

MUTUAL MINISTRY REVIEW FOR CLERGY AND PARISHES

Whether formal or informal, “evaluation” happens all the time. It is to everyone’s advantage to have a planned, intentional process. No single plan is the ideal model. Review can be undertaken by using an up-to-date parish self-study, and an on-going process for planning and goal-setting—for the parish and the clergy—separately and together.

Ministry review contains two similar but distinct review processes. Depending on the size of a congregation and the amount of ministry to be reviewed, these processes can be done in one or several sessions. A first step to mutual ministry review includes deciding on whether to separate them or do them together.

The first review (Parish Ministry Review) is intended for the development of all facets of a parish’s program and mission. Here we look at all that goes on, what is expected of both clergy and lay, and how we can develop and strengthen the total ministry of the institution.

The second (Rector Development *) is intended to focus on the ministry of the priest alone. Our aim is develop that unique ministry of an ordained person in the context of a community’s life together.

*We mean by “Rector” the ordained leader of a congregation whatever title that person is called, e.g. Vicar, Priest-in-Charge, Interim Rector, etc.

WHY DO A REVIEW?

Any discrepancies about purpose and accountability - however they may be expressed - must first be reconciled for mutual ministry to be reviewed effectively. At its best, review provides an equitable way for clergy and lay people to find out what is expected of them and how well they are doing the jobs they have agreed to and want to do together.

Traditions of confession, reconciliation and disciplined prayer lead us continually to examine whether we are indeed doing what God wants us to do. In the major covenants of the Prayer Book, the congregation pledges itself to support the person or persons making vows, be they at baptism, confirmation, marriage or ordination. Without some kind of examination, how do we know whether this support is being fulfilled? The desire for testing is itself a sign of hope—an indication that something else is possible; that deeper meaning and greater effectiveness can be sought and won.

Many clergy want to grow in professional effectiveness and are concerned that they meet standards of performance at respectable professional levels. They want to see excellence in the results of ministry, and are willing to work to contribute to developing that excellence. This objective is a likely outcome of a disciplined planned process of mutual and

reciprocal review of ministry (both clergy and lay) conducted at regular intervals—based on previously agreed-upon goals and expectations.

PARISH MINISTRY REVIEW

Though much of the ministry of a congregation relies on the ministry of a priest, the priest is not the focus of total ministry review. Rather, the focus is the work of the congregation. How is the CONGREGATION doing? What is going well? What needs improvement? Are we being faithful to our mission? Review of ministry is for the purpose of development.

All these questions are ones the priest asks continually. Your priest is a valuable resource for planning and review, so, while the priest is not the focus of this review, the priest is an essential member of the reviewing team. The partnership between priest and the laity in a congregation can be strengthened through such a review. They are equals in their love for the congregation and faithfulness to the call God has issued to them. This partnership can insure growth in the ministry of a congregation and in the faith journeys of those who are a part of that ministry. In an atmosphere of trust and mutual interdependence, the people of a congregation can feel supported in their life as a worshipping community.

LAY MINISTRY vs. LAY LEADERSHIP

There is much discussion throughout the Church about Lay Ministry. Each of us, at baptism has been given a ministry in the world. Whether or not a person is a leader of some aspect of the work of the church, all persons are “ministers.” And it would be helpful to think in those terms and use them, rather **than** thinking “volunteers” and asking for such when needs arise. Volunteers can “opt out” whenever they feel like it, but people fulfilling their baptismal promises have no “cop out” or “time limit” on those vows either. In Parish Ministry Review the aim is not either to challenge or to criticize the ministry of an individual. Rather, the goal is to enhance the ministry of the *congregation* by insuring that whatever objectives were set, are, in fact, being carried out.

Lay Leaders are called by the congregation to accountable ministry. Along with the clergy and Vestry they mean to achieve a clearly defined and understood end. After a period of time, it is helpful *-both to the individual and to the leadership-* to check and see just how that ministry is progressing. This check-in time is what Parish Ministry Review is all about.

THREE STEPS IN MUTUAL MINISTRY REVIEW

Regardless of the size of the congregation, all Mutual Ministry Review proceeds along similar lines.

1. Decide exactly what is to be reviewed—A good method is to take a look at what gets done—Pastoral Care, Financial Management, Outreach, Liturgy, etc. Develop and keep an ongoing list of all that the congregation does. You may not, however, want to review all that is going on in a congregation.

a) **IS IT TIMELY?** Every congregation develops initiatives in ministry from time to time. You might want to check out those objectives carefully in the beginning stages.

b) **IS IT CANONICAL?** Lay leadership in a congregation is responsible for certain aspects of ministry distinct from those of the clergy. These should be reviewed carefully.

c) **IS IT SOMETHING WE WANT TO SEE A BIG CHANGE IN?** These criteria are like shining a spotlight on an area of ministry of particular importance to a congregation. Sometimes things are not going as well as you might like and feel increased attention will help to make improvement. Other times things can be going quite well, but there is a surge of enthusiasm for that area. Review can be a way of helping emphasize the importance of that ministry in the life of the congregation. Again, it is important that you begin with a list of all that is happening in the congregation. That way you can be sure that you have a picture of the total ministry of the congregation.

2. **Look at what's gone on**—Once you know what you are going to review, decide who will review and against what expectations or goals. How are things going in that area of the parish ministry? Did you meet expectations? Why? Why not? Remember, blame is not helpful. You need to learn from failures, but you also need to celebrate successes!

3. **Set plans for the future**—Once you have developed an idea of how things went, spend some time envisioning the future. Is this something you want to continue? What will be achievable goals during the next review period? Who will you want to lead this effort?

CARING FOR THE LAY LEADERS

There is a temptation to leave lay leaders alone between reviews, which may seem to express confidence. However, every ministry that is important enough to warrant a lay leader requires care from all of the leadership. Lay leaders will appreciate the interest and concern of their fellow leaders. In addition there may be chances to help make linkages between lay leaders to help each find resource in the others.

Evaluation of programs and ministries within a congregation is not a matter of putting people on the spot. If we truly believe that God is calling us to effective ministry, then persons who enter into accountability for those ministries are partners in the work of the church. Care should be taken to define objectives that are achievable by that particular person. Success in meeting objectives can be a faith growing experience. Failure can be discouraging.

OBJECTIVES OF RECTOR REVIEW

Clergy are continually confronted by conflicting expectations. Many clergy find it difficult to get a clear reading on their effectiveness, achievement, or development. Few lay people know how a priest's time is spent. . . or how it should be spent.

Rector review is to improve performance: to affirm what's going well, and to revise mutual expectations. It is never to resolve conflict, or to correct what is clearly unsatisfactory performance.

Reasons to Do Rector Review

- To celebrate what is going well—and to identify what needs to be changed.
- To give clear and reliable feedback.
- To strengthen relationships by sharing concerns about priestly and professional development.
- To minimize or eliminate unrealistic expectations.
- To renew personal and parish goals.

RESPONSIBILITIES vs ROLE

A Rector is also a Priest. “Rector” implies responsibilities and tasks, while “Priest” implies role. Rectoring means doing. . . planning services, teaching youth, supervising staff. Priesting means being. . . a bearer of holy things, prophetic, open, loving. Rectoring calls words like: professionalism, competence, performance. Priesting calls up: spirituality, faith, mystery.

Professional Development is best understood, then, in the context of the Rector's total vocation and ministry which includes:

- Responsibilities,
- Role, and
- Plans for the future etc.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Preaching
Pastoring
Administering

ROLE

Being a spiritual person
Being a sacramental person
Being authentic etc.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Rectors provide administrative authority, organizational leadership, pastoral care, and guidance toward growth. They are the organization's key for resources, action and reaction. Their primary vocation is commitment

ROLE

Priests are central by what they symbolize to the congregation, and by the way they represent the congregation to the wider community. They are central and symbolic in the way they express personal faith,

to the organization. The effectiveness of the congregation's total ministry depends to a large extent on what the lay people expect of their rector, how they share the ministry, and how they contribute toward it.

care and commitment, especially when that faith and commitment are visible to other people and influential in their lives.