; risk taking; recognizing when it is time to move on” (DR)

“There should be structured opportunities designed to allow for broader participation. Levels and areas of responsibility that need to be filled” (DR)

“Leadership opportunities are limited. Opportunities to participate are unlimited. The need people feel to have meaningful and fulfilling lives. The basic goodness and nobility of people that comes out when they feel loved and respected. The glory of God which is the true message.” (DR)

“Identify, recognize, and invite appropriate people to collaborative ministry.” (DR)

“Building of different people’s gifts; need to work together to respond to the variety of needs in parishes today. Opportunities to share leadership. One person does not need to share the burden. Important to get to know people in order to preach and minister well. Help people to know they belong and are appreciated.” (DR)

“Enable, invite, encourage all to be Christ for each other by participating in the mission, message, and ministry of Jesus; recognizing giftedness and calling them forth; re-educate laity; calling people to participate in life of parish and community; mentoring of new leaders invited to assure leadership roles.” (DR)

“Teachers; music ministers; chaperones; renewal opportunities, e.g., retreats; prayer; coming together/clustering” (O)

Ongoing Faith Formation and Evangelization

Pastoral leaders believe that ongoing faith formation and evangelization, including adult catechesis and lay ministry formation are critical means of building vibrant faith communities for the future. The following comments reflect their commitment to this formational approach to leadership development:

“Formation – formation strengthens faith; opens doors to optimism and makes things more vibrant.” (P)

“To take the above challenges and interject a lasting message of hope – a helpful option for peaceful existence. In as many times as people feel the failure in the answers and structure that surround them, we will have an opportunity to reflect upon more substantial teachings.” (P)

“There seems to be good education for lay ministers.” (PLC)

“Contextual adult faith formation; drop-by evangelizations (Mass cards, RE registration, funerals, weddings, baptisms); move from need-based vision of parish to pneuma-theological gifts basis; creative, challenging homilies that open people to question and search.” (D)

“Lay ministry training; invitations to service; stewardship; adult faith formation; small Christian communities, especially facilitators; delegating tasks; spiritual growth” (PA)

“Acting as a faith-filled community; come to realize what our challenges are and as a result encourage leaders from among them to help build their communities; opportunities come from training in the theology for the community; sensitive, thought-provoking homilies” (PC)

“Trainings and workshops; education for laity; developing adult catechesis; use lay people to train lay people; spiritual retreats” (PC)

“Adult catechesis” (PC)

“Lay ministry formation; adult education in learning about faith/scriptures” (DR)

“Any movement that recognizes the possibility for forming disciples, community, or serving others is rich in opportunity.” (DR)

“Improve method of pre-cana, pre-baptism; bring willing leaders from the parish into church leadership. Be sensitive, thought-provoking homilies; developing adult catechesis courses for laity, pastoral studies, and theology. Use lay people (pastoral minister, pastoral associate, etc.) for training of Eucharistic Ministers, lectors, etc. Establish programs for lay people run by lay people with spiritual directors.” (DR)

“People who are spiritually hungry, eager to find meaning and contribute to the well-being of society; an extremely well-educated laity (many need theological formation, but increasing numbers have it); declining number of priests forces us to question our assumptions and rethink creatively.” (DR)

“We must be authentic when dealing with others. In addition, we must seek our brothers and sisters who have left us and encourage them to join us again. We also need to educate the laity on their responsibility as a baptized Christian.” (DR)

“Within the laws of the church the sky’s the limit. We need to think outside the box. The opportunity is ripe for training new ministers in all areas. Adult education is in demand. We must meet this need.” (DR)

“Formation of lay/religious/priests made available for training in ministries not quite prepared to take on for a successful outcome.” (O)

“The absence of priests and religious leaders – more opportunities for lay people to take roles in church; spiritual direction; religious education is more open to lay people.” (O)

“To strengthen and broaden the scope of those involved in the church; to grow/evangelize the breadth of those who assist the church in the vision” (O)

“Baptisms, First Communion, Confirmation, weddings, and funerals – great opportunities to welcome and invite people to a life in Christ. When people ask for prayers, seize the opportunity by asking them if it is OK to pray now. If they agree (usually with great surprise – don’t know what is going to happen), then pray right there for whatever they need.” (O)

E. The Parish of the Future

Pastoral leaders identified a number of trends they believe will characterize the parish of the future. These include clustered and changing parish structures, as well as small intentional faith communities. In addition, these pastoral leaders believe inclusive forms of leadership and the possible redefinition of ecclesial leadership are critical expectations for the future parish.

Clustered and Changing Parish Structures

As in other regions, a number of participants believe that clustered communities and changing parish structures are significant attributes for the parish of the future. These range from mega-parishes with supporting faith communities to clustered parishes in more remote areas. The following comments reflect the belief that structural changes are inevitable for the future of the parish:

“Clustered communities of faith” (P)

“No one model of leadership practice, but all should be a discerning community. The parish will be a parish of attitude to form and risk ways of doing ministry.” (PA)

“This is difficult to imagine. We talk about various models considered these days and we talk about all the dynamics affecting change (priest shortage to changing demographics, etc.). The way these variables mix will likely be different for many parishes, so we need to prepare for a gradual evolution: build our community, focus on the mission of Christ, and trust in the Spirit.” (PC)

“There will be a lot of different kinds of models. All remain Eucharistic community. More shaped by pastoral attitude. Response to needs as they arise.” (PC)

“Many diverse structures depending on the size and geographical location (urban, rural, suburban, but also Northeast U.S. versus West or South); reading the signs of the times – outreach and service dependent on needs of local community and beyond; foundation as communities of prayer (personal and communal) centered on Christ; truly hospitable, welcoming, inclusive, collaborative in our diversity” (DR)

“There will be multiple models in which the Eucharist will remain central – and a community of disciples will become ever more central.” (DR)

“Mega-parishes with small faith communities within. People will have to travel farther to Mass, but will be nourished by the small faith communities.” (DR)

“I’m not sure there will be parishes as we now know them. The ‘parish’ of the future might be a house church as we had in apostolic times.” (DR)

“Larger parishes with smaller faith communities within them. Clustered parishes will also be factored in. Hopefully, most people will get used to laity within the parishes and less priests.” (DR)

“Mega-parishes with various staffing models: 1) One staff that oversees all. 2) Encouragement of small faith communities that minister among themselves and sacramental minister is present in a regularly scheduled way.” (DR)

“There will be more clustering and sharing of resources. Many parishes will be led by laity and deacons. Initially, attendance and participation of parishioners may drop off because of the changes. At some point, parishes will see growth. Perhaps not former parishioners returning, but new one who are now attracted to this form of church.” (DR)

“I don’t know. But, our church is very different from what it was in the 40s and 50s (Irish Catholic). In the 60s, everything nearly shut down because of I95 and lots of displacement). In the 70s and 80s, with Charismatic Renewal coming in heavily; in the 90’s with savings being nearly depleted and the threat of closure for our school; in the new century with a revitalization that feels like a miracle.” (O)

Smaller, Intentional Faith Communities

A number of pastoral leaders believe that the future will be characterized by small, intentional faith communities that are part of a larger parish setting. The following comments reflect a belief that small communities of faith will emerge as part of the parish of the future:

“The parish of the future won’t be territorial or boundary driven. It will be a place for people of faith to gather and celebrate union, communion, support, prayer, and a connection with the transcendent and eminent relationship of Christ, Our Savior. It will be faith-based, small communities that can’t live in this world without it.” (P)

“Smaller; intentional; lay groups developing with particular focus; less parish-based” (P)

“Small Christian communities meeting during the week, joining together on weekends or some other night as a mega-church” (PLC)

“Large, busy, vibrant, small Christian communities with all kinds of people doing all kinds of ministry” (PLC)

“Many models – community of communities; ministry communities; service communities; faith sharing; cultural” (D)

“Very small and very old, unless we plan for something different” (PC)

“Welcoming place with a sense of an adult accepting family; less emphasis on the physical building and more on the faith life; if it is not something like this, it will be a small congregation of mostly older people. The rest may be in small prayer groups in homes.” (PC)

“Parishes will continue to spread the Gospel and teach the truth. There will be increased perpetual adoration in parishes. There will be more parish centers to bring the community together. There will be whole community catechesis/small faith sharing communities.” (O)

“Smaller, more by choice, more involvement of laity” (O)

Inclusive Forms of Leadership

A number of pastoral leaders in the Northeast believe that the forms of leadership of the future will be more inclusive. There will be greater continuity between priests, deacons, and lay leaders in a collaborative way. The following comments reflect this perspective:

“More people that are members nurtured (ordained, deacons); more people invited to respond to the call to broaden the ministries that exist today. The uninvolved hear the call and are invited to share their gifts.” (P)

“More deanery center; education led by laity; priest more sacramental” (P)

“Possibly both parishes will merge into one having one priest. People taking ownership and leading in areas of service and formation guided by staff (lay ecclesial minister and deacon).” (PA)

“Many leaders around parish life – spiritual, administrative faith formation – recognized as equals.” (PA)

“I think we can expect a greater participation in leadership from the laity and should be preparing them and the community at large for the possibilities. Our church will survive and it will change. The greatest thing we can do is keep reminding people that change is inevitable and pray as a community that the spirit will guide the parish and inspire and call leaders. We also need to help people remember we are part of a world-wide community. As change occurs, it would be beneficial if collaboration extended beyond parish boundaries – within the U.S. and draw upon the wisdom of the church leadership in other countries.” (PC)

“‘John, you stay in bed. I’ll say the Homily, said his wife.’ Church in homes – possible, but likely? Clusters of parishes; sharing staff; one leader of the group; yoking parishes with priests going from one to another. Priests and laity in collaboration; parishes each with cultural identities with one staff and one pastor. Daily liturgy on a rotating basis.” (DR)

“Hopefully a place where the leadership and pastoral council will grow sufficiently as genuinely collaborative ministries who enable the mission, message, and ministry of Jesus to flourish to its fullest; where the gifts of all are shared; where the needs of those who are suffering are met; where the hopes and aspirations of all are encouraged and where love permeates our lives.” (DR)

“Like an adult family with kids around adults because it is time for our church to realize it can no longer treat its membership like children by spouting rules and regulations and working off guilt. It’s time for collaboration and the church of 2025 will need to embrace the opportunity it brings.” (O)

“More religious and lay ministries taking over many of the roles priests formerly did.” (O)

“Either faith communities supported by pastoral administrators or the concept of a broader basis where one priest is supported by a sharing ministry team to provide assistance to several parishes.” (O)

Redefining Ecclesial Leadership

A number of pastoral leaders believe that some form of redefining ecclesial leadership will occur. This includes lay parish coordinators, the possibility of married clergy, or a more prominent role for deacons on leading parish life. The following comments reflect this perspective:

“So that we can continue to be Eucharistic church, we must do a lot more to promote vocations. The present Pope has adopted healing the rift with the Orthodox Church. Perhaps a secondary effect would be to allow for a married clergy as the Orthodox do. We may center more on issues that have been put aside, e.g., orientation.” (P)

“More clustered parishes; priest/deacon collaborators; lay parish coordinators; broadening ordination to other than celibate men.” (P)

“I see a more inclusive church in the sacramental ministries, i.e., deacons being able to do anointing of the sick. (They do not need to do confessions.) Married priests may be a start with those who have been permanent deacons for five years or so; women as deacons, etc.” (PA)

“There will be priests who serve a church community. There will be trained lay people running the day-to-day business of a parish community such that the priest will be able to deal with the sacraments. There will be married priests with families to show as an example to the community how to live. Deacons will play a greater role. Preach and act out the concept for love of God as we are called to act in a way of Christ to others. Our good neighbor/mission, message and ministry of Jesus.” (PC)

“Married priesthood is possible. Strong adult presence, especially young married people; sacramental focus” (O)

“Married diocesan priests serving in parish; deacons working at the parishes in fuller capacity; women much more active in various roles; all parishioners seeing the mission, message, and ministry of Jesus to fulfillment” (O)

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

To conclude their discussion on parish best practices, Northeast Symposium participants were asked how close or how far they are from realizing their future vision of the parish. A number of pastoral leaders are optimistic that their parishes are clearly building toward a vision of the future. Others indicate their parishes are significantly far from the vision. Finally, other pastoral leaders indicate their parishes are in diverse places on the journey.

Optimistic in Building a Preferred Vision of the Future

Pastoral leaders in the Northeast who are optimistic about their progress in building a preferred vision for the future indicate this progress in the following comments:

“We are exactly where we can be and where God wants us to be. With the Holy Spirit, we will continue to grow exactly where God wants us to be.” (P)

“The process is heading in the right direction.” (P)

“In the dream – open to possibilities.” (P)

“70%”

“We’re moving...” (PLC)

“The potential is present. More understanding of individual gifts are needed. Patience on the part of staff is needed.” (PA)

“We have a relatively ‘liberal’ parish, but this depends on Rome and the Bishops, not our parish.” (PA)

“Moving in that direction from a willingness of parishioners” (PA)

“Each day our parish tries to live the message of Jesus.” (PA)

“We have begun small group interested in initiating change knowing that future change is inevitable. Talk has begun regarding restructuring of deanery parishes. Some collaboration between some committees of two parishes that will be yoked – i.e., social concerns and confirmation prep” (PC)

“We’re half way there and it could go either way!” (PC)

“We are where Christ wants us to be. We are at the beginning of a wonderful process.” (DR)

“Very likely – it’s on its way.” (DR)

“Closer than we were two years ago. I believe within five years, we will have attained much of this vision.” (DR)

“Know what we need to be and do, but just beginning on the path.” (DR)

“Our parish is several years away from realizing its vision, but is on track. Most of the work will be planned out this summer and program will be implemented in the fall 2005 and spring 2006.” (O)

“We’re in God’s providence! And I have confidence that we’ll be there in the future. We were Irish Catholic to the core. Now, our faces have changed and we are Black, Hispanic, Asian, etc. (with very few Caucasians), but we’re beautiful.” (O)

“Doing well but continues to evolve.” (O)

“We’re at 75%.” (O)

“Close in the fact that becoming open to the change that needs to occur, but a little farther away to actually fulfilling the vision because not yet a reality in our parish.” (O)

Significantly Far from this Vision

Still others leaders in the Northeast indicate their parishes are very far from their desired vision of the future. Those who are less optimistic about their progress offer the following comments:

“Very far — We move from the security of traditional teachings and practices of church (in a nostalgic view of the past) to a scary, fearful world which has us fall into ourselves, rather than opening us to a savior. Some have stepped beyond this to a more current view of Christ with courage to open themselves to the problems of the world. They have met Christ in the poor. Unfortunately, the vast number have remained closed, hoping to hold on to the past and some vestiges of certitude, which they hope will get them through today’s problems and into heaven.” (P)

“‘It’s all about me!’ Attitude refuses to let a hint of newness and hope fully penetrates or even partially penetrates, except for when some tragedy befalls them and they desperately seek help in terror.” (P)

“It’s a long way off – moving by force of history, not plan. The future parish must have a focus of ministry to the community at large beyond its own internal concerns. (P)

“Not even close!” (PA)

“We are a long way from what we say we would like to be.” (PC)

“The gap is huge. Part of the issue for us is how/where to start? Do programs lead the people, or is education and consensus a prerequisite?” (PC)

“We are very far from this vision largely due to egos, lack of communication, and lack of a prayerful spirit.” (DR)

“It’s on the ground floor. Some of the foundation is in place. But, laity need to be brought on board in a bigger way. Staff needs to be behind the scenes – facilitation not quite so visible.” (DR)

“Very far!” (O)

“We’re eons away.” (O)

“On a scale of 1-10, probably a 3-4” (O)

Diverse Places on the Journey

Still other pastoral leaders indicate their parishes are at diverse places on the journey. These leaders tend to focus more on the process itself rather than arriving at some pre-determined goal or vision of the future:

“Some parishes I serve are closer than others. I serve four parishes and one mission. Some are much closer than others. For example, one of the parishes has a pastoral council that prays and discerns, whereas, another parish I just started to serve is just forming a council period. They had no council before.” (P)

“Visions are never achieved. It’s the human journey...walking with each other and doing it with care, kindness, and love that matters.” (DR)

“This is a pilgrimage...with some resilient, some interested, some engaged, and some too firmly anchored in the past.” (DR)

“Presently my parish is more like the traditional model: pastor, parochial vicars, pastoral associates, business manager, DRE, and music ministers. For me the question is: What model will best sense the needs with the resources (both human and material) that are available.” (DR)

“We can’t have the parish of the future today. The question infers that the parish of the future will be better, but that is not correct. The parish of the future will be whatever the needs of that day require.” (DR)

IV. PARISH 2025 FUTURING EXERCISE:

Northeast Symposium participants worked in small groups on a Parish 2025 Futuring Exercise. The purpose of the exercise was to identify the nature and structure of the parish that may emerge over the next 20 years. After small groups reported on the following themes, individuals were given a reflection period to document their individual observations. The small group discussions and individual reflection focused on the following Parish 2025 issues:

- **Parish Structures**
- **Models of Ordained and Lay Ecclesial Leadership**
- **Forms of Leadership by Parishioners**
- **Future Trends in Parish Worship Ministries**
- **Future Trends in Ministries of the Word**
- **Future Trends in Parish Ministries of Service**

A. Parish Structures of the Future

Pastoral leaders in the Northeast believe that parish structures of the future will be characterized by small, more intentional faith communities, greater involvement and leadership of the laity in parish life, and larger clustered parishes.

Smaller, More Intentional Faith Communities

It is interesting to note in the Northeast that one of the common denominators is the expectation that smaller, more intentional faith communities will comprise the future of the parish. Whether larger or small structures are in place, the common element of small faith communities is prevalent in the following comments:

“Small and intentional; service oriented; guided by God and Spirit; different structures based on local needs” (P)

“Small, intentional parishes; adaptive to culture, spiritualities, and ecclesiologies; lay administered; new role for ordained” (P)

“Large worship site, but with many and varied small Christian communities” (PLC)

“Local community visited by sacramental minister and led by lay ecclesial minister and/or mega-parishes serviced by ordained person(s), nurtured by small faith communities.” (PA)

“Small intentional churches; service oriented; evangelization churches connected to neighbors; adaptive to local church; small Christian communities; less hierarchical and more collaborative” (PA)

“Small intentional; service oriented; adaptive to local needs; mega-churches with small Christian clusters nurtured on a daily basis; witnessing faith – God will be recognized in our relationships; spirit-led; less hierarchical and more collaborative” (PC)

“Two kinds of churches (small churches or mega-churches); small and intentional; service-oriented youth; large with household clusters; spirit-led conversation; less hierarchical – more collaborative; adaptive to community needs; witnessing to faith” (PC)

“Smaller, intentional, service-oriented, parishes that are adaptive to needs with small Christian communities that are witnessing of faith, spirit-led, less hierarchical and more collaborative.” (DR)

“Smaller, service oriented; growing Hispanic numbers; larger with smaller surrounding communities; spirit-led; more collaborative; technology; shift of authority from Rome” (DR)

“Small intentional communities; large parishes with small Christian communities; service oriented; witnessing and sharing our stories; spirit-led communities; less hierarchical, more collaborative. Technology will play significant role; professionally prepared leadership” (DR)

“Smaller parishes spread out throughout the diocese” (O)

“Small and intentional; home churches and mega-churches for weekend gatherings” (O)

More Involvement and Leadership of the Laity

A number of other pastoral leaders believe that the future structure of parish life will clearly involve laity in more prominent leadership roles. This includes a greater effort of collaboration among clergy, staff, and communities in working together as indicated by the following comments:

“Team leadership/priest (if there is one) as an equal partner on the team.” (PC)

“No single model; large worship, irregular Eucharist, more lay-to-lay service” (D)

“Ordained clergy will provide sacramental and more laity will respond to their Baptismal call.” (DR)

“In a wide variety of ways, depending on local needs. Generally more cooperative leadership covering more individual locations” (DR)

“The models are emerging. Parish structure will remain important both in the traditional and specialized sense (like the family emphasis of Holy Family in business). Staffs will be much more diversified, better trained, and better funded. Stewardship, accountability, and evangelization will be basic elements.” (DR)

“The ‘working together’ part is key. All people must be informed. There must be good and frequent communication both from the pastor and to the pastor by the various ministries.” (O)

*“If it is to be healthy, a parish must have this total ministering community.”
(O)*

“I think healthy parishes will depend on total ministering or that shall be their goal. Pastors, staff and parishioners will need to work together. Pastors, staff, and parishioners are the wisdom people. Among them, all the gifts the community needs are found.” (O)

“Pastors will still have their current role, but lay leadership will increase. Churches may be smaller.” (O)

“In 2025, there will be some sort of presider at every service – lay or ordained. Thinking in hope that the ‘priest’ will be representative of the people worshipping in every aspect – race, gender, etc. Lay will be involved and more important.” (O)

*“Many one priest parishes with strong lay presence; lay administrator keeps the books; smaller staff trained many parishioners to do ministry”
(O)*

Larger, Clustered Parishes

A few leaders in the Northeast believe that larger and more clustered parishes will be called for in the future. Compared to other regions of the country, however, these comments were less prevalent in the Northeastern part of the United States:

*“I still believe we will have a clergy/lay staff structure because I feel the hierarchy will not give up on current models and priests will continue to redefine and tinker with structures through staff hiring and restructuring.”
(P)*

“Cluster parishes with small faith communities” (PA)

“I am fascinated by the central parish office for numerous parishes. With advances in technology, the virtual parish concept with worship sites may become more prevalent.” (PA)

“Regional parishes – rather than neighborhood parishes; fewer pastors; more lay administrators” (PC)

“Larger parishes with fewer parishes; Christians will have one priest and many more pastoral lay leaders. Families will take a moiré active part in decision-making.” (PC)

“Bigger parishes; technology; shift in authority” (DR)

“Geographic, intentional, internet-based, larger parishes (20,000 families), but multiple worship sites per parish (if ordination requirements don’t change).” (DR)

“Larger parishes with multiple faith communities with trained professionals to operate them under director of sacramental ministries.” (O)

B. Models of Ordained and Lay Ecclesial Leadership

Symposium participants were asked to identify the emerging models of ordained and lay ecclesial leadership for the future. Pastoral leaders believe that models of ordained and lay ecclesial leadership will include increased dependency on leadership of the laity, as well as a more prominent role for deacons. Only a few participants indicate that the future will include more diverse forms of orders. Those participants who believe this will be part of the future were less prominent than in other regions of the United States. Finally, some pastoral leaders believe that a stronger servant model of leadership will prevail irrespective of the structures for ecclesial leadership.

Increased Dependency on the Leadership of the Laity and Deacons

It is clear among a number of participants that they expect the future of ordained and lay ecclesial leadership to involve greater reliance on the laity. The following comments reflect this expectation:

“Fewer parishes; more deacons; fewer religious men and women; need to engage parishioners more deeply (and in greater numbers) than today.” (P)

“Significant rise of responsible and trained lay leaders; major institutions to replace seminaries” (P)

“My hope is that professional lay ministers will be more accepted by the hierarchy by offering established benefits (health insurance, retirement, etc.) to them that are in line with what priests get. Theology graduate school loan coverage for those who make long-term professional commitments. Bishops work more closely with Catholic graduate programs at Catholic institutions - less afraid of them.” (P)

“Laity will take on more parish administrative responsibility; laity will lead more educational roles; priesthood still important with change in roles; formation of lay ministers extremely important” (P)

“More clusters of parishes; less clergy and more lay leaders” (P)

“I believe deanery models of parishes connected over time and space will be tried for years until this fails. Then, we will proceed to a people-based, need-based structure in which work will be done in outreach and Eucharist will sustain it.” (P)

“Decrease in priests; increase of trained lay ministries; small Christian communities – lay ministers; increase of deacons; increase in finances of the parishes; servant model leadership” (PA)

“Canonical ministers; more lay leaders” (PC)

“More deacons; new opportunities for lay ministry” (PC)

“Fewer priests; increase lay minister; better educated lay ministries; sacraments presided by lay ministers; servant model; real presence of Christ; formation of lay ministers; restructuring of lay ministers; leaders reflect demographics” (PC)

“Fewer priests; better and more information for lay ministers; women ordained; celibacy lifted; formation of lay ministers” (DR)

“Canonical pastors who will be ordained. Parishes may be larger. Professionally prepared leaders. Higher numbers of Spanish and Asian members.” (DR)

“More collaborative ministry” (DR)

“Lay ecclesial leadership that is well-trained; power of ministerial invitation – importance of identifying people who have the potential for leadership in church ministry. Greater effort at doing this needs to happen.” (DR)

“Larger parishes led by pastor, but with many worship/ministry sites, each led by trained lay ecclesial ministers (individually or in teams) – if ordination doesn’t change. Teams of ordained and lay – officially designated as leaders or through informal, local measures” (DR)

“Trained lay ministry in the diocese; whenever the needs of a community are met, those are best practices; best practice needs to begin with making liturgy all it can be and by staying focused on Christ.” (O)

“Best practices: Be open to the wisdom of the leaders and the parishioners. Gather a pastoral council. Gather a finance council. Sponsor parishioners in whom you see leadership potential in ministry formation program. Learn how to recognize gifts and invite people into ministry.” (O)

“Highly trained laity emerges; more young adult involvement” (O)

“More collaborative; service model of leadership; real presence of Jesus in Eucharist – consecrated by ordained priest; return of married priests (celibacy optional); more training for lay leaders” (O)

“Because of necessity, the church will revert or should I say, progress back to the pre-fourth and fifth centuries when all the rules and regulations about priests were imposed. Priests and lay will be more cooperative and both will follow the above structure.” (O)

More Diverse Forms of Orders

Unlike other parts of the country, only a few pastoral leaders commented that more diverse forms of orders will exist in the future, including optional celibacy and the possible ordination of women. The following comments reflect an expectation of greater diversity in the forms of orders:

“Ordained leader will consecrate Eucharist, including returning married clergy and possibly women. Celibacy will be optional. Lay ecclesial leaders will be formed uniformly for type of service and they will be accepted by community.” (PA)

“More and better educated and trained pastors and lay ministers; more flexible on restrictions of celibacy and marriage and men and women” (PA)

“Real presence; formation of lay ministers; ordained women; married priests” (DR)

“There will be a new appreciation of ordained ministry even as trained professional commissioned ministries achieve a new sense of collaboration in the church.” (DR)

“Perhaps married clergy (perhaps only those previously ordained at first).” (O)

“Models that recognize and respect differences between ordained and lay – even if by 2025 ordination is open to women and married men.” (O)

Servant Model of Leadership

A few leaders in the Northeast indicate that a servant model of leadership will prevail irrespective of the forms of leadership. This emphasis on the service role of leadership is evident in the following comments:

“Leadership will have varied forms in different parishes ordained and lay-led parishes. We will again go to the best person for that parish.” (PLC)

“Servant leadership; lead from weakness; empower others; new forms of formation; integration of women as full partners” (D)

“Servant model of leadership” (PA)

“Parish Life Director; fewer priests; increase in deacons, more trained leadership; more accountability regarding finances; new model of collaborative leadership; new formation models; servant model of leadership increasing; real presence by ordained continues; return of married priests; optional celibacy; lay ministers will be more accepted; ministers will be of the people.” (DR)

“Hopefully, leaders committed to wholeness, continued growth” (DR)

“Both will be servants to those they minister to as Jesus told his apostles to be.” (O)

“Servant leadership model or moving to it.” (O)

“Discerning; listening; be authentic; stewardship” (O)

“Common prayer of the staff and leadership is a tremendous help to working effectively.” (O)

C. Forms of Leadership of Parishioners

Northeast Symposium participants indicate that the baptismal call of the laity will be a major emphasis for leadership in parishes of the future. This trend toward increased collaborative ministry involving the laity is most evident in their observations.

“Lay-based” (P)

“Specialized service oriented leadership in the community...augmented and sustained through the teachings of a spiritual guide who will be there for guidance. Spiritual centers and guides will meet periodically with those who build the kingdom.” (P)

“Living out baptismal call of everyone” (P)

“Need to recapture sense of what lay people would be attracted to and energized by – social ministry and service to the poor. Parishes will be more internal, opportunity for vibrant parishes to grow. Leaders and parishioners learn to dialogue.” (P)

“Collaborative teams, including a priest either as canonical leader or solely sacramental/spiritual animator” (P)

“Lay people will be involved and lead many of the pieces of a parish. Parishes’ focus will depend on this. Leadership – focus on needs and justice.” (PLC)

“Peer-to-peer ministries; circles of faith; respect for talents and expertise” (D)

“Parishioners will be engaged in the life of the parish taking on responsibility as required for the service offered.” (PA)

“Parishioners will lead in specific areas of expertise, especially in area of finance. Multi-cultural, faith sharing, knowledge of other faiths” (PA)

“Every way of parish life” (PA)

“Increase on lay ministers who are well-trained; increase in deacons; larger parishes with small Christian communities; lay people anoint the sick; new model of ordained formation to work with all groups in society; servant model of leadership” (PC)

“Very specific purpose and goals; re-engaging real needs with real people; servant model of community” (PC)

“Greater importance placed on pastoral and finance councils. It would be wonderful if parish leaders could work with diocesan planners and administrators.” (PC)

“There will be more leadership from preaching; lay ministry will be vibrant” (PC)

“Full, active, conscious participation – continuing evolution, place and impact of lay role in the church” (DR)

“Significant leadership in all areas of parish life except those reserved to ordained” (DR)

“Considerable – there will be fewer and few professionals. Stewardship of time and talent will be key to service, leadership, and ministry.” (DR)

“More direct involvement in decisions, governance, and ministry.” (DR)

“Joining ‘intentional’ group...not just attending; servant model of community; deeper understanding of baptism and role of laity” (DR)

“Parishioners will be trusted to bring their gifts to the service of the parish. Parishioners will be located as adults.” (DR)

“Fewer priests; deaconate; well-trained lay ministers; small Christian communities; parishioners more involved in finances; new model of ordained minister; servant model of leadership; return of married priests – need reorientation; women ordained (collaboration of ordained and lay members, formation of lay ministers, acceptance of laity by parishioners, leaders will reflect demographics, celibacy becomes optional).” (DR)

“The Parish Council (pastoral) will be better formed as the basic discerning/visioning body of the parish working collaboratively with the pastor or parish leader and the parish finance committee.” (DR)

“Lack of vision; need for talented, trained leaders; people need to recognize giftedness” (O)

“Intentional communities with a specific goal and mission; engage real people; welcoming with good formation” (O)

“Parishioners, due to the reduction in size of the faith communities, will be more involved than ever.” (O)

“A lot. They will run nearly all sacramental ministry outside of Sunday Mass, marriage prep, etc.” (O)

“Lay parishioners will step forward to assist in the spreading of the Word.” (O)

D. Future Trends in Parish Worship Ministries

Symposium participants discussed the anticipated parish worship ministries to the Year 2025 and beyond. Northeast pastoral leaders believe that worship ministries of the future will be more inclusive of the laity in leadership roles. In addition, they expect more diverse and improved forms of worship.

Increased Role for the Laity

A number of pastoral leaders indicate that worship of the future will include laity in more active roles, including preaching and witnessing to the word. The following comments reflect an increased prominence of the laity in worship:

“Lay preaching and teaching” (P)

“Mass will continue to be led by ordained priests. Other forms of worship will be led by lay people.” (PLC)

“Enlivened liturgies with quality preaching from ordained and lay and inspiring music. Full participation by those who gather” (PA)

“Lay preaching and witnessing” (PA)

“Full, active participation; multi-cultural, good preaching – faculties to those who can preach (gifts) witnessing of faith” (PA)

“Will have a real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist celebrated by priest; celibacy becomes optional – return of married priests; formation of lay ministers that are ordained. Leaders of a parish are reflected by the community. Full, active, conscious participation; prayer and praise persons; have good music; have good readings with quality” (PC)

“Full active participation; witnessing into our worship; ministers well formed – quality” (PC)

“Full, active, and conscious presiders, participation by women preaching (faculties for those who do), witnessing with worship, prayer and praise people (music, music).” (DR)

“People (non-ordained) with the gift to preach and trained for this ministry will do so.” (DR)

“For a while, Mass will be pulled back to the priest, and likewise, the sacramental responsibilities. However, over time, and hopefully by 2025, the lay will be more involved.” (O)

“More traditional/contemplative liturgies with new ‘sacramental’ lay ministers” (O)

“Full, active, conscious participation; music, music, music; people with a gift to preach should preach; need witnessing” (O)

More Diverse Forms of Worship

A number of pastoral leaders expect the future to include more diverse forms of worship with greater emphasis on improved preaching, music, and technology. The following comments reflect this viewpoint:

“More prayer services, looking for prayer in non-Eucharistic setting.” (P)

“Less material oriented ministry; divesting of buildings and property; greater use of internet, and media services of outreach” (P)

“Better preaching please!! More formal instruction for those interested” (P)

“Liturgy of the Hours replaced daily Mass; more open pulpit; the people will have the Eucharist in or in spite of the church.” (D)

“Small faith communities” (PA)

“Mega-parishes; smaller groups within larger communities” (DR)

“There will be greater emphasis on prayer forms that gather communities outside the celebration of sacraments and a new deeper understanding of prayer at the core of all parish meetings.” (DR)

“We will remain a Eucharistic people, perhaps by welcoming a married clergy or teams of ordination, i.e., a commitment for 5 or 10 years.” (DR)

“More use of visual, multi-media, drama, witness talks, faith-sharing preaching connected to charism not office (with appropriate education), more diverse styles of music and instrumentation” (DR)

“Participation; deeper spirituality; music; whole community catechesis; emphasis on stewardship; learn commonalities with different faiths” (DR)

“Good preaching is essential whether you are lay, religious or clergy; personal witnessing is important; good formation, good reading, and good music all with high quality” (DR)

“Inclusive of all cultures in our parishes” (O)

Homilies/worship will need to be more entertaining.” (O)

E. Future Trends in Ministries of the Word

In their small group discussions and individual reflections, pastoral leaders were asked to indicate future trends they expect in ministries of the word. They clearly expect a greater use of technology, the Internet, and the media in education and faith formation. It is interesting to note that this theme of greater use of technology, the Internet, and the media is much more evident in the Northeast than in other regions consulted to date. In addition, symposium participants expect greater attention to biblical studies and whole community catechesis as part of their ministry of the word in the future.

Greater Use of Technology, Internet, and Media

Among symposium participants in the Northeast, technology, the Internet, and the media emerge as key vehicles for communicating and forming people in the word. The following comments reflect the role of technology, the Internet, and the media that they believe is possible in the future:

“Internet-based learning; deeper spirituality (formation by laity; faith-sharing communities); generations of faith (community catechesis); environmental movement with scripture; commitment (word); welcoming; comfortable with the Bible” (P)

“Media sources relate the Word to experience and prophetic thought” (PA)

“Preaching by gifted laity; role of technology influencing the witnessing of Christ in our lives.” (PA)

“Youth and young adult formation; internet-based learning; deeper spirituality (formation by laity, faith-sharing communities; community catechesis; welcoming, covenant” (PA)

“Internet-based; deeper spirituality – formation by laity – faith-sharing communities; generations of faith-community catechesis; environmental movement with scripture; commitment; welcoming; multi-cultural faith-sharing; inter-faith generation understanding; Catholics will or should be more comfortable with the Bible. Up close and personal media stewardship of the Earth. The word needs to speak to the signs of the time.” (PC)

“Electronic media, especially in the teaching of the youth” (PC)

“Internet-based learning; deeper spirituality; formation by laity; faith-sharing communities; generations of faith (community catechesis); environmental movement with scripture; commitment; welcoming; multi-cultural faith-sharing; interfaith generation/understanding; comfortable with the Bible; media; LCD projectors” (DR)

“Internet formation; faith-sharing group; whole community religious education; committed people who remain active; hospitality on the rise; multi-cultural sensitivity; more national control of what is being taught; more emphasis on stewardship of Earth” (DR)

“Internet learning; deeper spirituality; generations of faith (community catechesis); multi-cultural faith-sharing” (DR)

“Technology will play a major role in ministries of the word.” (DR)

“Internet-based learner; deeper spirituality; comfortable with the Bible; formation by laity to laity; Christian communities; commitment; welcoming; multi-cultural; interfaith generations; more use of media; the way we form children; whole community catechesis; message stronger or weaker; more diocesan control of what we teach; more emphasis on stewardship; word stay relevant to the times” (DR)

“Intergenerational; using technology effectively; more intentional Catholic presence; evangelization in public schools, neighborhoods, government, and secular society; more faith-sharing small Christian communities” (DR)

“Multi-cultural faith-sharing; community catechesis; use of Internet – distance learning will pay a larger role in opening up the word – instructing the word.” (DR)

“Internet leased learning, deeper spirituality: Formation of laity and faith-sharing communities; generations of faith, welcoming, peace and justice ministries, ecumenism and interfaith dialogue” (O)

“Though the temptation will be to move hi-tech, the Word will continue to be a person-to-person experience – perhaps returning once again to the past and the future and becoming more of a storytelling experience.” (O)

“Internet-based learning and use of media; faith-sharing groups; generations of faith and other such movements; curriculums more controlled for teachers” (O)

“Connecting the Word in all programs; internet-based learning” (O)

More Biblical Studies and Whole Community Catechesis

Symposium participants believe that whole community catechesis, as well as an emphasis on biblical traditions will be key elements for the ministry of the word in the future. The following comments reflect their expectations:

“Faith formation, whole community catechesis, etc., religious education programs; message/teachings on the environment linked with stewardship (global warming); more technology-based; hierarchical involvement of material taught and methods; more whole community catechesis; more emphasis placed in teaching/interpreting the scriptures; more emphasis on Catholic life social teachings.” (P)

“Lay preaching and teaching; whole community formation” (P)

“Intent; impact of whole country catechesis, importance of Catholic history” (P)

“More highly trained biblical scholarship” (O)

“Whole catechesis – families sharing word at home. The Sunday scriptures will be a strong part of prayer all week in the parish.” (PLC)

“More Bible study in style of RENEW; sitting the scripture into theological reflection” (D)

“Intergenerational ongoing catechesis and shared faith” (PA)

“How will we ever educate parishioners to accept a greater role of lay members in worship?” (PC)

“Deeper spirituality – formation by laity for laity; whole community catechesis; social movements and scripture; intentionality; welcoming communities; knowledge of other faiths; stewardship of earth” (PC)

“Whole community – less concentration on children; formation rather than education of all.” (DR)

“More action centered, intergenerational learning experiences; an implementation of total community catechesis that uses a process approach to faith development” (DR)

F. Future Trends in Parish Ministries of Service

Participants in the Northeast believe that future parish ministries of service will require greater concern and respect for the quality of life. This theme is far more prominent in the Northeast than in other regions to date. In addition, these pastoral leaders believe the future will include more collaborative and intentional approaches to service working across parishes and with other communities. Finally, pastoral leaders believe there will be greater emphasis on social justice and Catholic social teachings:

Greater Concern and Respect for the Quality of Life

Attention to respect for the quality of life surfaced in the Northeast as distinctively unique compared to other regions in the United States. The following comments reflect the expectation that the future of parish ministries will include greater concern and respect for the quality of life:

“Respect for life and quality of life for all ages; help people stay connected” (P)

“Quality of life for elderly and caregivers; new ways of promoting justice and addressing the newly marginalized in our model” (PA)

“Respect for life, quality of life, genuine sense of service, honesty, healthcare, housing, shelters” (PA)

“Need to help elderly with medical care; parish nurse and doctor; multi-cultural; housing and educational services as needed by households” (PA)

“Respect for life and its quality; care for the elderly in churches and the homebound; have doctors and nurses of parish help; creative solutions; prison visits – help them in transition out of prison; feed the hungry; help those addicted to anything; collaboration of parish and young adults to join in.” (PC)

“Respect for life and quality of life; servant mentality; health care; prison ministry and transitional support; daycare; collaborative effort of more than one parish with youth involved” (PC)

“Our population will be very elderly. The church should be taking a major role in supporting members as they age – end of life care issues will be critical!” (PC)

“Health care; housing; daycare; elderly population; feeding the hungry; youth” (DR)

“Quality of life – respect for life; caring for the elderly – in church, in the community – housing; prison ministry; soup kitchens to teach people to feed themselves; care for people with addictions” (DR)

“Respect for life/quality; aging” (DR)

“Respect for life in general and quality of life; servant mentality doing the work of Jesus; aware of elderly, handicapped, homebound, advocacy, health care clinics, being creative with solutions for prison ministry, housing, transitional support, feeding the hungry, etc.; daycare; help for people with addictions; all through collaboration among parishes, etc.” (DR)

“Respect for life is most important. We need to have servant mentality. Home visits; visit the imprisoned; feed the hungry” (O)

“Continued trend toward respect of life; provide service as Jesus did.” (O)

More Collaborative and Intentional Service

Clearly, some participants in the Northeast believe that collaboration and intentional service will be part of parish ministry. This may include a global connection between sister parishes, greater collaboration among clustered parishes, or greater ecumenical collaboration. The key to this understanding among these pastoral leaders includes collaboration and intentionality in service ministries. The following comments reflect this expectation and belief:

“We will have to make an assessment of the needs of the community by an authority of church to match ministers to communities. Many will seek the Lord, as they did in his time, because of what they need and they will hear him say ‘what can I do for you?’” (P)

“More globalization means a more effective connection between ‘sister parishes’. The Internet could connect very different parishes separated by thousands of miles, etc united in faith.” (P)

“Ad-hoc service; empowering the apostolic ministry of laity as leadership in the world; ecumenical approach to service; inter-parish approach to service” (D)

“Smaller numbers will demand a new determination of priorities. Collaboration among clusters of parishes will be necessary.” (DR)

“More ecumenical approach will be evident here. Soup kitchens, etc., manned by multi-church efforts.” (O)

More Awareness and Emphasis on Social Justice and Catholic Social Teaching

Emphasis on social justice and Catholic social teaching is less prominent in the Northeast than in other regions of the United States. However, a few leaders express the belief that the future of service ministries will have greater emphasis on justice and Catholic social teachings as indicated by the following comments:

“Catholic hospitals may close. Clinics will rise up addressing social/economic issues in concrete ways. A new presence at church by way of intentional communities.” (P)

“This will form parishes of the future. Parishes will have to focus on some form of justice to attend to parishioners.” (PLC)

“Outreach seen as rooted in Baptismal call and the Gospel message.” (PA)

“Active social justice and meeting the real needs of real people.” (DR)

“Quicker response to emerging needs, letting go of ministries no longer needed; wider involvement of all parishioners not just particular sub-groups; greater intentional connection of service with reflection/education, service, liturgy, and justice” (DR)

“There will be a wider understanding that to be a disciple is to continue the mission and ministry of Jesus. This will be new and central; any element of everything that a parish does.” (DR)

“More services to an aging population; more outreach to real people with real needs” (DR)

“Prison ministries, hospice, additions” (O)

“Service – social justice – political influence” (O)

V. MARKS OF PASTORAL LEADERSHIP:

The sponsoring partners of the Emerging Models Project identified a number of marks of pastoral leadership to be discussed during various phases of the project and, in particular, the symposiums. These marks of pastoral leadership are intended to identify the behavioral practices of leaders in creating the church of the future.

Participants in the Northeast Symposium were asked how they believe these marks of pastoral leadership are evident in pastoral life. The following section summarizes participant reflections on each of these marks of pastoral leadership. In preparation for their individual comments, participants worked in peer groups, such as priests, parish life coordinators, deacons, pastoral councils, etc., to formulate their views.

A. Ethical Behaviors of Leadership

Pastoral leaders were asked to identify ethical behaviors of leadership they see evident in parish life. Pastoral leaders in the Northeast tend to define the ethical behaviors of leadership as involving professionalism, confidentiality, and transparency in leadership roles. In addition, they frequently comment on the importance of personal ethics and integrity in their lives and ministry.

Professionalism, Confidentiality, and Transparency in Leadership Roles

Pastoral leaders in the Northeast spoke with some frequency on the importance of professionalism, confidentiality, and transparency in their leadership roles for parishes. The following comments their concern with this standard for pastoral excellence:

“Accountability; justice; shared equally; development of priests to do their work; totally different roles – no one is helping them; psycho-development and need for development education” (P)

“Honesty on all levels; everyone working on the same page doing God’s work; professional and pastoral” (P)

“Challenges! Sexual choices, just wages; and family issues. The world is challenging the church. Can we respond? Be clean and open; accountability” (P)

“Honesty and transparency in our attitudes; respecting the dignity of every individual; being accountable to the people in all areas of responsibility” (P)

“Realistic job descriptions (standardized); transparency with budgets, time allocations, etc.; incoming stuff must honor, respect, and work with the values of the parishes they serve. Hierarchy must honor the vocations of professional lay ministers as priestly vocations are honored. The commitments of the individual to their families must also be respected, i.e., being a Dad first and a Faith Formation Director second. We need retirement and benefits, graduate school loan forgiveness, evaluations, job security, etc. Responsive to needs of parishioners – staff is there to lead and serve.” (P)

“Growing demands and sense of accountability; growing call for integrity by leadership; growing call for ethical managerial practices, due process, and just wage; transparency; subsidiarity; shared lives with parishioners; prophetic dimension; how we wear out woundedness” (P)

“Honest; on the same page; authentic; ongoing evaluation; confidentiality” (PLC)

“Trust; honesty; openness”

“Practice of confidentiality and impartiality” (PA)

“Confidentiality and impartiality on the part of ministers in hospitals; faith formation; collection of the offertory; parish secretary” (PA)

“Confidentiality; treat all in a similar fashion (impartially); transparency; integrity; vocation of lay ministry honored, including just wages” (PA)

“Reasonable expectations; remember we are church and not a corporation” (PA)

“Openness on the part of pastor about what is really going on in the parish and diocese; openness on the part of members to ask the hard questions” (PC)

“Honest and open – What the big secret?” (PC)

“Confidentiality; job description standardized; evaluations from supervisors; vocation of lay ministry honored – fair pay and insurance” (PC)

“Monitoring; time; job security; honoring vocations; accountability – ongoing volunteers” (PC)

“Transparency; mutual respect; confidentiality” (DR)

“Respect boundaries; don’t accept people to formation programs who are not qualified or cannot succeed. Need forms of accountability for all positions; just wages; good stewards of the limited resources entrusted to our care – stewards; confidentiality; integrity; job description” (DR)

“Pastors need to be accountable to their staff.” (DR)

“Willingness for pastor/diocese to share; sometimes hard to cut through the red tape; things shouldn’t be a ‘done deal’.” (DR)

“Transparency – a willingness to be accountable in ministry.” (DR)

“Lay vocations should be honored through benefits, job descriptions, evaluations, and job security.” (DR)

“Job descriptions; training; conversation regarding needs to survive; accountability; stewardship; our ethical response needs to be considered.” (O)

*“Honesty – adherence to professional standards while being pastored.”
(O)*

“Holding people accountable is an ethical behavior. Accepting people into a lay ministry formation program who are likely to complete the program successfully is an ethical behavior.” (O)

*“Accountability – leaders require much of members and vice versa;
Openness – no secrets in community; Confidentiality – sensitive pastoral issues; Fair Pay – ministerial justice gives fair pay and just wages.” (O)*

Personal Ethics and Integrity

Pastoral leaders in the Northeast also stress the importance of a sense of personal ethics and integrity. Many of the following comments also reflect the deep connection between Gospel values, prayer and spirituality, and personal ethics:

“Living simple lives; using God’s gifts in stewardship; living out conflict resolution skills with those around them; honesty about situations without being afraid of consequences” (P)

“We need to seek out what is truth. We need to honor diversity.” (D)

“Treasure lay vocations; honor family needs; stewardship; ownership; coach and be coachable” (PA)

“As individuals, regardless of our position in life, we need to follow the ideas of Jesus and the manner of respect he carried with him for others. Ethics is equated to respect. Engage brain before opening mouth. Thinking about what you will say before it because what is said in the first instance cannot be taken back and it will have a bearing on an outcome.” (PC)

“Protecting God’s children and the Child Lures program are both programs used to improve the integrity of leaders. Being good stewards; accountability” (DR)

“Justice issues are introduced into the conversation. Dignity of person is foundational. Love your neighbor as yourself is foundational to ethical behaviors.” (DR)

“Leaders should take care to show respect to all people, especially in public. Leaders need the courage to address disagreements about a person’s behavior, but in private. Ethics includes people of community, not just to individuals.” (DR)

“Demonstrates respect for all: Those of differing ecclesiologies, those often maligned (gays, lesbians), those who are ruthless and those who are powerful. Justice in relationships – treat staff justly, allows and encourages to have balanced lives; work toward justice in wages; transparency in information shared” (DR)

“Honesty in all matters; respectful” (DR)

“Intentional formation and modeling; insistence on required opportunities for personal growth and development; ongoing evaluation; form team – looking for these attributes alive in the team not necessary in the individuals.” (DR)

“There is not always respect for ‘some’ people in our parish. Every voice needs to be heard.” (O)

“Being careful to represent at all times justice and respect” (O)

“Be an example by living your faith and in accordance to church law; speak church truths (not your own opinions); be respectful; be just; be fair; be confidential and impartial; always wear our stripes” (O)

“Walk the talk; consistent; respectful; inclusive of all” (O)

“Being true to one’s self – speaking the truth – speaking honestly about what is on one’s mind; openness (move away from secretiveness); confidentiality” (O)

“Honesty, working together with the gifts each one has; recognizing that all gifts are not given with ordination.” (O)

“Openness; ability to weave scripture and culture together; ability to address people who are angry or do not go to church; responsibility to be truthful” (O)

“Have a dedicated prayer life for the community to whom we minister; stand for truth; stand for personal justice; stand for church workplace justice” (D)

“To stand for truth – not water it down to make it palatable; prayer life oriented toward the people we minister to (people, lay leaders, pastor, bishop); to stand for all God’s people” (PC)

“Prayer as a group is very important to live out the qualities of leadership.” (DR)

“Listening; multicultural communication; respect for differences; focus on inclusion and Gospel values; respect of tradition; openness to the Spirit of God; accountability and evaluation; ‘defenseless listening’. Church leadership must have at its core deep faith and trust in God’s leadership centering on prayer and discipleship.” (DR)

B. Pastoral Behaviors of Leadership

Symposium participants identified a commitment to a shared sense of responsibility and empowerment, Gospel-centered leadership and values, and a strong relational presence with people as key pastoral behaviors of leadership.

Commitment to a Shared Sense of Responsibility and Empowerment

A number of pastoral leaders indicate that a commitment to a shared sense of responsibility, empowerment, and collaboration with staff and the community as a whole is an important pastoral behavior of their leadership. The following comments reflect this commitment:

“Help others live the Gospel; listening and empowering others; being a conductor of others’ gifts; letting go of control” (P)

“Programs (process); empowering, stewardship, giftedness of others and a process of discovery; micro-managing (control issues); seminary retooling; flexibility with details and regard broader view” (P)

“When coming into a new job position, don’t implement too many changes right away. Move slowly and get to know people and the parish first. Combined parishes involved in a reconfiguration process and staff to be even more reflective and deliberate as changes are implemented. Consensus must be sought after always. Don’t push too hard. Ministers must get out and mix with others (not stay in the office too much.” (P)

“Deal with ad hoc needs; empower others to discipleship; create opportunities; learn to listen and change; accept people where we find them – leave them uncomfortable to remain there; practice discernment” (D)

“Ownership – We need to empower the people about this component of stewardship; priestly baptism; set priorities: the needs of the people over devotions and other church programs; flexibility; be a welcoming community” (PA)

“Making meaningful prayer apart of every PPC meeting; listening to the parishioners; making lay members responsible for prayers” (PC)

“Planned approach to ministry – mission for living church; ability to respond to ad hoc demands/needs; people will come to deacons before they’ll go to a priest on some issues; empower others to discipleship; the church has no mission – it is the mission of Jesus Christ that has church to carry it out; listen – discern, so much to learn from the people we minister to” (PC)

“Collaboration and consultation in evolving ministerial responses that welcomes varieties of expressions and programs that respect the many varieties of the human experience of holiness.” (DR)

“Nurture and develop gifts of all in community; compassionate yet provides guidance; humble; committed to healing individuals and communities; prayerful; build up unity of community, able to manage and lead through conflict; able to lead with vision, but shape the vision with the parish” (DR)

“Good stewardship is a pastoral behavior. Recruits/hires people who have skills she doesn’t possess.” (O)

“Meaningful prayer to begin each committee/council meeting; listening; mentoring of new parish leaders” (O)

Gospel-Centered Leadership and Values

A number of pastoral leaders in the Northeast believe that their strongest pastoral behaviors are rooted in Gospel-centered leadership and values. They often cite their commitment to deep spirituality and prayer as the foundation of their leadership as indicated below:

“Being available as much as possible; always teaching; not be afraid to spend time in reflective prayer about pastoral situations” (P)

“Christ-centered; respect diversity; always wear our stripes” (PLC)

“Parish finding focus and ministering; parishioners minister to each other like they used to do in small town and neighborhoods in the city” (PLC)

“We need to tell the community that they are disciples of the church and to address the problems as they arise.” (D)

“Presence – ability to be completely present; listening; deep spiritual dimension that permeates daily life” (PA)

“Having a positive overall view of the mission of the community of the church; nurture the life of the community; one has to behave/act in a pastoral manner as a steward of the community. We are always wearing our stripes – hence what we do and how we behave and speak is critical to those in the community. Prayer is a very important part of a leader’s mission. It leads the life of those involved.” (PC)

“Understanding real life issues; nurturing heart – compassion; topics of discussion; nurturing needs to keep in mind the ultimate goal of Jesus, so that when addressing people’s needs we can guide and nurture to Christ.” (DR)

“Prayerful” (DR)

“Always oriented toward the mission” (DR)

“All leaders are called to be good organizational stewards; sensitive, caring, kind, present to people, respectful, etc.” (DR)

“Modeling prayer; listening and responding in a timely fashion; being flexible; knowing when to let go of issues; being a visionary” (O)

“Everyday behavior consistent with real life issues and guiding toward Christ” (O)

“He makes an effort to do this, but some ministries refuse to let go of some of their responsibilities.” (O)

“Liturgy-centered – You gain people because of Eucharistic access so do it well; Wisdom-centered – A common ground approach that seeks the wisdom among the theological diversity in the church; Catechesis – Explain much, assume little, and often; Welcoming – should be primary; Contemplation – Intentional quiet time is necessary.” (O)

“Be nurturing and an example of Christians” (O)

“Know, understand, and profess in action the mission of the church and teachings of church.” (O)

Strong Relational Presence with People

Clearly, a number of pastoral leaders believe that fundamentally their pastoral behaviors are best served through a strong relational presence with people. This often includes creating open and welcoming communities, as well as honesty and listening to the concerns of individual members, as well as staff. The following comments reflect this relational presence with people as a key pastoral behavior of leadership:

“Listen and reflect. We are all part of this in helping others to hear the Gospel.” (P)

“Open and welcoming to the people; willingness to serve their needs with a welcoming and generous spirit” (P)

“Observe needs and respond.” (PA)

“Honoring what’s already happening and what’s important to the parish community; respect for all parishioners; prayerful leaders” (PA)

“Take ownership of parish; be open to discussion and be able to disagree with each other without being disagreeable; keep ourselves in control of our own agendas; rigidity; be more personal and not rigid” (PC)

“Honesty – inclusive; fair; committed; visible” (PC)

“Financial difficulties sometimes stand in the way of building the kingdom; recognize that one-on-one often times does not require large finances; food bank – all staff and parishioners should acknowledge people waiting at the food bank” (PC)

“Needs courage; time management; listening; delegating” (DR)

“Pastor and staff need to be approachable; be good listeners; know when to let go of an issue” (DR)

“We need to not place obstacles in the way of people who want to join us. We always need to look outside ourselves as parish to focus on the needs of others.” (DR)

“Compassion and understanding of the real life issues; nurturing” (DR)

“Welcoming attitude – people who come from places that need to change, i.e., what to be married, but don’t belong to a church or attend, etc.” (O)

“Show respect for people – remember to treat all people as Christ would.” (O)

“Be present to people. Include others in prayer. Treat each other well (staff).” (O)

C. Prophetic Behaviors of Leadership

In discussing the prophetic behaviors of leadership, pastoral leaders in the Northeast often cite the importance of maintaining their foundation of prayer and spirituality. Other pastoral leaders discussed the importance of a faithful and prophetic stance toward issues of justice in the culture and the world.

Rooted in Prayer and Spirituality

The most commonly cited dimension of prophetic leadership in the Northeast is the importance of prayer and spirituality. It is clear that pastoral leaders believe issues of prophetic leadership have their foundation in a deep sense of prayer and spirituality as reflected in the following comments:

“Call to holiness; challenge to live faithful life” (P)

“Challenging preaching and witnessing based on Gospel values” (P)

“Be theologically reflective; proclaim the word when convenient and inconvenient; read the signs of the times and speak to them.” (D)

“We need to be reflective of the Gospel in our lives.” (D)

“Homilies address issues; welcoming and witnessing; parish nurses share services” (PA)

“If the deacon’s homily is like the priests, we’re missing the boat – theological reflections on practical application in life – something the people can relate to” (PC)

“Education needed; listening; delegating; prayer; openness; attending versus participating in Mass” (DR)

“Good, well-prepared homilies/presentations with parents are prophetic behaviors.” (O)

“Leadership by example – walk the talk” (O)

“People have needs. Good leaders begin with ‘yes’ then show the way to that ‘yes’ rather than say ‘no’; it can’t happen because...” (O)

“Having spiritual growth as a goal, lead by example” (O)

“Calling people to the words of Jesus and applying to today; leading people toward seeking God” (O)

“Upbeat attitude which is contagious/evangelistic in nature. I agree that they should be servant leaders; prayerful” (O)

Faithful and Prophetic Stance toward Issues of Justice (speaking the Truth)

A number of pastoral leaders indicate that prophetic behaviors of leadership often involve a faithful and prophetic stance toward justice. Some express this as creating a vision for the parish and moving it forward toward an agenda of serving the church and the world. Others speak about this as a personal commitment to justice. The notion of prophetically speaking the truth and standing for justice is evident in the following observations of pastoral leaders:

“Listening; collaborating – hearing God beyond own agenda; shared wisdom – pastor promotes and orchestrates” (P)

“Servants – not servant leaders; the latter proclaims reward and status from service. There cannot be service with a reward, only service in faithfulness. There has to be a confidence in service to realize God loves us and others more than we do and that we imitate dimly his love. We need confidence in his care.” (P)

“Know where the call to excellence is asking us to go. Professionals must craft a vision that is founded on their education and parish values that incorporates activities and programs that are generated home from the parishioners themselves.” (P)

“Prophetic – starting where the community is moving them - I do not worry about being ecumenical with the Methodists because we hate praying with the other RC church next door. Listening to God speaking through the people of God; prophet moves the people one step.” (P)

“Visible commitment to ecumenism and service; evaluation of parish activities, programs and mission must be ongoing; courage as a lay minister -- sometimes (many times) I am afraid to speak the truth – confrontation when injustice arises. Defend integrity of the sacraments balanced with being responsive to the needs of parents, kinds, and families.” (P)

“Capacity to love; capacity to work” (PLC)

“Prophetic voice to move from parochial, insular view to mission of church; prophetic ways to continually move individuals and communities beyond their comfort zones in faith, love, justice, and hope.” (PA)

“Social justice – in and out of parish; interfaith task forces; look at how we serve the needs of people; be the voice of those who don’t have it.” (PA)

“Teaching, welcoming, encouraging, evaluating” (PA)

“Noticed in areas of homilies; they address issues of the day. Teaching and leading us on. Pastoral teams voice the needs. Nursing ministry; RCIA programs enable us to talk about justice issues.” (PA)

“One who recognizes the need for renewal and takes appropriate steps; educational and formation programs” (PC)

“Calling people back to the vision Christ has for the church. Learn to ask the tough question without being judgmental and let it lead into other things which will open us into the possible needs of the community. Prophetic is looking to God’s/Christ’s vision. It is not necessarily viewing the future. Listening to hear God’s direction for a plan for a future and hope, but you must seek the guidance of the lord.” (PC)

“Need to be more open to the changes in culture – evaluating the needs of the parish in light of the Gospel and its mission. We need to focus on the need of the whole community – speaking the truth even when it is difficult to do.” (PC)

“Pastoral team empowers all committees – take the ownership that is needed; ecumenical sharing of gifts; interfaith dialogue; homilies – address issues of the day; keep focused on the mission of church; welcoming attitude” (PC)

“Addressing the difficult issues” (DR)

“We need to be able to adjust to the sign of the times by evaluating what we do regularly. Part of being prophetic is speaking the truth with love and conviction.” (DR)

“The leadership needs a vision. They need to be missionaries – and share their vision with the parish community. A mission statement with value statements and goals – these are essential in order to establish vision.” (DR)

“Asking the question – Are we going in the right direction? Are we serving God’s kingdom with where we are amid what we are doing? Requires knowledge of God’s plan. If you seek one, you will find me. Ask the tough questions.” (DR)

“Lead community to read signs of times and discern what is just; speak truthfully about all situations” (DR)

“To tell the truth” (DR)

“Servant leadership is an essential element of leadership in the present and future church. Respect for differences while understanding one’s own tradition is basic, yet justice seeking and outreach providing is an Ecumenical/interfaith effort that build the rich culture of a community.” (DR)

“Asking the questions that deal with the issues of truth, justice, and mission” (DR)

“Trends of times tell us what to expect. Speaking truth when it is difficult.” (O)

“Issue-based – What are the needs of the community and how do we organize an approach? Tradition-based – What’s Catholic about our response? Preferential option for the least of the community” (O)

“Tell the truth; ask the questions that address the key issues (elephant in the room). Does the question lead in the right way; discernment.” (O)

“Providing mentors to our local prison system to nurture people to follow their faith journey’s into a productive lifestyle.” (O)

D. Collaborative Behaviors of Leadership

Participants were asked to illustrate the collaborative behaviors of leadership that are most evident in their faith communities. Pastoral leaders heavily stress the importance of empowerment, collaboration, whole community catechesis, and listening as part of the collaborative behaviors of leadership. Calling forth the gifts of others and an invitation to service are the hallmarks of their commitment to facilitating opportunities for others to share their gifts. The following comments reflect this commitment:

“Listen/empowerment; asking and then sharing/giving power away” (P)

“Empowering people; calling forth God’s gifts that are present” (P)

“Learn to respect the gifts of others; let others make decisions based on gifts; reflect upon what is seen, how it is understood, and what options are available together; continually monitor all ministry based on agreed goals” (P)

“Collaboration is the key to inclusive and welcoming behaviors.” (P)

“Must not be afraid to work on the other side of the theological camp to find common ground; listen first, then speak; open-minded and creative thinking to find common ground; always focus on the big picture” (P)

“Coaching; e-mail technology” (PLC)

“Young energy needs to collaborate with old wisdom.” (PLC)

“To spread the word to enhance the kingdom” (D)

“Upwards and downward collaboration is crucial. If getting the job done is important, do it alone – if Christian fellowship is important, do it together, even if it is messier and takes longer.” (D)

“Small faith communities; helping others to identify gifts; present stewardship as a way of life” (PA)

“Whole community catechesis; educating and inviting people to explore their gifts and passions and inviting them to use their gifts for mission of church; inviting parish groups to collaborate across committees; having meetings on same night; stewardship” (PA)

“Need to network, search, and recognize others’ gifts; promote unity and respect among different parish groups; ability to listen and talk with others who have different ideas than your own.” (PA)

“Whole community catechesis; stewardship – as a way of life; so many groups in the parishes need to work together.” (PA)

“Be one community. Have unity within our differences. We don’t need oneness of thought, but treasure our diversity. Have a sense of identity.” (PA)

“Be careful not to be ‘the minister’. My ministry – I involve others. Difficulty with resentment of religious communities” (PC)

“To fully listen to others taking all their thoughts and ideas into consideration in coming to a joint idea. Recognizing the gifts in others and finding a joint solution to a situation. Willing to recognize a change and then using effectiveness of all.” (PC)

“One aspect that is important to the collaborative behavior is prayer. So many decisions are made without discernment and prayer.” (PC)

“Discuss with the pastor about lay ministry – has no time for that. Deacon – ‘I know family, when I have something to do around the house, I could get rid of the kids and get the job done my way. But, if I involve the kids, the table sets done – a little messier, but the family is stronger.” (PC)

“Whole community catechesis; stewardship; empowerment of gifts; breaking down of barriers” (PC)

“Have a member of each ministry be present at each PPC meeting” (PC)

“Collaboration in our diocese will happen when it is required by the bishop. For most priests, it does not come naturally. Without support at the pastor’s level, collaboration is difficult for staff and lay members.” (PC)

“Welcoming and supporting those who are involved in ministry; willingness to change” (DR)

“Ability to listen to others; be attentive to their ideas and to consider others and their gifts; affirm each other – a great form of collaborative action; be willing to bend, modify your view, and to be changed.” (DR)

“Truly listening to others and seeking to understand fully; being attentive to gifts and emerging gifts of others, calling them forward, providing training and support, affirming; creativity in taking ideas of all to create new thing; thorough understanding of own gifts and limitations” (DR)

“Truly listening stance within the group; willing to be changed by the others; affirmation of the gifts and encouraging people to develop them; being willing to share power and authority with others” (DR)

“Stewardship; community; delegating; prayer” (DR)

“We need to work on unity within our parishes and clusters.” (DR)

“Enabling, empowering, encouraging, dialoguing, listening, discerning, nurturing, etc.” (DR)

“Town meetings; parish pastoral councils; diocese pastoral councils; parish focus groups; small cluster communities; parish finance councils; kingdom orientation. Respect for character, expertise, insight, and commitment of others is essential. These must be joined with respect for one another’s other life commitments.” (DR)

“Personal invitation; recognizing people’s gifts” (O)

“Affirming the gifts of all ministers is a collaborative behavior.” (O)

“People empower themselves – we don’t empower anyone. But, we invite, set the environment and offer opportunities for people to identify, acknowledge, and choose to use their gifts.” (O)

“Truly listening to understand – paying attention to the gifts of all and reinforcing and nurturing those of little confidence and great self-doubt” (O)

“Academic style wisdom honored – searching for the wisdom of the age in healthy dialogue. Preferred option for young adults – without alienating the rest of the parish; respect for lay ministry – especially in liturgy.” (O)

“Listening to and hearing each other; be attentive; be affirming of each others’ gifts; be present; be open that your opinion may be changed by another” (O)

“Able to tap into the gifts, ability to then empower them and hold them accountable gently; join focus gladly with all to get to the final point” (O)

“Be one community; welcome critics; listen; church is the people of God.” (O)

“Flexibility; knowing when to let go of an issue, not being stubborn; formation of parish leaders” (O)

“Parish groups need to learn to work together rather than focusing exclusively on their own mission. If they are not against us, they are with us.” (O)

E. Inclusive Behaviors of Leadership

Symposium participants in the Northeast define the inclusive behaviors of leadership as multi-cultural in nature. In addition, many pastoral leaders also spoke more broadly about creating open and inviting communities of faith where everyone in the community is welcome and included.

Multi-Cultural Awareness and Inclusion

Among pastoral leaders who stress the importance of a multi-cultural sensitivity and inclusion, the following comments reflect their experience in advancing a multi-cultural commitment in their parishes:

“Treating everyone as a unique child of God; differences seen as positive rather than divisive” (P)

“An appreciation of diversity; a desire to share in another’s culture; an openness to the largeness of our God; a desire to reach out; a receptivity to learning other languages” (P)

“Respecting cultural uniqueness and historical realities of people in rites and homilies; be sensitive to perspectives of others – women, minorities, religious, and priests.” (D)

“We need to look at personal justice.” (D)

“Recognize the gifts of the different groups; cherish diversity” (PA)

“Personal invitations, especially to the newcomers; awareness of diversity and possibly express that in music.” (PA)

“New families invite to belong; leadership role – look at gifts – invite people; music ministry – multi-cultural celebrations” (PA)

“Cherish our diversity. We have a small English contingent and relatively large Latino community. We also host the St. Gregory Society and the traditional Mass in Latin, yet we have to work on being one parish.” (PA)

“Recognizing and respecting that all should be involved in one way or another for their gifts and talents and be drawn into the community. Curiosity is very beneficial to draw people into the community.” (PC)

“Accepting and accommodating multiple forms of spirituality; accept everyone where you find them and leave them uncomfortable to stay” (PC)

“Sensitivity to affect of rituals on different cultures; K of C is oppressive to people from Latin America; ‘Our Father’ versus families with no father” (PC)

“See gifts of diversity; set up program that speaks to all cultures and generations; try to understand the needs of people who are different.” (PC)

“Each individual is respected for their unique giftedness; invite” (DR)

“Curiosity and excitement about the differences of others; sensitivity to different cultural assumptions and respect for dignity of others; willingness to approach issues from another’s perspective” (DR)

“Acceptance (openness) of the views of others; includes people’s cultures; avoid the jump to judgment. Invite individuals to bring the knowledge of their culture and ideas forward; be curious enough to ask.” (DR)

“Having a curiosity and excitement about how differences can enhance, build, and reinforce the community” (O)

“Direct personal invitation; high turnover in leadership; honoring differences (culture, age, sexuality, theological)” (O)

“Recognizing gifts of all, including those from other countries, including men, women, youth, and priests, including assistants and laity.” (O)

“Our parish has been changing from an all White, mostly Irish parish to a more diverse parish. Our school has been the engine that brought about this change.”(O)

Open and Inviting Community

Still other pastoral leaders speak very broadly about creating open and inviting communities. They often stress the importance of welcoming and including others of diverse backgrounds and experiences into their parish life. The following comments reflect a broad commitment to creating open and inviting communities of faith:

“Inclusive (welcoming); struggle to really become inclusive – Maybe at heart, but on the edges, we are still exclusive; from programs to process; plant seeds for when pastor no longer is there – ongoing cultural change” (P)

“These behaviors are all ‘hand in glove’.” (P)

“Recognize that we are striving for the same goal – sharing the gifts of God” (P)

“Constantly inviting new people to share gifts; personal invitation; moving people to different ministries so ‘cliques’ do not become entrenched; music for multi-cultural; being open to learn and embrace new perspectives; here are many perspectives/spiritualities to reach and embrace a relationship with our loving God.” (PA)

“Knowing people’s gifts and inviting them to use those gifts; invite new people to the parish to participate; music” (PC)

“A parish needs a deliberate annual plan to achieve this. It can’t just be that someone has a particular interest or the loud voices get their attention.” (PC)

“Open PPC meeting; ministries for youth, elderly, and shut-ins; use the web to communicate as much as possible.” (PC)

“Welcoming; openness; discernment” (DR)

“Need face-to-face invitations to participate” (DR)

“We need to accept our diversity and yet realize that we are the same with the same needs of respect. Respecting generational needs is also crucial.” (DR)

“Inviting...participation; watching to see who is or needs to be at the table; making certain that collaborative groups include folks with a spectrum of viewpoints; evolving and naming a vision...respect for process...celebration of the mutual pilgrimage.” (DR)

“Inclusive behavior is reflected in speech – inclusive language, structures, and invitations to participate” (DR)

“Have a curiosity and excitement about the other – tell me about you; be hospitable; respect differences; invite people and their ideas.” (O)

“Recognize if you don’t have the ability to be more inclusive to tap into the talent of those in the faith community to assist; humility; show interest in all who are members.” (O)

“Generations of faith helps; change language” (O)

“Regular staff meetings is an inclusive behavior. Consensus building is an inclusive behavior.” (O)

F. Welcoming Behaviors of Leadership

To conclude their discussion on the marks of pastoral leadership, participants identified the welcoming behaviors of leadership as most prevalent in their parishes. Pastoral leaders in the Northeast widely endorse a commitment to personal efforts in creating a welcoming environment in their parishes. Many have structural programs to accomplish this, while others seek to create an attitude and expression of welcoming in their parish lives. However, central to all these forms of welcoming is a commitment to personally involve others and invite them to be part of parish communities.

Personal Efforts to Create a Welcoming Environment

“Having nights of welcome and introduction; having bi-lingual (or more) liturgies; making information available in diverse languages” (P)

“Anything we do must be helped/supported by the pastoral people, but must be from the people – from them, by them, for them; changing culture” (P)

“First impressions are lasting expressions” (P)

“Are we truly welcoming? We’re better, but how about people in the margins?” (P)

“Receiving people into the parish office” (PLC)

“Accept everyone where we find them – then leave them uncomfortable to remain there.” (D)

“Personal interest in others; well-trained greeters and staff on how to welcome; forming a parish community in the mission of Jesus Christ” (PA)

“RCIA process; ‘Bring a Friend to Mass’ weekend; parties to gather community together” (PA)

“Put ourselves in people’s shoes. Have a warm, welcoming to new people (even to their children).” (PA)

“Meet and accept people where they are; recognize new people and returning parishioners; create an atmosphere of warmth for all from young children to singles to diverse families, etc.” (PA)

“All of the above are welcoming. Be always positive in behavior and statement to anyone. A person who is pleasant at all times toward others. Welcoming is a ministry and it does what it says, brings people in with a positive feeling. Behaviors found in all of these statements. Behavior/acting with visible presence speaks far louder than words as we are a visually-oriented species, so how we act tells others a great deal. Think and pray before acting.” (PC)

“Reach out; personal invitation; be present” (PC)

“Meeting everyone at the place they find themselves – in their relationships with people and with God. Listen to their needs. Be attentive to signs of change in someone’s behavior. Don’t be judgmental. Be open to compromise.” (PC)

“Leaders need to see their role as temporary and see their role as engaging more lay members; mentoring and supporting. People need to be invited to contribute because their gifts have been noticed.” (PC)

“Personal invitations from pastor and/or parishioners; appreciation night (party) from parish volunteers” (PC)

“Our parish has determined one of the primary goals of stewardship is to become a more welcoming community. It is a work in progress.” (PC)

“Kind; faithful; patient; understanding; inviting” (DR)

“Be inclusive of the issues of ethics, pastoral, prophetic, collaborative, and inclusive behavior. Be pleasant. Make people feel important. We are a ministry, not just a job. Self-worth” (DR)

“Good greeters, ushers, welcome home, reaching out” (DR)

“Warm, invitational; pays attention to all aspects of parish life and makes sure that all (people, events, visuals) let people know they are wanted and needed” (DR)

“Hospitality; inclusion; calling by name; community by welcome to new members; warmth” (DR)

“You are made to feel special and needed as part of making the community whole and vibrant.” (DR)

“General rather than limited interactions; ability to ‘small talk’, comfortable with him/herself” (DR)

“All parishioners are expected to be welcoming. It is critical for staff (from the secretary to the custodian) to meet people where they are.” (DR)

“What is said here expresses it well.” (DR)

“Greeting parishioners at the door at weekend liturgies is a welcoming behavior.” (O)

“We use greeters before and after Mass to have a welcoming presence for those new/old folks coming in and saying good-bye after Mass.” (O)

“Hospitable, open to those who come to the community; knowing people’s names/families – if being so large is difficult, have people of the faith community assist in knowing; be gracious and kind. A smile goes a long way.” (O)

“Smiling; remembering names; invitation to become part of existing groups” (O)

“All of the above; seeing ourselves as a ministry, as well as a job; helping people to feel important” (O)

“Direct, personal invitation; honor the gifts of the community and implement them well; seeking parishioners beyond the parish walls – intentional evangelization.” (O)

“Be inclusive; train secretaries in parishes to be more cordial and hospitable; make people feel important; smile; extend hand” (O)

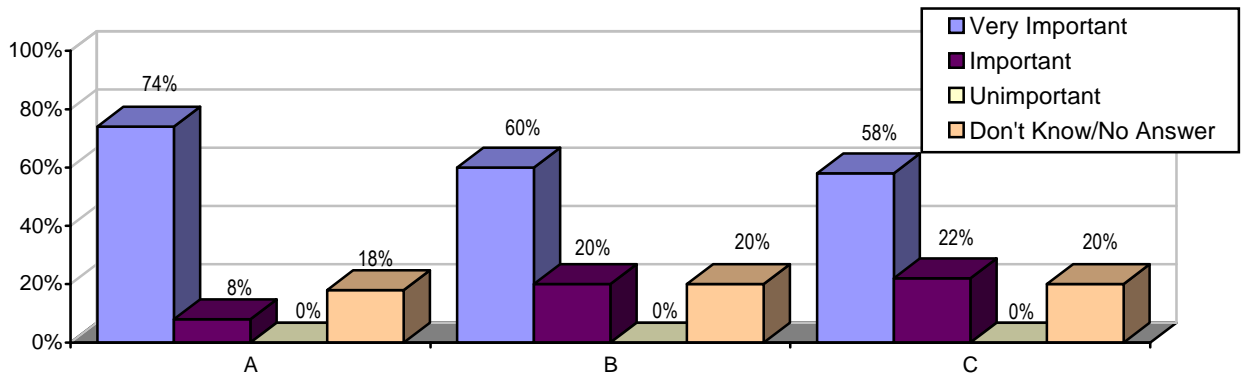
VI. CONCLUDING ASSESSMENT:

To conclude the symposium, participants were asked to privately evaluate their parish ministries on a number of factors. At the conclusion of the eight regional symposiums across the United States, data from the following quantitative questions will be aggregated across all regional gatherings for a more detailed analysis by region, cohort group, and demographic factor. In this particular symposium, however, the following top level summary captures an initial assessment of participants' viewpoints on these questions.

Figure 1 below indicates the current importance of the three major elements of pastoral leadership discussed during the symposium. Among pastoral leaders in the Northeast, all three major elements of pastoral leadership are identified as very important or important to their future. This includes:

- **A spiritually alive and healthy community**
- **A visible commitment to building the life of the faith community**
- **A total ministering community (including the leadership or pastors, staff, and council together)**

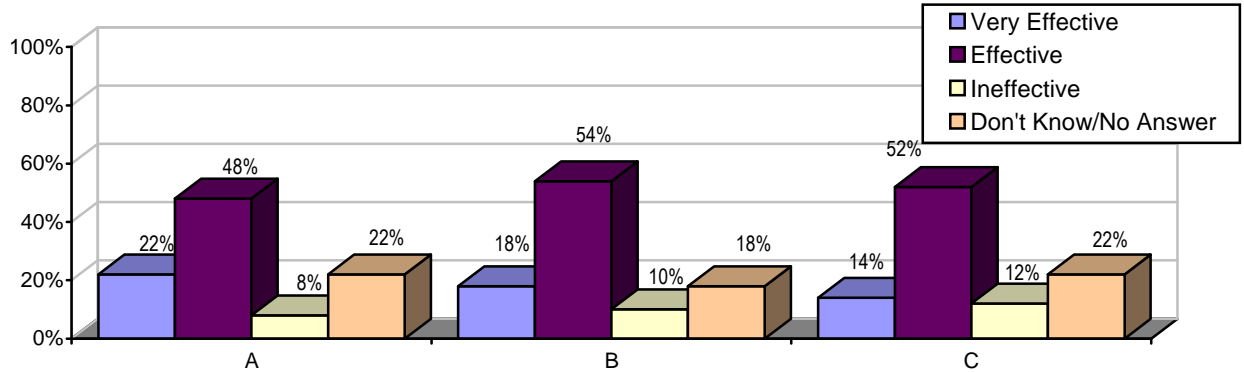
Figure 1
Importance of Pastoral Leadership Elements
(All Respondents)



- A spiritually alive, healthy community
- A visible commitment to building the life of the faith community
- A total ministering community (including the leadership or pastors, staff, and council together)

Figure 2 below indicates how effectively participants believe their parishes are in realizing these same three critical dimensions of pastoral leadership. As in other regions of the United States, pastoral leaders in the Northeast believe their parishes are effective to very effective in their pastoral practices of building a spiritually alive and healthy community, creating a visible commitment to building the life of the faith community, and creating a total ministering community.

Figure 2
Effectiveness of Parish in Pastoral Leadership
(All Respondents)

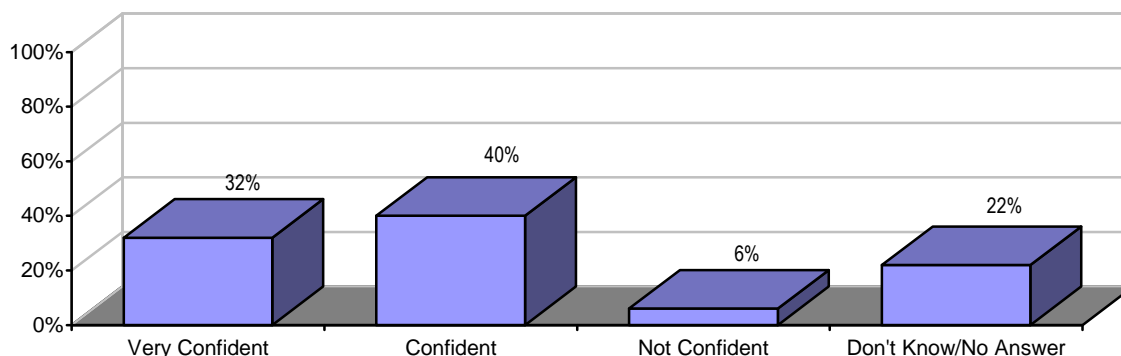


- A. A spiritually alive, healthy community
- B. A visible commitment to building the life of the faith community
- C. A total ministering community (including the leadership or pastors, staff, and council together)

Figure 3 below indicates the level of confidence participants have in their parishes becoming vibrant faith communities in the future. The majority of participants are confident or very confident that their parishes are in the process of becoming vibrant faith communities.

It is interesting to note that only 6% of participants indicate they are not confident in their parishes becoming vibrant faith communities. Despite considerable challenges mentioned during the symposium, the confidence of these pastoral leaders seems fundamentally strong in the potential vibrancy of their parishes.

Figure 3
Confidence in Parish becoming a Vibrant Faith Community
(All Respondents)



When participants were asked to comment on their level of confidence in their parishes becoming vibrant faith communities, they indicate the following:

“Not confident – it will close.” (P)

“I share a vision that I think is in harmony with the values and desires of our faith community. Therefore, I think we’ll get there. Despite of the fact that money is limited, our parish council meetings suck me dry. We will get there.” (P)

“Having transitioned into a ‘Share a Pastor’ model, my communities and staff have taken on more leadership roles. Could this be done in a greater way? Yes, but I feel we are heading in the right direction.” (P)

“We have done a great deal of work to transform the parish council to a pastoral council.” (P)

“We remain at crossroads, but God is still working in us.” (P)

“Constraints: Mobility of parish community; passive – consumer mentality to church; culture – consumerism, isolation, over-extended core groups” (P)

“All the things we have been talking about (collaboration, openness, group interaction, etc.) all depend on the mental health of the individual. It takes real psycho-sexual maturity to do these things. How do we help priests/ministers get this help? In our current culture, it is not OK for a priest to say I need counseling or I need to talk with someone. Certainly, it is not OK for a seminarian to say, ‘I need support.’ How can we make these steps without help? If guys who are not doing well are not better or worse than the guys that are crashing, the only

difference is the group that can do it have the tools and are healthy enough to let go (to empower) to give away authority and this is not magic. It is hard work and mental health to do the work. I do not know how to do this – how we change culture. I am really pressed with the concern that we are asking priests to make changes in how they live with no support in making these changes” (P)

“I feel confident that we will evolve. Those things which kept me from checking off ‘very confident’ were the uneven quality of my parish staff. (Coaching hasn’t helped the weaker, less capable members. One will retire in one to two years; the other may have to be replaced if performance doesn’t improve.) The turnover among active families in the parish...there is much movement in and out of our suburban parish. Continuity will not be taken for granted!” (P)

“I have been concentrating on pastoral, collaborative, inclusive, and welcoming behaviors because this is what was needed when I arrived 20-21 months ago.” (P)

“Our pastoral planning is taking us to a good place for the future.” (PLC)

“Present leadership (pastor) has been there for 2-1/2 years and has enabled growth and a positive response among parishioners. I expect increased ownership and vibrant faith, as well as the community’s understanding of their leadership role to grow in the coming years.” (PA)

“We are in the midst of reconfiguration with a new pastor, so the challenge is bringing a bigger community into the covenant model in which we live the mission of stewardship.” (PA)

“I have already experienced the evolving of our parish into a vibrant faith community. The staff has the intention of moving themselves and the entire parish toward building God’s kingdom.” (PA)

“There have already been moves in this direction, i.e., stewardship education as a whole community catechesis approach. In the restructuring plan for the deanery, there has been a lot of communication and dialogue. People are very aware that the future of the parish depends upon the vitality of the community.” (PC)

“Due to current changes, new pastor, failing school, and beginning of merger with another parish, it could go either way.” (PC)

“It is such a community already. It will, of course, continue to function as a dynamic community.” (DR)

“Halfway there – on the journey” (DR)

“Leadership is so key. While there are good people, I wonder about the number of true leaders or even managers out there.” (DR)

“Many of the so-called ‘leaders’ are not true leaders and need to be replaced before we can move on.” (DR)

"This confidence is based on the heart of some of the church leaders. We will have a new pastor in two years. Our world could be challenged at that time. However, hope springs eternal." (DR)

"We have been merged for less than a year and we are still struggling with the sense of loss and anger. But, I believe we can use this as an opportunity to strengthen the parishioners of the new parish so that we become a vibrant stewardship community." (DR)

"I worship in a faith community that has well-prepared pastoral leaders. It is sponsored by the Jesuits. Their legacy has the capacity to endure." (DR)

"I think that people are yearning for this type of community. We are due for a change in leadership. I am hopeful a new pastor will make a difference." (O)

"Our current pastor has brought us from isolated groups of people to being willing to share our gifts with everyone." (O)

"We are on a path that will lead us there." (O)

"Excellent leadership from Franciscan community who staff the parish and encourages lay leaders as staff and volunteers" (O)

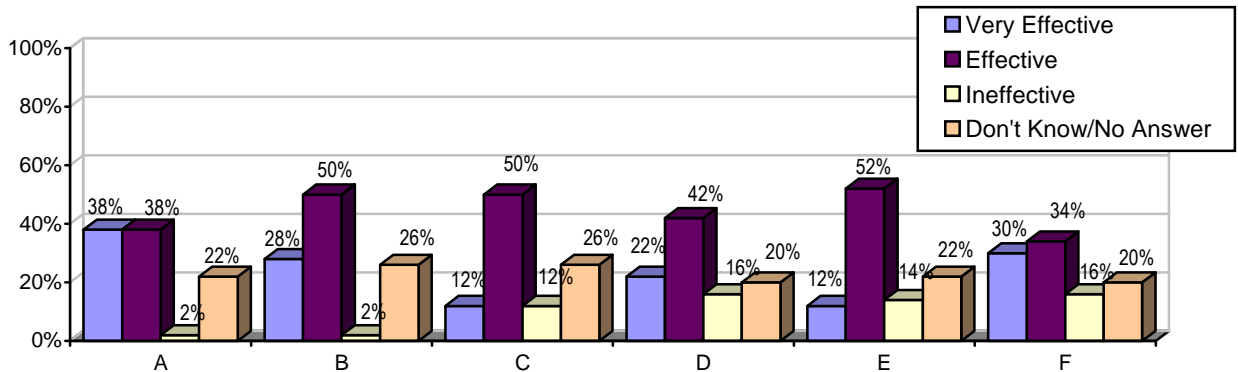
"If it's the last thing I do, this will happen in my parish." (O)

"There is hope within the parish to develop and change, and since there is openness to the process, I'm confident that the potential there exists." (O)

In concluding the symposium, participants were asked to indicate the effectiveness of their parishes in demonstrating concrete behaviors of pastoral excellence as described by the project. Figure 4 below indicates how effectively participants believe their parishes demonstrate behaviors of excellence. Pastoral leaders believe their parishes are effective or very effective in all the concrete behaviors of excellence identified during the symposium. However, a higher percentage of pastoral leaders tend to rate their parishes as ineffective on the following three elements of pastoral excellence:

- Collaborative behaviors
- Inclusive behaviors
- Welcoming behaviors

Figure 4
Effectiveness of Parish Leadership in
Demonstrating Concrete Behaviors of Excellence
(All Respondents)



- A. Ethical behaviors
- B. Pastoral behaviors
- C. Prophetic behaviors
- D. Collaborative behaviors
- E. Inclusive behaviors
- F. Welcoming behaviors

VII. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

On April 25-27, 2005, 50 pastoral leaders from the Northeast participated in a regional symposium on the Emerging Models of Pastoral Leadership. The regional symposiums are one part of a multi-year effort sponsored by six leading national organizations of the Roman Catholic Church and are funded by a Lily Foundation Grant for Pastoral Excellence.

The following topics were explored at this symposium:

- **Future of Parish Leadership Roles**
- **Emerging Parish Best Practices**
- **Parish 2025 Futuring Exercise**
- **Marks of Pastoral Leadership**
- **Future Model for Pastoral Ministry**

When discussing the current vitality of their parishes, participants primarily defined their parishes as:

- **Spiritually alive and healthy (through liturgy, worship, and strong community identity)**
- **Making steady progress in becoming spiritually alive and healthy**
- **Weak and in need of greater spiritual vitality**

Participants were asked to define how their parishes express a visible commitment to building the life of the faith community. These visible commitments included:

- **Effective prayer, worship, and Eucharistic celebrations**
- **Inclusive ministries involving many members**
- **Lacking in a visible commitment to building a vibrant faith community**

Participants evaluated the extent to which their parishes reflect a total ministering community, including the roles of pastors, staff, and pastoral councils working together. Participants characterized these efforts as:

- **Collaborative efforts among pastors, staff, and parishioners**
- **Making steady progress in becoming more collaborative**
- **Struggling or hurting to realize the reality of collaborative parish life**

When asked to describe their current parish leadership models, participants often referred to them as:

- **Traditional and hierarchical models of leadership**
- **Collaborative with shared ministry**
- **Centered on a core team of professional staff**
- **Weak or no specific leadership model present**

In written comments and group discussions, participants most frequently described the role of pastors and parish life coordinators as:

- **Empowering and calling forth the gifts of others**
- **A pastor-centered form of leadership**
- **Engaging others envisioning of the parish**

Participants were asked to discuss the emerging roles of staff in leading their parish communities. Participants primarily defined staff leadership roles as:

- **Planning and program implementation**
- **Hindered by various factors limiting their effectiveness**

Participants further reflected on the leadership provided by lay parishioners. They often characterized the leadership of the laity as:

- **Active and engaged communities of leadership**
- **Strong engagement of the laity through pastoral councils**
- **Passive and not well-engaged**

When asked to define the emerging models of pastoral leadership, participants most frequently defined emerging models as:

- **Increasing lay involvement and dependency on the laity for parish life**
- **Clustered or shared ministry with other parishes**
- **More collaborative effort and team approach within the parish**

When asked to reflect on why their parish leadership models function as they do, participants identified the following reasons:

- **Necessity and urgency of present needs**
- **Leadership style of the pastor**
- **Intentional model of parish life**

Participants in the Northeast Symposium clearly believe there is an essential link between a commitment to a total ministering community and a healthy parish. Their comments repeatedly stressed this essential in their perspective.

When asked to identify the best practices of pastoral leadership in their parishes, participants most frequently mentioned:

- **Emphasis on prayer, spirituality, and faith formation**
- **Commitment to collaboration and shared ministry**
- **Active listening and sharing of information throughout the parish**

When asked to identify the challenges for their leadership in building vibrant faith communities in the future, participants indicated the following challenges:

- **Overcoming parochialism and resistance to change**
- **Dealing with trends in a dominant culture of self-centeredness and fast-paced lives**
- **Creating more outreach and invitations to serve**

When asked to identify future opportunities for building vibrant faith communities, participants most frequently mentioned:

- **Calling forth the gifts of others**
- **Ongoing faith formation and evangelization**

When asked to identify the composition of the parish of the future, participants focused on:

- **Clustered and changing parish structures**
- **Smaller and intentional faith communities**
- **Inclusive forms of leadership**
- **Redefining ecclesial leadership**

When asked how close or how far they are from their vision for the parish of the future, participants frequently mentioned:

- **Optimistic perspective in building a preferred vision of the future**
- **Concern in being significantly far from this vision**
- **Being in diverse places on the journey in their parishes**

As part of the symposium, participants worked individually and in small groups to imagine parishes in the Year 2025. When asked to identify parish structures for the future, they identified these as:

- **More intentional faith communities**
- **More involvement in leadership of the laity**
- **Larger and clustered parishes**

When describing the emerging models of ordained and lay ecclesial leadership to the Year 2025, participants focused primarily on:

- **Increased dependency on the leadership of the laity and deacons**
- **More diverse forms of orders**
- **Servant model of leadership**

When asked about the future leadership of parishioners, symposium participants overwhelmingly expressed the belief that parishioners of the future will be much more engaged in parish life, living forth their baptismal call for leadership.

When describing future trends of worship ministries, participants focused on:

- **Increased role of the laity, particularly in preaching**
- **More diverse forms of worship**

When describing future trends in ministries of the word, participants especially focused on:

- **Greater use of technology, the Internet, and the media**
- **Greater emphasis on biblical studies and whole community catechesis**

When looking at future trends in parish ministries of service, participants emphasized:

- **Greater concern and respect for the quality of life**
- **More collaborative and intentional service ministries**
- **More awareness and emphasis on social justice and Catholic social teachings**

As part of the symposium, participants described their experiences with the marks of pastoral leadership identified for the project. When defining ethical behaviors of leadership, participants tended to focus on:

- **Professionalism, confidentiality, and transparency in leadership roles**
- **Personal ethics and integrity**

In describing pastoral behaviors of leadership, participants tended to focus on:

- **Commitment to shared responsibility and empowerment**
- **Gospel-centered leadership and values**
- **Strong relational presence with people**

When defining prophetic behaviors of leadership, participants identified:

- **Prophetic behaviors rooted in prayer and spirituality**
- **Faithful and prophetic stance toward issues of justice by speaking the truth**

When focusing on collaborative behaviors of leadership, participants overwhelmingly mentioned the importance of listening, empowerment, and calling forth the gifts of others in building faith communities.

When defining inclusive behaviors of leadership, participants most frequently mentioned:

- **Multi-cultural awareness and inclusion**
- **Creating open and inviting communities**

When asked to describe welcoming behaviors of leadership in their parishes, participants frequently mentioned personal efforts to reach out and engage people in a welcoming environment, as well as assuring that all people feel a sense of belonging and invitation to participate in parish life.

This Northeast Regional Symposium Report represents a thorough and detailed analysis of the findings and themes of this particular symposium with pastoral leaders throughout the Northeastern part of the United States. Its findings should be understood as representing one of eight different symposiums scheduled throughout the United States between 2004 and 2006.