

A Roadmap for American Churches and People of Faith: W.W.J.D. (What Would Jesus Do?)



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Stewardship Calling

CHAPTER 11. – Selected Additional Stewardship & Engagement (S&E) Suggestions.

Size Matters.

As cited previously in Chapter 10 of my Roadmap, the Faith Communities Today 2020 Study of 15,278 religious communities from 80 different denominations estimated that there were between 350,000 and 375,000 congregations of all faith traditions within the United States. Interestingly, the majority of these congregations were considered small, with about 70% of the faith communities having 100 or fewer weekly attendees. As it turns out, size does matter when dealing with interpersonal relationships and S&E.

In the 1990s, British anthropologist Robin Dunbar concluded that there was a correlation between the brain size of humans and the average social group size. This concept has been known as “Dunbar’s Number”. It suggests that because of the size of our brains and ability to process relationships, individuals are likely only able to have about 150 close, personal, and meaningful relationships that are stable over time and where people truly know each other in sufficient detail (Dunbar, 1992).

Other data suggests there are about 2.6 individuals in the typical American Christian household. Thus, if you were to take a typically small Christian parish of about 100 people that regularly participate on Sundays and extrapolate the number of souls that are represented in those families, you would come to a size of about 250 to 300 individuals per parish. If Dunbar’s number is valid, it is easy to see how one clergyman would likely be unable to have the kind of close personal relationship with that number of parishioners. Obviously, when you get to parishes of a much bigger size and scale, the challenges become even greater.

This leads to one of the fundamental truths of American Christian churches that I advocate: **The bigger a church gets, the smaller it must become.** Well, to be sure, there are a lot of advantages in terms of scale, resources, and service opportunities that are available in larger parishes. However, the reality is that with the clergy shortage that permeates the American Christian sphere, this is becoming increasingly difficult. Thus, it would be completely unrealistic to expect our clergy to take care of all the spiritual needs of its existing faithful, let alone perform the evangelism and other philanthropy services that we expect of our clergy. Accordingly, the only solution is to do exactly what Christ did in creating the Apostles by organizing an army of faithful Christians to pursue the Vision and WHY of the Church, both amongst its existing parishioners and in the community at large.

Robert Putnam validates this concern in his two best-selling books, Bowling Alone and Better Together, discussed in Chapter 10 of my Roadmap. This research focuses on examining hundreds and hundreds of organizations within the United States to determine why the majority of them decline in membership after reaching a point of inflection, with only a few experiencing a sigmoid curve of reinvigorated growth (Putnam, 2001). This

research led to the sequel Better Together, which was a case study of some of those more successful organizations, including a church, which figured out how to grow effectively (Putnam & Feldstein, 2004).

It is impossible to properly cover all the great insights from the research covered in these two books in just a few sentences; however, the essence of this research focuses on “**Social Capital**.” Social Capital is the combination of (1) **the collective value of everyone you know** (i.e., **your social networks**) and (2) **the desire to do things for each other that our networks foster** (i.e., **reciprocity**). In essence, effective interpersonal organizations aggregate the collective networks of all its members and make them available to each other so that reciprocity is achieved, and when one person helps another person, the organization as a whole and all its members improve.

A concrete example of the Social Capital phenomenon was when my older daughter moved to Baltimore to attend Johns Hopkins University. Within a week of her being there, she called me to ask if we still had AAA service. After an extended interaction where I asked her what was wrong, she asked me what difference it made if I knew her problem since I was in Atlanta and she was in Baltimore. I finally extracted the information that her car wasn’t starting and specifically where she was at the time. I told her to sit tight and wait where she was. I never answered if we had AAA (which we did). I called a church friend from Baltimore and discovered that there was a great (Greek) mechanic whose location was not too far from where my daughter’s car broke down. Within a matter of minutes, I was back on the phone with Alexis to let her know that “Thanasi was on his way.”

Understandably, she asked, “Who the heck is Thanasi,” to which I responded, I had no idea, but he is trusted by someone whom I trust. Several hours later, she called to inform me that Thanasi had arrived and was able to start her vehicle, but he refused to accept any compensation. This was a teachable moment where I reminded her that she was part of a much bigger global Greek Orthodox Church family that had no genetic connection. She was no more than a telephone call away from someone who could solve any problem. I also took the fatherly opportunity to remind her that I had eyes and ears everywhere she was; however, I’m not sure that message got through.

The point of this funny but accurate anecdote is to demonstrate how, when the opportunity is presented, we can form large-scale, broad-based, nationwide community networks of faithful people willing to help each other even when we don’t necessarily have a direct interpersonal connection. This is one of the great mysteries and joys of the Christian movement both in the United States and globally. The notion of creating a connected family of faithful people who are not related but willing to assist each other by following the instructions our Lord gave us is one of the most potent messages of Christianity.

All of this is validated by the scientific and empirical research that demonstrates that you and your parish can create this kind of “social capital” and connectedness. This leads to the question of what you and your parish are doing to combat Dunbar’s Number by cultivating your parish’s “social networks” and ensuring that “reciprocity” is always offered. I have long wondered why your parish doesn’t call a representative of another parish in your faith tradition located in the cities where your youth will be attending college

to introduce your youth to them and ask them to offer a heartfelt welcome and assistance, if necessary. Of course, this means you must do the same thing by calling to welcome youth from other cities attending college in your area to welcome them and offer to provide any help needed. I believe this is a ministry EVERY Christian parish should adopt.

I conducted an experiment where I endeavored to personally reach out to every Orthodox student who attended Emory University in Atlanta with my younger daughter. These young adults all seemed genuinely grateful that someone they did not know but who shared a common belief reached out to offer them whatever assistance they might need, including getting a ride to church. Essentially, I offered to be their “Thanasi.”

One weekend, I got a call from a doctor in Philadelphia whose daughter I had contacted as part of my outreach ministry experiment. He was so touched and shared how it made his wife and him more comfortable knowing that local faithful Orthodox Christians were available to help their daughter. He then asked the magic question: “What can I do for you?”

A lesson I learned early on from my law partner, Carl Sanders, who was the former Governor of Georgia, was, “If you want me to like you, do something for me. If you want me to love you, do something for one of my children.” So, in that spirit, I told my new Philadelphia doctor friend that what he could do for me was pick a Philly-area school and do the same thing I was doing at Emory and welcome all Orthodox students from out of town.

He said that would be great, but he was a busy surgeon. I immediately responded, “B.S.” (although I used the real words, may God forgive me). He seemed surprised until I told him that I was a busy lawyer, but I found the time to reach out to his daughter and the other Orthodox youth at Emory. After a few seconds of silence, he chuckled and said, “You’re right. Of course, my wife and I can do that too.” I wasn’t sure if he would dump the duty on his poor unsuspecting wife; however, I ask you, is your parish reaching out to all the young people attending college near you from your faith tradition (or better yet, any child) and offering them to become part of your “adopted family of support?” If not, why not?

Small Groups.

Let me be clear from the outset. When people try to force me to give them my top three S&EM tactics that will make the greatest difference in their parish, a small group ministry is always on my list! So, how can you overcome the challenge if your parish grows (God-willing) without the ability to hire more clergy while continuing to foster the close and loving family relationship your Lord desired for your parish? As with most questions, the answer is in the Holy Gospel, where we learn, “*For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them*” (Matthew 18:20), and “*Let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another...*” (Hebrews 10: 24-25).

Just as our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ could not be everywhere, our clergy are similarly limited by time and space. Thus, we must follow our Lord's example and create an "army of disciples" (my words, not his) that can extend The Word and help others. One of the most effective vehicles for doing this is the reincarnation of what used to exist in the ancient church and is currently called a "**Small Group Ministry**" ("**SGM**").

At its core, SGM allows churches to get more intimate through interpersonal relationships and interactions. Essentially, SGM consists of weekly (ideally) gatherings of up to about 10-12 people to 1. explore spiritual topics in greater depth and 2. get to know each other and help each other deal with personal life issues. Thus, a typical SGM will have two simultaneous principal objectives of spiritual growth and what I call "one-anothering" (where people get to know each other, help each other, and learn how to serve each other better).

You can organize your SGM groups in many different manners; however, the three most common constructs are:

1. **Geographic** (people who live near each other),
2. **Demographic** (with people of a certain common characteristic (e.g., men, women, young adults, singles, empty nesters, widows/ers, etc.), and
3. **Interest** (with people of similar interests gather, such as for a Bible study, reading a spiritual book, learning how to raise Christian children, women who have had miscarriages, or any other human characteristics that may bind a unique group of individuals together).

Indeed, your parish can mix and match small groups from amongst any of the above three constructs or others. Thus, it is perfectly fine to have some SGM groups that are gathering demographically or geographically. In contrast, others may be particularly focused on unique topics of interest that are shared across the group. I suggest you worry less about forcing an identical SGM organizational construct and more about gathering your parishioners together on a regular basis to grow spiritually and care for each other more effectively.

Many of the larger Protestant denominations and mega-churches have had enormous success with SGM as a vehicle to try and combat the aloneness that might occur when gathering together with thousands of worshippers. However, as St. Paul identified above, this SGM phenomenon has long existed since the ancient Christian church. Indeed, during the Ottoman occupation, Orthodox faithful in Greece would gather regularly in secret cave locations to continue practicing their faith, receiving spiritual education, and lovingly caring for one another.

In modernity, many different denominations are also taking advantage of the powerful insights and opportunities that are presented through an SGM. In their book, "Rebuilt: Awakening The Faithful, Reaching The Lost, And Making Church Matter." Fr. Michael White and Tom Corcoran explain how SGM revitalized their Roman Catholic Church outside of Baltimore. They attribute their SGM as being a critical catalyst to help transform their parish culture, which led to a tripling of weekend church attendance that subsequently resulted in increased giving, flourishing ministries, and a vibrant and solid

spiritual revival. Indeed, their Nativity Church has been very generous in providing regular podcasts to talk about how they have successfully implemented SGM and other best practices in their significantly growing church (<https://www.rebuiltparish.com/small-groups-equip-course>).

Another outstanding SGM example is discussed in the book Divine Renovation: From a Maintenance to a Missional Parish by Fr. James Mallon. Because of Fr. Mallon's Roman Catholic church size, smaller interchurch communities were formed that helped transform St. Benedict church into an even more caring and loving growing community of faith (Mallon, 2014). Countless other examples of SGM exist that have flourished within so many different Christian denominations, such that effective organizations have been formed to assist you with your SGM. For example, check out Small Groups.com at <https://www.smallgroups.com/>.

Similarly, North Point Community Church (<https://northpoint.org/groups>), Passion City Church (<https://passioncitychurch.com/atlanta/community/>), and Saddleback Church (<https://saddleback.com/connect/smallgroups>) are three large churches that have maintained a degree of intimacy and effectiveness as a result of their SGM. Indeed, several of my former law partners who belonged to North Point Community Church and Passion City Church would regularly invite me to some of their SGM men's group activities out of caring for me and with no expectation I would ever join their parish. That is loving "one-anothering!"

There are a plethora of benefits to creating a vibrant and effective SGM, of which I will only enumerate 10 that were poignantly outlined by Mark Howell, the founder of Small Group Ministries (<https://smallgroups.net/resources/free-downloads/>) and the pastor of discipleship communities at Canyon Ridge Christian Church (Howell, 2013):

1. Life change happens best in smaller gatherings of individuals.
2. SGM allows for church to become more personal as people enhance their one-anothering.
3. SGM provides a nearly unlimited leadership development pipeline, as SGM leaders are then trained to take on broader leadership positions within the parish eventually.
4. Off-campus small groups provide a nearly unlimited space at optimal times that reduces travel time and makes for far more congenial environments.
5. "Come over to my house" is a much easier invitation than "Come with me to church."
6. Small groups with more intimate interpersonal interactions provide the best opportunity for one-anothering.
7. Small groups can also provide a sense of family and connectedness for many whose biological family lives far away.

8. It is easier to ask questions in a small group than try to raise your hand at the end of a homily in the church service.
9. SGM makes it possible for more people to be cared for between Sundays. This point cannot be overstated. All too often, people come and go from a church service on Sunday and do not necessarily have the opportunity to feel heard or loved. They feel alone with whatever issue(s) they are facing, even though there are likely others in the parish dealing with the same or similar challenges. By allowing a smaller group of people to become more intimate friends and share their spiritual and life journeys, the loving care our Lord instructed us to project can be extended beyond “the Sunday experience.”
10. Finally, SGM provides an ever-expanding network for communications and impact. It’s easy to imagine that if small groups are meeting on a weekly basis, the parish can effectively communicate with a larger group of people more directly and intimately and ensure that their messages are being heard.

Starting a Small Group Ministry.

As with anything new, starting an SGM requires recruiting the right people to lead each of the small groups, training them in the methodology your parish seeks to implement, and powerfully and repetitively promoting their existence and formation to encourage recruitment. It is not unusual for a new parish to begin with only two to five small groups and work out the kinks as they go, learn from each other, and figure out how to build a more effective SGM. However, the SGM must be considered as critical a ministry as any other in the parish and not merely relegated to a few individuals.

Another beautiful thing about SGM is that they frequently have no budgetary requirements. The SGM members have become increasingly comfortable bringing food or beverages or other fellowship offerings and sharing them willingly. Moreover, since the SGM gatherings take place at people’s houses, it leads to less wear and tear on your parish facilities and lower utility bills and other similar expenses. Some small groups may meet consistently at one person’s house, while others may rotate amongst several of your parishioners. It is less critical that they all operate identically than that they stay focused on the two crucial objectives of sharing spiritual formation information and one-anothering as they grow and love each other more closely.

A very effective way that some SGM has been administered is for the priest to identify a topic in their homily that is then expanded upon with some study questions and perhaps some additional reading. At the weekly SGM events, the participants discuss the clergy’s spiritual message, which is reinforced through dialogue. Other SGMs will focus on potentially going through a particular religious book, chapters of the Bible, or written teachings of a Spiritual Father of that faith tradition, etc. Any way they do it, the group can grow deeper in understanding what their faith teaches.

Some clergy raise concerns that without them being present at every SGM gathering, perhaps the theology won't be perfectly communicated. There are at least three responses to this concern, the third one of which may seem a little harsh. First, for Biblical scholars, this concern sounds familiar to the Apostles chastising others who healed in Christ's name but were not one of them (Mark 9:38-39). The Lord responded lovingly, instructively, and firmly to let others also do those good deeds in the Lord's name: "*For he who is not against us is on our side*" (Mark 9:40). Christ knew that recruiting as many believers as possible (with different discipleship skills) was essential for His message to be heard by the world.

Second, if SGMs are properly formed and effectively led by faithful parishioners who have the proper training, the opposite occurs. SGM gatherings afford the participants the opportunity to raise questions that they never got to ask during the church services or would never ask their priest. Unanswered questions can be aggregated by the SGM facilitator and shared with the clergy to get a more authoritative and proper answer. If enough SGM participants have a similar question, it can inspire a homily to go into greater detail on that topic.

Third, (and I mean this lovingly), it is important to not arrogantly assume that only "I" can properly train someone or best bring people close to Christ. Let's face it: not all of us are given the same gifts. Some do not communicate as effectively as others. Some are way too theoretical and never get around to the application of the message. Some of us do not hear and process information or communicate the same way or as effectively from the same people. I can go on, but if you are humble and honest, you know what I am saying. (I was always surprised when my wife explained something to our daughters that they seemed to understand when I was confident I had just explained it more perfectly right before her, and they didn't seem to get it.)

The bottom line is that to address the massive need for spiritual formation and "one-anothering," given the significant shortage of priests, we must figure out how to leverage the strength and time of the clergy. There is no way for one person to personally reach hundreds of parishioners effectively. However, they can stay in touch with and train their SGM leaders, which in turn will relay the message down to the faithful in a much more efficient and effective manner. This was Christ's distributed disciple approach (Luke 10:1).

Of course, I do not suggest that more interpersonal time and relationships with, and teachings from, your clergy are not essential. They absolutely are critical. There is a reason why Christ created Apostles, who, in turn, became the bishops and trained disciples and deacons and all other orders of individuals to help bring about spiritual education. However, the more you try to place all spiritual training and development on one priest at a parish, the more likely you will fail in achieving your ultimate objectives. Thus, leveraging the gifts, skills, talents, and abilities that God has given other individuals within your parish through the application of an SGM allows the parish to grow spiritually, in impact, and interpersonally. Your parishes can help bring people closer to Christ and each other by making your growing parish operate as if it were smaller and more intimate.

Council of Ministries.

Another great parish innovation is organizing a Council of Ministries, which is the new evolution of the way your parish could operate more effectively. To make the case, let me provide a history of the American Orthodox church (and many other Christian jurisdictions in America) in a few sentences. Talk about aggressive! In the American Orthosphere of the early 1900s, our immigrant grandparents or great-grandparents would get together, and they would typically recruit an itinerant priest, often from their homeland, to come around every few months to offer church services.

Around the 1920s and 1940s (it varies by church and geography), we started seeing full-time priests being employed by parishes, working with the early precursors of parish councils and boards. In the 1940s-1950s, parishes created a model where we had professionally trained priests who came from theological seminaries to work with popularly elected parish councils and boards. These early parish councils reported to a parish assembly and were ultimately accountable to all parishioners. That is the model created in the American Orthosphere around the 1940s-1950s, and it is the same organizational model used in most church operations today.

You might remember the earlier data about how we are living in exponential times and that the speed of change is unimaginable and accelerating. So, here's my question: Can you think of any effective organization that is using the same operational structure it used 70 years ago? The honest answer is likely no.

The old parish council model made sense in the early days when there were not many ministries, and the parish council members did everything. Now, the president, treasurer, and secretary have regularly assigned duties (and are required to fill offices by most State corporate laws). However, most of your remaining parish council members have no real assigned duties and are merely members of a "committee of the whole." Let us explore the effective innovation of a **Council of Ministries ("COM")**.

In a COM, all activities of your parish are considered ministries and headed by co-chairs. There are no more committees. If it is important enough for your parish to focus on, it should be characterized as a ministry of the parish.

This includes the obviously critical ministries in the areas of liturgical practices, music, education, philanthropy, outreach, stewardship, evangelism, etc. But it also includes tactical activities such as buildings and grounds, finances, and every other activity undertaken by your parish. In this way, there are endless opportunities for your parishioners to engage in service and to use whatever gifts they have been given. Naturally, all liturgical and sacramental ministries must report to your clergy. However, the clergy cannot do everything else alone. Thus, all operational activities must be included in the COM.

The ideal is for each of your parishioners to attach themselves to one or more parish ministries that speak to their talents and calling. In this way, the foundation is laid to create a **"full participation parish"** where everyone can maximize their engagement liturgically, sacramentally, and in ministry service to others. People's sense of calling may change over time. For example, when my children were young, my wife worked with the

youth ministry, and for 15 years, I coached church league basketball. However, once our daughters grew up, my wife started a women's small group reading ministry, and I moved full-time into my Stewardship Calling ministry. In this way, there is always an outlet for you and your other parishioners to be engaged in parish ministries by using your gifts to serve others based on your situation, calling, and experiences.

Dear brother or sister, you know that too many people treat their parish as a "Sunday only" experience. They focus on how quickly they can get in and out on Sunday and then act as if they are done being a Christian for the week. That's part of the challenge and problem. The critical foundation must be laid to provide a way to bring all parishioners into living their Christian faith 24x7x365 by engaging in the ministries of your parish.

The COM consists of the clergy, your three elected parish officers (President, Treasurer, and Secretary), and all the co-chairs of each ministry. Your COM meets at least quarterly to ensure that all ministry leaders are informed about the status of the major strategic initiatives of the parish (hopefully, from your parish strategic plan), and each ministry informs the others about their major activities and progress toward accomplishing their respective plans.

The COM also ensures that each ministry is aligned with the parish's WHY, Mission, Vision, Core Values, and strategic plan. In your quarterly meetings, your COM members should share best practices, challenges experienced, synergies, and strategies for how they can all work better together. The ministry leaders in your COM are also the training ground for future leaders of the parish in other initiatives and capacities. Thus, they should receive periodic leadership training, as discussed in Chapters 4-8 of my Roadmap. By working together to achieve the objectives of their ministry and the common Vision of the parish, greater parish health and effectiveness are achieved.

As your parish establishes its COM, you should share with other parishes the ways you implemented this revised organizational structure, lessons learned, and innovations implemented. I would love to create a central repository for such knowledge and best practices. In the meantime, one COM model developed in 2015 as part of the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Atlanta strategic plan I was blessed to lead can be viewed here: <https://atlstrategicplan.org/wp-content/uploads/CompletedGoalMaterials/1-5CouncilofMinistries/COM-Goal-1.5-after-HQ-09.27.17-1.pdf>.

What Can You Do Until Your Parish Council Is Replaced With A COM?

The sooner you can revitalize the ancient and no longer effective parish organizational management structure to a Council Of Ministries, the more effective your parish can be at fulfilling its Vision and living its WHY by providing an opportunity to maximize parishioner engagement. However, in the interim, for jurisdictions that must maintain a parish council structure in keeping with the third major stewardship and

engagement principle of “PPS” leadership alignment (discussed in Chapter 10 of my Roadmap), the COM can be implemented alongside the existing parish council structure.

Other than the President, Treasurer, and Secretary, most of your parish council members do not have defined duties and can be assigned to be liaisons to the various ministries. In that capacity, they are not running the ministry (unless they are also serving as a ministry co-head if no one else is available). If you have 20 parish ministries and 13 members of your parish council, after the three officers, your remaining 10 parish council members at large each pick two ministries to which they are liaisons.

The parish council liaisons attend the meetings of the ministries to which they are a liaison to understand and support what they are doing. Your parish council liaisons then bring any major ministry accomplishments, plans, or impediments to your parish council meeting. If this is done, imagine how your parish council meetings can be completely transformed to focus on the ministries of the parish rather than busy work.

New Parish Council Meeting Agenda After COM

A more productive parish council meeting agenda after COM implementation can look like this:

1. Clergy offers the opening prayer and spiritual formation message.
2. The Parish Council President briefly addresses any major changes or issues since the last meeting and any matters requiring a vote of the entire parish council.
3. The Treasurer offers a brief financial update, preferably focusing on the Stewardship Calling Parish Data Dashboard discussed in Chapter 10 of my Roadmap. (The full financial statements should have been previously emailed to the parish council members along with minutes of the previous meeting.)
4. The Secretary shares any major correspondence and takes any corrections to the minutes previously circulated.
5. Parish Strategic Plan Head Coaches remind everyone of the parish’s WHY and Vision and provide an update on any major strategic planning milestones or accomplishments.
6. Each Parish Council Member briefly shares any major news or developments from the ministries to which they are liaisons. Not every parish council member has to report if their ministries have nothing materially new happening.
7. Clergy offers the closing prayer.

Notice what this agenda does. You have now become a future-oriented, strategic and ministry-driven parish. There is no committee busy work wasting the time of the

leadership. There are no endless non-strategic or less important discussions about who will cut the grass or provide lunch, etc.

Instead, you focus on understanding where your parish is in terms of its strategic initiatives, and your time is better spent understanding the incredible impact of your ministries and ways you can support this powerful work of engagement and help it grow. In this way, you focus more on ministry and less on unproductive committee discussions.

Please do not waste people's time by reading and approving minutes or reviewing every bill or financial statement line item (which is the job of your Finance Ministry). Minutes and financial information should be circulated in writing and in advance, along with the documents needed to understand any issues requiring a vote.

And by way of spoiler alert, your COM helps create your parish budget since every ministry is asked to do a zero-based (ground up) budget of what they need to achieve their WHY and Vision. Once you add your operating expenses to the COM ministries' budgets, you will finally create a budget worthy of a parish, bringing people closer to Christ and each other.

[Is Your Budget Worth The Paper It Is Written On?](#)

I know to some of you, this may sound like a very confrontational title; however, hear me out. First and foremost, your parish budget must be taken very seriously and should be done in accordance with the best practices on both a ministry and financial accounting reporting basis. As mentioned previously, in a perfect world, your parish financial statements would be subjected to an annual independent audit. I recognize that many churches cannot afford this, and in such cases, they should ensure that there is an internal audit that is as independent as possible that is then reported to your parishioners to maintain the maximum integrity, transparency, and accountability (ITA).

Fortunately, there are a variety of software packages now that can assist parishes with establishing a proper Chart Of Accounts and accounting system to properly and timely record everything. In this regard, it's also critical that you implement financial accountability standards that ensure minimum protections, such as ensuring that the same person who counts the money is not the person who deposits it, requiring two signatures for every check, validating that all expenditures are done in accordance with whatever approved budget, etc.

So, if you follow all the above and other best practices, why did I include such a disparaging title about your budget? The answer comes from reviewing many hundreds of parish budgets and working with over 1,000 parishes (admittedly mostly within the American Orthosphere). I always ask every parish leader how they created this year's budget. They inevitably say they started with last year's budget and made any adjustments for inflation or known upcoming expenditures. Then, when I ask them how they created last year's budget, they basically refer to the prior year's budget with a few adjustments and so on. At this point, I rather humorously and confrontationally state that "The only real budget your parish ever created in its history was the very first one, and

you have been compounding the felony ever since.” This usually gets a humorous response and simultaneous acknowledgments of the sad truth of the statement.

So, my first criticism of parish budgets is the fact that they are not budgets at all but rather adjustments from last year’s budget. And they merely focus on funding the operational costs of your parish. This statement usually leads parish councils to ask me how they should do budgeting, which is actually the right question they should have asked a long time ago. My answer is to create a faith-based, mission-driven, vision-fulfilling budget focused on the ministries and operations of the parish necessary for it to fulfill its WHY. Those in the business world are used to this form of “zero-based budgeting.”

To do this, first, your parish council should create and organize every ministry your parish needs as well as all ministries it should have if it is properly fulfilling its WHY and Mission. Second, your parish council asks all COM ministry leaders to answer two critical questions: 1. WHY does your ministry exist (i.e., what is the fundamental purpose for your ministry and what problems and challenges are you addressing), and 2. what are the total financial resources you need to fulfill your WHY. This will typically require your ministries to undertake a Why Discovery process and do their own budgeting.

At the same time, your parish council should undertake a detailed zero-based budgeting approach to assess all your required operating budgets and expenses and ensure that they are properly categorized and include appropriate adjustments for inflation, additional services needed, and any other year-to-year adjustments. Once both processes are completed, your parish council adds its operating budget to ALL the COM ministry operating budgets, which becomes the parish budget.

Needless to say, this first real parish budget will likely substantially exceed by probably many orders of magnitude your existing subsistence parish budget that never addresses the needs of your ministries. This will bring your budgetary process from a bare minimum survival operating budget to a WHY-fulfilling, thriving ministry budget worthy of Christ’s church. By reorienting everyone’s focus to your parish and ministry WHY, Mission, and the Vision of where your parish will be in a couple of years, you can ensure a transformational budget will help inspire your parishioners to fulfill the calling of the Lord.

Ministry Fairs.

As mentioned previously, your parish’s critical focus should shift to its ministries and encourage higher levels of engagement of your parishioners liturgically, sacramentally, and in ministry so as to become full-time (not Sunday-only) Christians. The instructions your Lord gave you to “*make disciples of all nations*” require that **you should actually live and not merely lip-synch your faith**. Thus, you must focus substantial energy to ensure that all your ministries are operated with as much excellence and impact as possible by using all the best practices and recruiting the greatest number of ministry workers.

In reviewing my Stewardship Calling wHoly Engaged Stewardship and Engagement commitment process outlined in Chapter 10 of my Roadmap, your primary focus is to identify opportunities for your stewards to engage in the ministries of your parish. In addition to the Parish Ministry Handbook (**PMH**) (discussed in Chapter 10 of my Roadmap), one of the best ways to promote and present your various parish ministries is through a ministry fair. This event is usually done on some Sunday after church and replaces a more traditional coffee hour or luncheon. The Ministry Fair allows each of the ministries in your COM to establish a table or booth to describe WHY it exists and what it does and encourage other parishioners to catch and see its Vision and join the ministry.

Your Ministry Fair does not need to be relegated to a once-a-year exercise and can be done very effectively three times a year. It is nice to offer it once at the beginning of the year, a second time in the Spring to encourage continued summer activities and a third time at the start of the Fall. This Ministry Fair is meant to supplement the continuing efforts of your ministries to recruit newly engaged parishioners throughout the year. The focus is always to highlight the various life-changing ministries and results your parish is providing in a rapidly changing world.

This is also a wonderful opportunity to present the greatest amount of creativity that the various ministries can offer in promoting what they do. For example, a wonderful multiethnic parish that I took through strategic planning in Harrisburg, PA., did a Ministry Fair that featured at each table the food and beverages of the home countries of each of the ministry co-chairs. As you walked from table to table, you not only learned about the various ministries, but you also actually enjoyed some of the cuisine of the ethnically diverse ministry leaders. It became an extremely enjoyable event in which everybody participated, both for the opportunity to engage more deeply in ministries and also for the great social interaction that it created. You should let your God-given creative juices flow to find imaginative ways to feature the transformational work of your ministries and encourage greater parishioner engagement.

While I previously discussed in Chapter 10 of my Roadmap how critical it was to have a current and effective website and social media initiatives, your parish ministries can provide the best content. Every ministry should have its own page on your website that is regularly updated with stories and photos showing its impact and activities. In addition, the COM should ensure that all ministry activities are prominently featured on the parish calendar. As someone who looks at parish websites every day, I cannot tell you how depressing it is to see a parish calendar that is fairly blank except for Sunday services. Honestly, this tells me that either your parish has no ministries or does not care to recruit for them or share their impact.

In Chapter 10 of my Roadmap, I share a large amount of data explaining how critical your website (and other social media) is to telling your parish's story, sharing its WHY and Mission, and inspiring people to want to join you. Check your parish calendar on your website right now and tell me what it says about your parish. Is your parish one full of opportunities to use my gifts to help others and come closer to Christ and my fellow men, or does it tell the story of a building that is empty of joy and purpose except on Sunday?

And He gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers for the equipping of the saints for the work of MINISTRY, for the edifying of the body of Christ till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head – Christ... (Ephesians 4:11-15).

Sometimes Impact Is A Better Metric Than Expenses.

Non-profits in America are often first evaluated by how small a percentage they spend on overhead/marketing/fundraising/administration, etc., rather than the impact they achieve. Which charity would you rather invest in, one that spends 2% on overhead and only raises \$100,000 for its cause or one that spends 40% on overhead but raises \$100 million and has a substantially greater impact? The answer is obvious; however, as Dan Pallotta, who raised millions for worthy causes, made clear in his TED Talk, American non-profits are unwisely directed and incited to spend as little as they can rather than spending whatever is necessary to have the greatest impact (Pallotta, 2013).

Two charities that Dan Pallotta formed respectively raised \$194 million for breast cancer research and \$180 million for AIDS services that were forced to shut down because they spent 40% on marketing, donor experience, talent recruitment, training, and reasonable salaries, notwithstanding having the greatest impact. The obsessive focus solely on limiting expenses regardless of impact is misguided, and it prioritizes the wrong things.

In my examination of some of the biggest dilemmas/challenges faced by parishes and other non-profits, higher employee turnover than desired kept re-occurring. The departures are not because of the inadequacy or unfulfilling nature of the work performed by the departing employees but rather because of the higher wages offered by for-profit businesses for talented people who parishes trained to excel at Servant Leadership. Indeed, a parish's ability to properly invest in the development of its staff and ensure Servant Leadership is enculturated in its ethos and culture has the counterproductive impact of making these individuals more attractive to businesses that can benefit from the already-trained servant leader.

However, the news is not all bad. Acknowledging the non-profit sector pay gap compared to the for-profit sector can be significant (especially for management/leaders), Handy and Katz (1998) argued that this differential leads to a positive self-selection in the caliber of some leaders who are more committed to the non-profit cause than if they worked for a business. While the debate between the relative productivity of non-profit and for-profit workers continues (particularly complicated by the impact of volunteers working alongside paid staff), the economic reality is that a non-profit employee well-trained in Servant Leadership is very valuable to a business that can recruit them away for higher compensation (including offering equity) (Preston & Sacks, 2010, pp. 106-

119). This creates a hiring and development dilemma for all Servant Leader non-profits like your parish. How are you developing and evaluating your parish and ministry leaders? Are you trying to spend as little as you can or trying to have the greatest impact you can at bringing people closer to Christ and each other? **Impact eats efficiency for lunch!**