MUTUAL MINISTRY REVIEW

What is a Mutual Ministry Review, other than a process that parishes are obligated to undertake and complete? Very simply, it is a way for parishes to assess their needs and accomplishments by addressing such questions as: are we fulfilling our mission, are we achieving identified goals and objectives, and do we have priorities that govern the use of resources?

Further, we should expect the Mutual Ministry Review to:

Celebrate what is going well, identify changes
Give clear and reliable feedback; speak the truth in love
Identify lay and clergy development needs
Minimize unrealistic expectations
Deepen the clergy/vestry relationship
Be a consistent on-going process

The November 2012 Diocesan Convention, in ratifying the Compensation resolution, reaffirmed that parishes are required and expected to undertake Mutual Ministry Reviews.

Mutual Ministry Review, or MMR as it will be referred to from this point on, presupposes that a parish has, or will establish, a mission, several goals, with priorities, and objectives in support of the goals. The operative is "we". The process involves both the clergy and lay leadership in establishing the mission, goals, and objectives and in assessing the parish's achievements against those targets. It is not a performance review or an evaluation either of the clergy or lay leadership. It is a collective team assessment.

Initiating the process is a serious undertaking. It will take time and often lengthy discussions. Generally, the MMR process should be linked to the fiscal year in that there are funding implications.

It begins with the determination of mission. There can be a number of approaches. A description of two follow:

The first description is a top down for parishes who feel comfortable and confident its mission can be established through discussion and without extensive analysis. Goals and objectives can similarly derived. The second describes preliminary steps that may be taken to assess various factors contributing to the parish's status and health, Issues pertaining to mission will arise from the assessment forming a basis for the mission development. Once accomplished, the top down approach can be undertaken.

Top Down Description

The following paragraphs will describe the steps shown above and will be illustrated with examples from parishes in the Diocese of Central New York

Mission
The first step is mission, for the church is mission driven. The Catechism in Book of Common Prayer states the following: "The mission of the Church is to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ." (pg 855). The parish mission should be equally brief. It should be a consensus of the clergy, wardens and vestry and widely recognized by the parish. An example, taken from a parish in the diocese is: "Our Mission: Igniting Passion for Jesus Christ to Change Lives". Another parish states theirs as being "an inclusive and worshipping Christian community that accepts the challenge of living the Gospel." And another is, " to worship, love and serve our Lord Jesus Christ through the Anglican tradition". As one would expect, there is a wide range of mission statements though there is an evident centrality throughout them all.

For MMR, mission is the basis for the establishment of goals. The achievement of the goals becomes the fulfillment of the mission. Thus, determining mission is critical first step.

Vision
Vision too can take many forms. For purposes of MMR, it is an expectation of what the parish can become. It is suggested the rector and/or vestries take the lead to establish a vision for the parish;. Often, it is integral to the calling of a new rector. Lacking a rector or clergy leader, it would be the vestry. The vision is a way for the leadership to condition and energize the goals that are about to be established.

Goals
Many, many goals can be conceived for a parish ranging from worship, outreach, stewardship, and pastoral care to ecumenical events, fellowship and building and grounds. The list below is representative of a few most common ones. Note that goals are <u>not measurable.</u> Objectives will be developed for each goal and will have

measurable outcomes. A priority will be assigned to each goal. The priority will be carried through to its supporting objective (s).

- Create an innovative Sunday worship service that engages the congregation.
- Maintain worship momentum during the summer months.
- Expand our ability to provide pastoral care.
- Develop and foster small group ministries
- Increase the number of pledging units and both the average and median pledge
- Develop and prioritize a capital plan that addresses the needs of Building & Grounds.

Strategy

A discussion of strategy at this point is helpful for it determines how the goal will be attained. It's the action items and events that have to take place. These will serve as a basis for the objectives. Further it is a realistic check on the parish's ability to achieve the goal.

Objectives

As stated above, the objectives are measurable. Each objective will have a date, an event or an outcome. For example, taking the goal:

- Increase the number of pledging units and both the average and median pledge

Here are some objectives:

Increase both number of pledging units and average pledge by 10%.
Form the stewardship team by June 1 with increased number of members.
Define the theology of stewardship by Oct. 1
Outline plan for year round stewardship for vestry review by Oct 15
Discuss the budget in the context of the theology and vision by November

Programs

Here is where the strategy and objectives coalesce. As a technique, it is helpful to write a description. Think in terms of putting an explanation before the parish of how a goal is to be achieved and who is responsible. As an example, let's look at a hypothetical description for the goal outlined above under Objectives. It might read;

The parish, facing a significant budget, is earnestly trying to increase the number of pledging units and the average pledge by 10%. To reach this objective an expanded team will be formed by June. The theology of stewardship will be formulated in a way that is clearly understood. It will be the subject of homilies given by the rector in late fall. The emphasis will not be limited to the Every Member Canvas, but will stress year-around stewardship. As we approach the end of the year, budget projections for next year will be outlined in the context of the mission opportunities possible with the budgeted resources. The results will be known during the first quarter of next year, at which time the program will be assessed. Responsibility for this program will lie with the stewardship committee.

MMR/Assessment

Having stepped through the model illustrated in the chart, a parish mission will have been established and promulgated , a vision projected, goals established and prioritized, measurable objectives established and related to prioritized goals and a strategy determined which coalesces the objectives into a meaningful programs.

The MMR is an assessment of how we, the parish., did, program by program. Those responsible for the separate programs will assess their attainment. It would be reported to the vestry. It would contain supporting data, conclusions, upwards-oriented suggestions and possible revisions for the next year. It also would contain fiscal or budget revisions brought about by the MMR.

As emphasized before, the MMR process outlined about is a joint, team effort. It is an assessment, not an evaluation. The effort to establish mission, goals, objectives and programs is substantial. However, once accomplished, the steps to a Mutual Ministry Review are clear. Moreover, it is a process that can be sustained year to year by revisions and adjustments rather than having to recreate it. Finally, it is the basis for an enduring partnership of clergy and laity.

Preliminary Steps

It is not uncommon for a parish to be uncertain of where they are going or what God wants them to do. Should this be the case or should a parish feel compelled to undertake data gathering and analysis prior to a determination of mission, here are three steps that may prove helpful.

Determine Parish Values
Here is an example of values determined by one parish.

CARING for one another, the environment, our congregation and our loved ones.
FAITH and faithfulness to God, nurtured by prayer and worship.
WELCOMING: inviting, accepting, respecting and being honest with all.
 REACHING OUT to our community, the poor, children families and friends.
Engaging a parish in discussing and formulating values may be most useful in that it begins to establish a frame of mind amongst the parish and its leadership.

Profiling a parish and its needs
Assign each statement with a numeric value:
1 = an apt description of our parish
2 = needs to be strengthen, high priority
3 = needs to be strengthen, low priority
4 = Not something we should pursue now

Our Parish
____ We need a clear understanding of mission
____ We are a welcoming community sharing the love of God with others
____ We balance our needs with the needs of those beyond our parish
____ We share the love of Christ through fellowship and service to each other.

Worship Services
____ The laity, including youth, is widely involved in worship services
____ The liturgical style of worship is relevant and fosters a connection to God
____ Musical elements of the service help us worship and focus on God
____ Sermons are personal and speak to us

Spiritual Vitality

____ Parish members enjoy gathering to discern God's actions in their lives
____ Clergy, lay leaders, parish members seek the Holy Spirit's guidance in our work
____ Worship is impacted by God's activity and presence in parish life
____ There is palpable energy when speaking of God's activity in our lives

Education Programs

____ A variety of Bible centered education programs exist
____ Parents support religious education for children
____ The physical plant of the parish supports effective education sessions
____ Teachers are held in high regard

Fellowship

____ Social functions nurture relationships among parishioners
____ Small groups enhance fellowship, establishing a caring attitude in the parish
____ Fellowship events are well attended
____ There is a mutuality, a team spirit, between the rector, leadership and the parish

Communication

____ The parish website is comprehensive, accessible and current
____ An openness exists in communication between the rector, vestry, staff, parish
____ Parishioners generally understand where to go to get specific needs addressed
____ Meetings are agenda driven, yet other and dissonant voices are carefully heard

Stewardship and Finance

____ Stewardship is a given, the year around responsibility of every parishioner
____ The 10% tithe is a realistic standard for this parish
____ The effect of stewardship on mission attainment is clear and well communicated
____ The parish is well managed financially

Establish a Parish Vision

This is an extensive survey, requiring time and thoughtful effort by parish leadership. Its analysis however should reveal pointers, enabling and assisting the parish to establish mission. It also will facilitate the determination of a parish vision. It is suggested that the vision be determined at this point as opposed to incorporating it in Approach 1 for it will have a direct effect on the determination of mission.

GETTING STARTED

It should be clear MMR is a significant undertaking, placing a premium on the rector, wardens and vestry leadership,. Certainly, it cannot be expected that all the required skills exist among the leadership, particularly as strategies, objectives and programs are developed. Other skills may be needed. Teams may have to be formed. The development of the parish mission, however, should be the province of the leadership. This task may take time, since it should have the endorsement of the entire parish. Similarly, the vision is a leadership task.

The initial steps should be directed towards the creation and acceptance of the parish mission. There are a variety of ways to approach this task. Leadership must decide what is consistent with their talent, experience and resources. Suffice it to say, it should have priority