THE CONSULTATIVE PROCESS IN ACTION
A Handbook for Pastoral Administrators and Council and Commission Chairpersons

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**Table of Contents**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic Concepts</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Participants</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Agenda</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working Information</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendation</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Moment of Decision</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary Overview of Do's and Don’ts</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendices</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Introduction

This handbook is a guide to the consultative process. It is designed for those who wish to take steps toward a more effective implementation of my book, *Consulting the Wisdom of the Parish Community*. It will be of particular usefulness to pastors, pastoral staff members who regularly consult with a commission, and council and commission chairpersons, but it may be used with profit by council and commission members as well.

This handbook relies heavily upon the vision of council and commission effectiveness set forth in *Consulting the Wisdom of the Parish Community*, where the basic concepts of a consultative council-and-commission structure are elaborated, together with a rationale for the consultative role. Those readers who are not already familiar with (a) the distinction between the Parish Service Organization and the parish as a whole, (b) the distinction between program implementing groups and consultative groups (and specifically, the distinction between a commission and a service team), or (c) the vital contribution made by consultative bodies to the implementation of a full and effective cycle of power functions may want to read *Consulting the Wisdom of the Parish Community* before or at least in conjunction with this handbook.
This handbook does not represent an exhaustive treatment of the consultative process in parishes. Rather, it represents one comprehensive approach to parish consultation that seeks to be (a) sufficiently competent and thorough to be a significant factor in parish organizational decision making and yet (b) sufficiently uncomplicated to be of practical use by people of average group process and organizational skills. The present need seems to be for a beginner's guide to the consultative process that can have a vital impact upon the effectiveness of parish ministry and the quality of parish life, yet remain simple enough for ready understanding and use by pastoral administrators and consultors selected from the congregation without formal training in group process or organization development.

**Basic Concepts**

The purpose of this section is to give a quick review of the basic concepts underlying the consultative process.

*The Parish Service Organization*

The Parish Service Organization (PSO) is that sector of the parish community that is organized for mission and ministry. It is made up of all those individuals and groups that have taken a formal role in order to serve others at the community's call and with the community's support.
It exists to serve, in the name of the parish, those that the parish chooses to serve, both within its boundaries and beyond. It is not synonymous with (a) the congregation (those who attend religious services regularly) or (b) the parish community (those who live within the geographical boundaries). It usually represents less that one fourth of the congregation. It is the organized part of the parish, the part taking official action to meet pastoral needs.

**Service Teams**

The PSO will usually be divided into a number of smaller groups that exist for the purpose of (a) designing step-by-step programs and strategies for achieving PSO goals and (2) carrying out those programs and strategies efficiently, effectively, and responsibly under the leadership and supervision of the pastor or members of his pastoral staff. At the present time, there is no standardized term that names such groups within the PSO. Although such groups assuredly exist in every parish, they are known by many different names (commission, committee, task force, organization, ministry, to name a few). For the sake of clarity and in the interest of a uniform terminology, such groups will be referred to in these pages as service teams.

A service team is different from a commission in two respects: (a) its function is to select means and take direct action to meet pastoral...
needs, while the commission's function is to evaluate action taken and make recommendations for improvement, and (b) it serves as an arm of the pastoral administration, while the commission represents the interests of those receiving services.

The present confusion of the concepts of commission and service team constitutes one of the most formidable stumbling blocks to parish organizational effectiveness as well as to a clear understanding of how PSOs might function more effectively. This confusion is so entrenched in our way of thinking about parish organization, however, that it is probably unrealistic to expect it to be quickly dissipated in practice. It is recognized, therefore, that movement from the present vision of council and commission functioning to the implementation of separate structures for administration and consultation will probably best take place in planned stages over an extended period of time. The guide to the consultative process set forth in this handbook, therefore, does not presume or require total separation of structures for administration of services and consultation before beginning the process, although it recognizes the eventual desirability of such a clear and total separation.

**Consultative Bodies**

Parishioners need to have a voice in evaluating how well the PSO is doing in its attempts to be of service to the parish community. The
recommended strategy for giving the people of the parish such a voice is to assemble a group of people who can represent the wisdom of the community and the best interests of the people that the PSO professes to serve. The parish council is the primary group of this type, but there may be others, in this case properly referred to as "commissions."

The purposes of the council and the commissions are (a) to make evaluations and recommendations that will help the primary administrators of the PSO to make key decisions and take action to improve the quality of parish life and to meet the pastoral needs of the parish community, (b) to affirm and support those decisions and actions in the name of the community, and (c) to call the pastoral administrators and, through them, the entire PSO to accountability. The council offers this vital service to the pastorat (pastor and pastoral staff), who represent the PSO as a whole. The commissions offer this service within a more narrowly prescribed area of the PSO's overall mission: education, worship, finance, etc.

Because consultative bodies are not encumbered with the responsibilities and the time and energy commitments involved in program implementation, and because they are not as personally invested in the success of specific programs, they can be very helpful partners to the program implementers in the PSO, providing a service of
their own without which the efforts of the PSO to be of service to the parish community would be critically weakened.

Loving and respecting the parish and believing that the Lord is using the parish to proclaim His presence and his love to the world, members of consultative bodies accept parish administrators and their vision, rules, and structure and yet are not afraid to speak the truth to them and to call them as needed to something more.
PART ONE:

BEFORE THE MEETING
The Consultative Process

The Participants:

The participants in the consultative process always consist of the following: (a) one or more pastoral administrators and (b) the members of a consultative body. The administrator(s) are consulting the body; that is, they are asking the consultants for input in the form of evaluations and recommendations that will help them as administrators to make better decisions and take more effective, efficient, and responsible action in the interest of meeting the pastoral needs of the parish community. In the case of the parish council, the consulting administrator will usually be the pastor, though other staff-level administrators may become involved from time to time. In the case of a consultative commission, the consulting administrator(s) will be those responsible for the specific area of the parish's mission and ministry that is the special interest of that commission. For example, the school Principal and the Director of Religious Education would be consulting administrators for a total parish Education Commission.

In order to facilitate interaction between the administrator(s) and the group with regard to setting the agenda, facilitating the consultative process, and articulating the group's evaluations and recommendations,
consultative bodies usually designate a chairperson to speak for them with one voice, represent their interests, and keep the consultative process running smoothly.

If the chairperson of a consultative body is not gifted with the skills to help the group do its work efficiently and effectively, a group facilitator, from within the group's own ranks or from outside the group, may sometimes be needed in order to insure productive use of the group's time. Sometimes the administrator may fulfill this function, or the administrator and the chairperson may do it together as a team.

It takes (a) process planning, (b) leadership, and (c) time for everyone involved in a consultative process to learn how to make the process effective and satisfying as well as productive for the Parish Service Organization.

The Agenda

Either the administrator(s) or the consultors should be able to initiate items for the agenda. That is, evaluations and recommendations might be requested by the pastor or pastoral staff member on the basis of their experienced concerns or volunteered by the council or commission on the basis of the concerns that they are picking up in the community. When the administrator(s) initiate agenda items, they need to be very clear and specific about exactly what they are asking of the
consultors and very careful that the consultors have or can acquire the working information that they need in order to give the administrator(s) what they are asking for. For example, "What are you hearing about the new hymnbooks?" is much more specific and focused than "How's worship in this parish?"

Sometimes a problem situation or a new and pressing need may come to the attention of the consultors before it comes to the attention of the administrator(s). Then the consultors may propose agenda items themselves, challenging and encouraging the administrator(s) to address a situation, set a direction, make a decision, develop a plan, formulate a policy, or establish a priority, and offering their consultative assistance and support. When consultors propose agenda items, administrators need to show themselves open and responsive to their initiatives.

However, collaborative decision making between administrators and consultors does not mean that the administrators must or will consult before making each and every decision. Hundreds of administrative decisions are made at all levels within the PSO each month in a parish of any size, and consultors have neither the time nor the investment level necessary to make themselves available for constant, on-call consultation regarding every decision to be made with regard to the implementation of any and every PSO program. Therefore, administrators and consultors together need to exercise discretion in deciding how best
to use the time and energy available for consultation; that is, they must exercise discretion in structuring the agenda for the consultative process.

The following are options for structuring the agenda:

1. The agenda can be structured at the beginning of each meeting. Councilor commission members can raise issues for the agenda based upon input they have been receiving from the community. The administrator(s) may also raise issues of current concern. These may be listed on newsprint or on a blackboard by the council chairperson or by a group process facilitator. No evaluation of items should be allowed while they are being listed. Then the group may prioritize the issues by using a numerical ranking formula of some kind (See Appendix A). The group may then choose to work through the items in priority order for the time they have available, or they may establish a cut-off point limiting the number of issues to be discussed at that meeting, and/or they may establish a time limit for the discussion of some or all of the issues to be discussed at that meeting.

Some key advantages of this method of agenda setting are that (a) it allows the agenda to have up-to-the-minute relevance to the present situation in the parish and (b) it broadens the base of ownership of the agenda by involving council and commission members directly in
the process of its formulation. Some key disadvantages are that (a) it consumes meeting time that would otherwise be available for the consultative process itself and (b) it easily lends itself to a crisis management approach to agenda structuring, focusing always on the hottest fires or the squeakiest wheels.

2. The agenda can be structured between meetings—usually by the pastor or other pastoral administrator representing the interests of the Parish Service Organization and by the chairperson representing the interests of the councilor commission. Such an agenda may be published prior to the meeting along with whatever support data or working information the consultors need to aid their reflection, focus their own attempts to get in touch with the community, and prepare their evaluations and recommendations in advance (See Appendix B). Of course, such an agenda, even when published in advance, can still remain open for ratification or possible amendment or modification by the consultors at the time of the meeting, if that seems necessary or desirable.

Some key advantages of this method are that (a) there is more time available for consultation during the meeting itself and (b) the agenda is available prior to the meeting, enabling consultors to do their "homework." Some key disadvantages might be that (a) the sense of ownership through direct participation in agenda setting may be reduced
and (b) more time and energy may be required for "homework" on the part of administrators and consultors alike.

3. The agenda can be structured on a periodic basis; that is, a consultation schedule can be set up for the year or on a three-year cycle (depending upon the structural complexity and programming intensity of the Parish Service Organization in question) in order to insure that, over a given period of time, every major area of the life, mission, and ministry of the relevant sector of the Parish Service Organization will be touched upon by the consultors at least once (See Appendix C). Such a method of structuring the agenda allows members to know months in advance what issues, subjects, parts of the Parish Service Organization, or programs will be discussed on a certain date. Of course, such a method of agenda-setting is not totally incompatible with the addition of more timely or pressing concerns.

Some key advantages of this method are that (a) it allows for complete and uniform coverage of the mission and ministry of the Parish Service Organization and the expected and unexpected outcomes of that mission and ministry over the specified period, thereby avoiding the "fire department" approach to administration and consultation alike and (b) it allows maximum preparation time for consultors to touch base with the community and thus to truly be able to voice the wisdom of the community rather than simply their own. Some key disadvantages might
be that (a) the agenda might lose some of its immediate relevancy to the concerns of the month and (b) consulting focused upon sectors of the Parish Service Organization that are basically "healthy" might not be as interesting or motivating for some consultors as consulting focused upon sectors that are in crisis.

Appendix D lists a number of questions that each service team within a Parish Service Organization, as well as the Organization as a whole, should be addressing and answering in consultation with its council-commission structure. These may be used for the purpose of generating specific agenda items using any of the above three methods of agenda setting.

**Working Information: Input From the PSO**

The pastoral administrator(s) must provide the consultors with the clear, accurate, current, specific, agenda-relevant information about the Parish Service Organization and its activities that the consultors need in order to make and gather intelligent evaluations and recommendations. Traditionally, reports made by "commission" representatives served this function, though often in a very time-inefficient way. If a council wishes to preserve its traditional meeting structure in this way, it might continue these reports, making sure, however, that the reports are agenda-relevant.
Having the working information in written form prior to the meeting will, however, be a big help for consultors in their task of gathering and preparing evaluations and recommendations. Ideally, the working information accompanies the agenda for the meeting and is organized item-by-item according to the order of agenda items.

It is especially important that the working information be clear, concrete, specific, and current, e.g., not "Things haven't been going too well with the finances lately," but "Collections have been down 30% for the last four weeks, and we're facing an operating deficit this June of $60,000.

Working information for consultors might include such things as a schematic diagram or flow-chart of the Parish Service Organization, a list of the names of existing service teams, their leaders and members, the titles and brief descriptions of the current programs of existing service teams, existing mission statements, goals and objectives,. and policy statements of service teams or of the Parish Service Organization as a whole, the action plan or program design of a given program, the budget of a given program or service team, a report on needs serviced by a given service team or on progress-to-date toward achievement of current team or program objectives. Consultors should not be inundated with more information than they need to do their job effectively as consultants. The use of the term working information suggests that the information
needed is the information that will help the consultors do their work of formulating and gathering evaluations and recommendations more efficiently, effectively, and responsibly.

**Evaluation: What Are You Hearing?**

**Roles:**

In the actual process of consultation that takes place during a council or commission meeting, the pastoral administrator(s), as representatives of the Parish Service Organization are requesting feedback from the consultors; that is, they are asking the consultors to feed forward their own evaluations of the Organization’s attempts to meet the authentic pastoral needs of the community and also the evaluations that they as consultors have been able to gather from the community. The consultors thus have a dual role. They serve as an information source; that is, as members of the community themselves, they can feed forward evaluations of their own. They also serve as information gatherers; that is, as representatives of the collective wisdom of the community, they should be able to feed forward evaluations gathered from the community and thus speak for more than their own limited viewpoints.

**The Task:**
In the consultation meeting, the pastoral administrator(s) and the consultors together are asking one another and asking the Lord to show them and to help them to decide in a spirit of prayer what, in all the parish's ways of being and doing needs to die, what needs to go on living, and what needs to come to birth.

The core of the consultative meeting, then, consists of the pastoral administrator(s) asking the consultors, or the consultors volunteering on their own initiatives, (a) how they personally are reacting to and (b) what they have been hearing from the community concerning the specific aspects of the Parish Service Organization and its mission and ministry that are the focus of the agenda for that particular meeting. For example (at the administrators' request) "What are you hearing about the new worship space?" or (at the consultors' initiative) "We've been hearing a lot from the community about the recent renewal weekend that we'd like to pass on to you."

**Listening to the Community:**

Since the primary mission of the consultors is to represent the wisdom of the parish community in the process of evaluating the quality of parish life and the effectiveness of the Parish Service Organization's pastoral services and making recommendations for improvement, it is important for consultors not to let an opportunity go by for listening to community members.
The following are strategies that consultors might use for gathering evaluations and recommendations from community members relevant to the specific items of agenda established for consultation meetings:

1. Evaluations and recommendations may be gathered through a process of simple, informal listening; that is, the consulter uses whatever occasions present themselves spontaneously for talking to community members informally in order to gather from them their reactions to the Parish Service Organization, and its mission, goals, and programs, as well as to the quality of parish life that results from these. This method of gathering evaluations and recommendations will be greatly facilitated if the pastoral administrator(s) publicly request such feedback from the community and publicly introduce the consultors to the community as the individuals to whom such input may be brought, establishing them as the officially approved channel for such input. Unless the consulter has an outstanding memory, this method will also be enhanced if s/he carries a small, assignment-type notebook and writing instrument at community gatherings when contact with congregation members and their views is most likely to occur. In order to use this method, it is important for consultors to realize that they need not wait for community members to approach them or to express their views on agenda-relevant issues once informal contact has been made. It is fully appropriate for the consultors to approach community members with requests for input, e.g., "What did you think of the Festival last weekend?" or to bring informal discussions
on other topics around to the discussion of agenda-relevant items, e.g., "I'd be interested to know how you would feel about our parish offering sanctuary to Haitian refugees."

Such informal input may also be solicited, of course, in written form as letters, statements, or signed petitions, whether addressed to individual consultors or to the councilor commission as a whole. If consultors are unable, for whatever reason, to take notes on member input, they may consider asking the members themselves to put their views in writing and to submit them prior to the next meeting, though consultors should be aware when doing so, of the extra commitment of time and energy that they are asking the member to make thereby.

Some key advantages of this method are that (a) it is probably the easiest and most natural method of information gathering and (b) it requires the least amount of training in order for consultors to be able to use it effectively. Some key disadvantages are (a) that it may be selective, specifically favoring respondents eager to come forward, known to the consalter, and not marginal to or alienated from parish life and (b) that it may not provide the kinds of carefully controlled and focused or quantifiable responses prompted by other methods.

2. Evaluations and recommendations may be gathered by means of
formal structured or semi-structured interviews. Such interviews, whether conducted by telephone or in person, are usually formally "set up" by appointment in advance for a particular time period and place. In a completely structured interview, all of the questions are carefully designed ahead of time to elicit the exact specific kinds of responses desired by the consulter(s). In a semi-structured interview, there are some designed questions to be asked during the interview (See Appendix N), but the consulter is then more flexible in following the lead of the person being interviewed. Some key advantages of this method are that (a) it allows for and even perhaps requires more controlled, focused, and quantifiable responses that can be more easily generalized or summarized across the total field of respondents and (b) it requires little consulter training. Some key disadvantages are that (a) it requires someone skilled in designing questions for structured interviews and in generalizing and quantifying the results and (b) it may be more intimidating and demanding of the time and energy of respondents. Councils or commissions interested in exploring further the use of structured or semi-structured interviews as a method of tapping the wisdom of the community should refer to Appendix E for some model questions. These may be used as they are, adapted for use, or used as models for constructing your own interview questions.

3. Evaluations and recommendations may be solicited and gathered
through the use of sensing meetings. The sensing meeting is similar to the structured interview except that a number of respondents are called together into one place, where they participate in a group process carefully designed to elicit the kinds of input desired by the consultors. Some key advantages of this method are that (a) it is time and energy efficient in that larger numbers of responses may be gathered from larger numbers of respondents by smaller numbers of consultants and (b) it offers a bonus of ownership through participation to respondents without compromising any of the advantages of the structured interview. Some key disadvantages are that (a) it requires human resources with group process design and facilitation skills and considerable time and energy commitments for logistical preparation and follow-through and (b) the inconvenience of a fixed meeting date and time for a large number of respondents.

Three examples of group process designs for such sensing meetings are included in Appendix E.

4. Evaluations and recommendations may be sought by means of written survey instruments. Respondents anonymously fill out a carefully constructed questionnaire designed to secure the exact kind of feedback desired by the consultors. These are then tabulated or otherwise "processed" by the consultors or their agents. Some key advantages of this method are that (a) it can potentially reach the largest number of
respondents with the greatest amount of anonymity and sampling validity and (b) it is the method with the most easily quantifiable results. Some key disadvantages are that (a) its design and interpretation require considerable social research skills to be effective and, even with these, the method tends to be self-limiting and self-fulfilling in its findings and (b) unless used sparingly, it can become annoying to respondents, who then lose their motivation to participate.

Councils or commissions interested in exploring further the use of survey questionnaires as a method of tapping the wisdom of the community should obtain and study Decision Making in Your Parish: Effective Ways to Consult the Local Church by Leon McKenzie (West Mystic, Ct.: Twenty Third Publications, 1980).

The validity of any of the above methods, that is, its capacity to accurately reflect the wisdom of the community on a given question or issue, may be enhanced by using the method with a statistical random sample (See Appendix F).

Obviously, the above-listed methods are not mutually exclusive and may be used in any combination. Further, their combined use will usually yield a more in-depth or multi-dimensional picture of the wisdom of the community with regard to a given issue, concern, or agenda item, thereby increasing the validity of the results.
Regardless of the method or combination of methods selected from among those set forth above, the consultors’ key skill in using the method(s) is the skill of reflective listening. Negatively stated, reflective listening means that in the process of eliciting evaluations or recommendations from community members, consultors refrain from engaging in three kinds of interpersonal behaviors that run a high risk of prematurely closing down on the free flow of the community member's input. The first of these "high risk" behaviors is for the consulter to try to give the community member solutions to problems that s/he shares. Whether this takes the form of telling the community member what to do, giving the community member advice, or moralizing with the community member about what "should" or "ought not" be or be done, the effect is very likely to be that the community member becomes more guarded and defensive concerning what and how much to share.

The second of the "high risk" behaviors is for the consulter to evaluate the community member or her input. Most of us have experienced the inhibiting effect on our free flow of ideas and feelings when someone negatively evaluates us or our input as soon as we make a contribution or even while we are still in the process of trying to articulate our position. Nothing will cut off the flow of information and communication more quickly. It is also important to note that--especially in a group setting--positive evaluation can be equally inhibiting, since it tends to be interpreted as favoring the ideas and feelings of some...
respondents over those of other respondents, and, of course, even in one-to-one interactions praise can be used manipulatively, e.g., "I'm surprised at what you just told me; you're usually such a level-headed person."

The third of the "high-risk" behaviors is for the consulter to withdraw from the community member or his input by reassuring him, e.g., "Don't worry; things will work out; you'll see," or by changing the subject, e.g., "Don't even think about it; calm down; let's talk about something else; would you like to go get something to eat?" Consultors are especially likely to react in this way when the community member is highly emotional and obviously in pain concerning the input being offered and is, perhaps, even crying in grief, anger, or frustration.

Offering solutions often communicates to the community member that the consulter wants to be a sage or guru and feels that the community member is not able to solve her own problems. Evaluating often communicates to the community member that the consulter wants to be a judge or a critic and regards the community member's personality and input merely as opportunities to express approval or disapproval. Withdrawing often communicates to the community member that the consulter cannot handle his thoughts and feelings or is uncomfortable with having him express these. It may be helpful for consultors to remember that their primary role in the process of gathering evaluations and recommendations is not to be interpersonal problem solvers, judges
or critics of the persons, ideas, or feelings of respondents, or healers and pain relievers but rather to get in touch with and to accurately represent the wisdom of the community, what community members are really thinking and feeling, what they are hearing in their prayer and from the depths of their own hearts regarding the specific focuses from parish life concerning which they, the consultors, and the pastoral administrators share a vital interest.

Positively stated, reflective listening means that, in the process of eliciting evaluations and recommendations from community members, consultors engage in or exhibit frequently three kinds of interpersonal behaviors that facilitate the free flow of the community member's input. The first of these "facilitative" behaviors is for the consulter to "open the door" to the community member's input, that is, to offer the community member a non-coercive invitation to talk about issues related to her participation in parish life and her responses to the mission and ministry of the Parish Service Organization, e.g., "Excuse me, Jane, but I couldn't help noticing that you were frowning and shaking your head during the homily this morning; would you like to share with me what was going on with you? I'd be interested to know how you were reacting."

The second of the "facilitative" behaviors is for the consulter to paraphrase or summarize back to the community member the essential content of what she hears the community member saying in her own
words. This gives the community member the chance to hear played back to him the gist or core of what he has been saying and the opportunity to correct the consulter's perceptions of what he is saying if necessary, which, of course, benefits both parties. It also prevents the consulter from "tuning out" on what the community member is saying, since the consulter must listen in order to be able to paraphrase or summarize accurately. It helps the consulter remain in a following posture and to have an accuracy check on her perception of what the community member is attempting to communicate.

The third of the "facilitative" behaviors is for the consulter to reflect back to the community member what s/he perceives the community member to be feeling emotionally about what s/he is attempting to communicate. This behavior is particularly appropriate when the emotion accompanying the community member's words seems to be the most prominent or important feature of the communication.

Use of the three "facilitative" behaviors tends to have the effect of keeping the focus of the interaction firmly fixed upon the community member, what the community member has to say, and how the community member feels about what s/he has to say. This focus upon the community member and her input builds trust in the relationship between the community member and the consulter and encourages the community member to share more extensively and deeply, all of which helps the consulter to get what s/he wants--valid information,
perceptions, evaluations, recommendations that s/he may use in consultation meetings with pastoral administrators. Use of the three "high risk" behaviors, on the other hand, tends to have the effect of taking the focus off of the community member and his input and putting them on the consulter, the consulter's problem-solving ability, the consulter's values and verdicts, and the consulter's lack of ease and comfort in the interaction instead. This focus on the consulter and his solutions, values, judgments, and discomfort with strong feelings builds distrust in the relationship between the community member and the consulter and discourages the community member from sharing more extensively and deeply with the result that the consulter gets more guarded and less honest input from the community member and ends up without what s/he really wants--valid perceptions of the wisdom of the community that will be useful in the consultative process.

Once evaluations and recommendations have been gathered from community members by means of any or all of the above four strategies, it will probably be helpful for the consultors to organize the information that they have collected into a format that will help them and the others present at the consultation meeting to see clearly and to understand what the raw data from the interviews, meetings, or questionnaires says. Organization of the information may range in formality, thoroughness,
and complexity from simple listings of responses and summary reports of findings to graphs, charts, tables, and statistical summaries. The more technical kinds of organization (e.g., tables showing frequencies of response among a statistical population with standard deviations and so on) obviously require special competence, but any consulter may look for and find ways of organizing and summarizing the responses that s/he has gathered from community members on a given issue or question that will help herself and others to digest the raw input with more clarity of understanding than a random helter-skelter of input would allow. This organization of information gathered into a presentable format is an important part of the consulter's "homework." If nothing else, responses can be grouped by agenda item or subject category, as pro or con, and so on.

Specific methods of organizing material may be specified in advance if the agenda, the specific questions, and the specific kinds of desired responses are known in advance and may become standard operating procedure. This approach has the advantage that all consultors organize their material in a uniform way easily understandable to all other participants in the consultative process. With certain methods of gathering input, e.g., the sensing meeting and the survey questionnaire, a few consultors in charge of implementing the program may accept or delegate responsibility for organizing the information gathered in the
name of the entire council or commission, thus relieving the other consultors of the need to do so.

The price to be paid for failing to organize raw input to the consultative process into a presentable format is the obvious lack of clear focus that accompanies a confused and disorganized welter of unprocessed information. The confusion and disorientation thus created are similar in their effect to that created in a meeting with no formally structured agenda. One doesn't know where to begin or how to proceed. There is a sense of directionlessness or of going off in all directions at once. If the organization of the data is not done before the meeting, therefore, it will almost certainly need to be done during the meeting, a task that can consume much valuable meeting time and participant energy that would otherwise be available for the crucial interaction between administrators and consultors.

Feed forward of evaluations organized into a presentable format can, of course, be done in written form prior to the meeting as well as or even instead of during the meeting. If and when this can be done, a great deal of meeting time can be saved.
PART TWO:

DURING THE MEETING
Listening to the Consultors:

Just as the primary task of the consultors is to listen to the evaluations or recommendations of community members and to feed these into the consultative process, whether before or during the meetings, the primary task of the administrator(s) is to listen to the evaluations or recommendations of community members (including the consultors themselves) during the meetings and then to use these to prayerfully and carefully discern what God wants for the parish at this time, making pastoral decisions and taking pastoral action that reflect the fruits of that discernment. During the meeting, therefore, the administrator(s) need to exhibit the same kinds of "facilitative" reflective listening behaviors toward consultors that the consultors need to exhibit toward community members, and, of course, they also need to refrain from indulging in the "high risk" behaviors for the same reasons that the consultors need to refrain from indulging in them.

As an aid to this listening process, all evaluations gathered and fed into the meeting should be recorded visually in such a way that they are available for all participants to look at and refer to throughout the meeting. They may be recorded by a "recorder" with magic markers on
large sheets of newsprint and posted on the walls of the meeting room (such newsprint may also be made up prior to the meeting) or they may be typed up and duplicated and passed out to each participant. This way specific items of input do not get "lost" and are available for future reference. The anxiety of participants is also reduced since they can check visually to see whether their input has been mentioned and heard or not. Finally, some people are primarily visual in their approach to perception and will find it easier to apprehend, think about, and understand the evaluations being fed in if they can see them in writing than when they can only hear them spoken.

After the consultors have had a chance to offer their agenda-relevant perceptions of what the community is thinking, feeling, saying, or doing, therefore, the administrator(s) should have and should take the opportunity to (a) ask questions of clarification (no evaluation at this point, either expressed or implied) requesting amplification or further articulation of the input for the sole purpose of helping the administrator(s) to accurately hear and understand it and (b) summarize back to the consultors the kernels of content and prevailing feelings that they are hearing in the input.

If the administrator involved does not have the skills for such summarizing, perhaps the council or commission chairperson does. If neither of them do, perhaps a group process facilitator, whether drawn
from within the council's or commission's own ranks or from the community at large may serve this vital function. Whoever does the summarizing, however, it is important that the administrator(s) visibly own the resulting understanding and remain active participants and not disinterested spectators in the process.

Analysis of the Evaluation: What’s Behind That?

There is a difference between wants and needs. The specific things that people choose to think, feel, and do sometimes help them to get their authentic pastoral needs met efficiently, effectively, and responsibly and sometimes do not. An alcoholic wants drinks. S/he needs a sense of love and acceptance, a sense of self-worth and recognition, and freedom from chemical dependence, among other things. The alcoholic likely perceives the drinks as a need, whereas in fact they represent a rather ineffective, inefficient, and irresponsible pathway that s/he has chosen in an attempt to meet the underlying authentic needs. Similarly, many of the specific evaluations that make up the raw material of a consultative meeting may be symptomatic of deeper, underlying problems and unmet needs. Complaints that the organist plays too loudly, for example, may be interpreted simply on the surface as a want (desire) for the organist to play more softly, but they may also be symptomatic of the presence of a deeper unmet need. The organist plays too loudly, perhaps, to cover for
the fact that the congregation doesn't sing. The congregation doesn't sing because it has no real experience of Sunday liturgy as a joyous celebration within which singing would be a natural and authentic response.

This kind of moving beyond the surface level of understanding the evaluations gathered and fed into the meeting by the consultors to what lies behind them is called analysis and forms the next major responsibility of the leadership of the meeting after soliciting, organizing, clarifying, and summarizing the input in the meeting’s first stage. In moving to this second stage of the meeting, then, the leaders are asking the consultors to consider (analyze) what’s behind the raw input generated in the first stage. The following are some popular strategies for analyzing and identifying assumptions and needs behind the raw evaluations that have been collected and fed in at this point:

1. Evaluations may be analyzed by looking for trends. Trends are patterns in the data that emerge at a given moment or over a period of time. Examples of some questions that could be addressed to raw evaluations to facilitate an analysis of the underlying trends that they suggest include the following: What do these evaluations tell us about the service teams or service programs that are exerting the most significant influence (positive or negative) upon the parish community right now? What do these evaluations tell us about which Parish Service Organization
resources are being used to the greatest advantage or to the least advantage right now? What do these evaluations tell us about new focuses or concerns that community members are experiencing (e.g., for the last six months, most evaluations have focused upon the school issue; this month, most of them center on social justice concerns)?

2. Evaluations may be analyzed by examining the probable causes behind any trends that emerge in the raw data. If, for example, a trend indicating growing dissatisfaction with the existing parish renewal program becomes evident, the probable causes of such a trend might be explored by asking such questions as the following: Is it because the program is not effectively designed? Is there misinformation about what happens in the program? Do the implementers of the program have the skills needed to run it effectively?

4. Evaluations may be analyzed on the basis of the strengths and weaknesses or helping forces and blocking forces or met and unmet needs that they suggest. Some sample questions that might be addressed to consultants to facilitate this kind of analysis are as follows: What strengths and weaknesses in the Parish Service Organization or in its programs are suggested by these evaluations? What forces helping or blocking the achievement of Parish Service Organization goals or helping or blocking the further growth of God’s Reign in this parish community are suggested by these evaluations? What real pastoral needs do these
evaluations suggest we are or are not meeting? What "wants" or community desires are suggested by these evaluations and what "needs" might those "wants" be aimed at achieving (e.g., What would quieter organ playing ~ for people; how would that "help" them)?

As this second, analytical stage of the consultative meeting comes to a close, the administrator(s) again need to be able to (a) ask non-evaluative questions of clarification and (b) offer a summary of their understanding of the major findings or results of the analysis. Once the council or commission becomes more skillful and confident in handling the tasks involved, it may no longer be necessary, at least at times, for the administrator(s) to be present during these first two stages of the meeting. They might then choose to enter the meeting and be briefed with the summary evaluations and analytical findings by the chairperson or facilitator at this point. Of course, this strategy will constitute an effective act of delegation on the part of the administrator(s) only if it is perceived by the consultors as a "reward" rather than as a "punishment."

**Recommendation: What Do You Suggest?**

As the second stage the meeting closes, the administrator(s) should be able to point to the major specific findings of the evaluation and analysis stages. Stage three begins, then, with an indication by the
administrator(s) of an area or two that stand out as in need of improvement. At this point, then, their question to the consultors is "What do you suggest?" or "What do you recommend that we do about or in connection with these evaluations?" It is very important during this third stage of the meeting that consultors not accept responsibility to do for the program implementers of the Parish Service Organization what they should be able to do for themselves. Frequently, therefore, the appropriate recommendation may very well be simply that the administrators, service team leaders, and program implementers in the relevant parts of the Parish Service Organization examine their alternatives and take action to improve the situation. Such a recommendation amounts to a vote of confidence in the administration of the Parish Service Organization and puts ownership of options, decisions, and action-taking back on the program implementing side, where they mostly belong.

On the other hand, it may sometimes be appropriate or desirable for the consultors to develop alternatives or even specific recommendations for administrators or service team leaders to consider in making their decisions. When that is the case, the first step is for the consultors to "brainstorm" a list of available options for improving the situation in question without stopping to evaluate these while they are being generated (See Appendix G). The consultors will include in their brainstorming any options they have picked up from community
members. The process may end at that point, with the consultors simply passing on the list of brainstormed options to the deciders for their consideration and decision, or the process may proceed to an evaluation of the brainstormed options on criteria established by the consultors themselves or by the constraints of the situation or of the Parish Service Organization and its resources.

During this second step, options may be sorted by category; specific options or categories of options may be weighed as to their possible advantages and disadvantages or pros and cons; a "checkerboard matrix" may be used (See Appendix H). Again, the process may end at this point with the consultors passing on to the deciders their list of options together with an indication of the relative merits of each option or category of options as they see it, or the process may again proceed to a formulation by the consultors of specific high-consensus recommendations.

During this third and final step, consensus building is the primary task (See Appendix I). This step will be greatly facilitated by familiarity with some process tools for consensus building such as preferential ranking (See Appendix J), negative voting (See Appendix K), and Quaker consensus (See Appendix L). Some strategies for what to do when consensus cannot be achieved will also be helpful (See Appendix M). Once the consultors have reached a consensus concerning which option or
combination of options they favor, they submit their recommendations to the appropriate decider(s) for prayerful consideration and decision.

At this time, if not at some earlier point, the consultative meeting is finished. Again, once the council or commission has become skillful and confident in the process of generating options, evaluating their relative merits, and developing high-consensus recommendations, it may not be necessary or desirable for the pastoral administrator(s) to be present for the entire process, though they may learn much by overhearing it that they might not learn by coming in near the end of the meeting and simply receiving the “bottom-line” fruits of the consultors’ labors. In any event, the meeting should end with a summary by the administrator(s) of the key things that they have "heard" at the meeting, both the evaluations and any recommendations attached to them. Such a summary gives the administrator(s) one last chance to test the accuracy of what they have been hearing and the consultors one last opportunity to know that they and those they represent have been heard or to be able to correct misperceptions.

At this point, the administrator(s) may also choose to give an indication of what they will be doing with the evaluations and recommendations and of when they expect to be able to report back to the consultors on what has been decided or done. Finally, of course, this is the time for the administrator(s) to give positive reinforcement to the
consultors for a job well done, thanking them for their contributions. Perhaps it is also a time for the consultors to express their appreciation of the administrator(s), openness to their input and the input of the parish community. Such expressions of mutual respect for complementary gifts and services need not become pro forma or artificial, but it serves, when genuine and spontaneous, as a symptomatic indicator of a Parish Service Organization and of a parish community with a healthy "climate." Conversely, a total or almost complete lack of such mutually expressed respect and affirmation of gifts and services is almost always symptomatic of a Parish Service Organization or parish community with a depressed or unhealthy "climate."

Since mutual appreciation of gifts and services is only one dimension of development, it is also appropriate at this time for the administrator(s) to challenge the consultors, when necessary, by indicating specific behavioral ways for consultors to improve their performance and give the administrator(s) what they are looking for in the consultative process and for the consultors to challenge the administrator(s) by calling them to accountability concerning what the administrator(s) are choosing to do with the evaluations and recommendations surfaced in the meetings.
PART THREE:

AFTER THE MEETING
The Moment of Decision: What, In All This, Is From the Lord?

After the consultative meeting, the administrator(s) must gather to prayerfully discern their decision(s) with respect to the evaluations and recommendations "fed in" by the consultors. The key questions to be answered here are these: "What, in all of these evaluations and recommendations that we are hearing from the community through the consultors, is from the Lord?" and "What does the Lord want for this parish community and therefore from this Parish Service Organization at this time in its journey of faith?" A suggested process for making such a prayerful discernment may be found in Appendix O.

During the moment of decision, it is important that the principle of subsidiarity be observed and that the decision be made at the lowest appropriate level within the Parish Service Organization. Administrators should not decide for program implementers what the program implementers can responsibly decide for themselves. It is crucial to make sure that all units within the Parish Service Organization that will be affected by the decision be included--at least by representation--in the discernment process at the moment of decision. Without such participation, affected units may have little or no "ownership" of the decision and little or no commitment to the implementation of the decision. Subsidiarity will often mean that the administrator(s) simply refer specific evaluations or recommendations to the leadership of the
affected service team(s) for problem solving, decision making, and action taking, usually with the requirement that the team leader(s) report back to the administrator(s) on decisions made and action taken. At other times, several affected service teams may need to make the discernment decision together, e.g., a high-consensus recommendation that the liturgy planning team and the social action team develop a program to design Sunday liturgies with social justice themes. At still other times, the decision to be made will affect an entire division of the Parish Service Organization (e.g., the religious education division), the entire Parish Service Organization, or even the entire community. Such decisions may be made by the administrator(s) alone in consultation with the affected service teams, or by the administrator(s) augmented by representatives of the affected service teams. The broader the participation in the discernment decision making process by the relevant affected units of the Parish Service Organization, the more ready and willing those units will be to commit their human and material resources to the implementation of the decision.

Some administrative decisions--e.g., expenditure of a significant amount of the parish's financial resources, or the decision to under- take a major parish renewal effort--require an unusually large commitment of human or material resources on the part not only of the Parish Service Organization but also of the parish community as a whole. Such decisions are so important to the life of the entire community and re-
quire such a broad base of support and commitment from the community that it is wise--or at least prudent--for the administrator(s) to include the consultors or even the community-at-large in the moment of decision itself. The vast majority of administrative decisions and the choice of specific means and strategies for implementing these, however, should be left to the administrator(s), service team leader(s), and program implementers involved. Of course, once decisions have been made and specific means and strategies chosen for implementing them, both the decisions made and the action taken are once again subject to the evaluations and recommendations of the community and of the consultors who represent the community's interests.

When the discernment is that evaluations are from the Lord, i.e., that they are an expression of the Spirit of Jesus moving in the community and there are no specific recommendations attached to these evaluations, the affected service team(s) of the Parish Service Organization may themselves develop alternatives or options for modifying and improving their programs and activities in order to better meet the pastoral needs of those that they exist to serve, or they may request either the consultors or an ad hoc group of the people serviced by their team(s) to do so, or both.

When the discernment is related to specific alternatives or options, i.e., to specific recommendations, whether from the team's members,
from the consultors, or from the team’s "clients," the questions posed in Appendix O may help in reaching an effective, efficient, and responsible pastoral decision. When such decisions are made, they should, of course, be reported back to the consultors so that they can monitor the community’s response to any changes in the Parish Service Organization or its programs that result from the decision(s). Such decisions should probably be reported back also to anyone else who participated in the generation of specific recommendations for the deciders to consider.

When the discernment is that evaluations are not from the Lord, or when the administrator(s), service team leader(s), or service team members cannot in good conscience adopt a high-consensus recommendation for good reasons after careful consideration and prayerful reflection, the appropriate administrator(s) must (a) report the decision back to the consultors, (b) set forth a clear rationale for the decision, and (c) show a willingness to continue the dialogue or to recycle the steps of the consultative process outlined above until it becomes clear to both the administrator(s) and the consultors that nothing further is to be gained in the way of an accommodation or a reconciliation or until a decision must be finalized by the administrator(s) or by the affected unit of the Parish Service Organization in order to avoid significant negative consequences, at which time, the decision is finalized and the administrator(s) should indicate to the consultors, when appropriate, any courses of appeal open to them. The basis of such
appeals should normally be a feeling or judgment on the part of the consultors that due process has not been provided as outlined above.

When administrators and program implementers cannot in good conscience accept high-consensus evaluations or adopt high-consensus recommendations tendered by the community through the consultors, it should usually be for one or more of the following reasons:

1. to do so would result in infidelity to the Gospel, e.g., a high-consensus recommendation to stop admitting to the parish school any children whose parents cannot pay the full tuition or a recommendation that the parish go on record as opposed to open housing practices in the neighborhood;

2. to do so would result in infidelity to Church tradition, teaching, or law, e.g., a high-consensus recommendation that the sign of peace at liturgies be discontinued or that there be no option provided for communal or face-to-face celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation;

3. to do so would be to depart from the agreed mission, goals, policy, or priorities of the Parish Service Organization, e.g., a high-consensus recommendation that the athletic program be given priority over the religious education program in scheduling the use of parish facilities; or
4. to do so would be to fly in the face of facts that the administrator(s) know to be true, e.g., a high-consensus recommendation to launch a school development program that goes against or deliberately overlooks an objective third-party statistical study which indicates that the school enrollment will be drastically reduced over the next five years.

When the administrator(s) tender a rationale for a decision that departs significantly from the high-consensus evaluations or recommendations of the consultors, the consultors should be given the opportunity to ask non-evaluative questions of clarification. The chairperson should then give a summary of the key points of the rationale in order to test the accuracy of what the consultors have been hearing and to give the administrator(s) the chance to know that they and those that they represent have been heard accurately or to be able to correct any misperceptions. The consultors must then decide whether to (a) let the matter stand, or (b) request that the consultative process be recycled with respect to this particular decision.

A period of time at the beginning or end of each council or commission meeting should be reserved for the administrator(s) to report back to the consultors concerning the decisions made and actions taken as a result of their earlier evaluations and recommendations.
Summary Overview of Do's and Don’ts:

The following may serve as a convenient ready reference to the major points made in this handbook with reference to the roles and responsibilities of all participants in the consultative process:

Administrators must...

...provide a clear focus on the consultors' task, i.e., on what the administrators want from the consultors.

...provide the consultors with the clear, accurate, current, specific information that they need to do what the administrators are asking them to do.

...show themselves open and responsive when the consultors initiate agenda items.

...exercise discretion in deciding which administrative decisions to share with the consultors.

...not only listen to the consultors' evaluations and recommendations but also prayerfully and carefully weigh and consider them and, whenever possible, actually adopt them in their decision making and action taking.

...when they cannot in good conscience adopt a high-consensus recommendation of the consultors after careful consideration and prayerful reflection, report their decision to the consultors, set forth a clear rationale for the decision, and show themselves willing to recycle the consultative process until it becomes apparent to both sides that nothing further in the way of an accommodation or reconciliation is to be gained or until a decision must be finalized if significant negative consequences are to be avoided.

...clearly accept accountability for the decisions that they make and the action that they take to implement their decisions.
Consultors must...

...insist upon a clear description of their task from the administrators when the administrators do not provide one.

...request the working information that they need if the administrators do not provide it.

...feel free to initiate the consultative process themselves as appropriate, urging the administrators to address a situation, make a decision, develop a plan, formulate a policy, or establish a priority and offering their support in the process.

...move away from an all-or-nothing perception of decision making power, accepting and exercising the calling power that is rightfully theirs in the context of a system where their input genuinely affects the outcome of significant decisions and yet others bear the final responsibility for the choices made.

...see every conversation with a community member as an opportunity to gather information that may be of use to the consultative process.

Administrators must not...

...attempt to exercise their administrative decision-making power apart from the wisdom of the community as represented by the consultors.

...set up consultative bodies and then ignore, disregard, or make light of their evaluations and recommendations.

...let their consultative bodies "flounder" without a sense of direction and purpose to assist them in structuring their task.

...regard the consultative process as "merely advisory."

...think of the consultative process as a way of keeping the consultors happy by letting them believe that their input is making a difference when it really is not.

...attempt to manipulate the consultative process so as to get the decision that they wanted all along anyway.

...adopt a defensive rather than a listening stance in consultative meetings.
...try to consult before making every decision.

...fail to adopt a high-consensus recommendation of the consultors without a good reason.

**Consultors must not...**

...lock horns with the administrators over who has power at the moment of decision, abandoning their evaluating and recommending functions and trying (a) to guarantee the administrators’ response to their wise counsel or calls to accountability, (b) to seize administrative power and run things themselves, refusing to support legitimate central role authority, or (c) to implement their own recommendations.

...give up too quickly on the fruits of their own discernments.

...become too dependent upon the administrators, always waiting for them to take the initiative.

...regard evaluation and recommendation as powerless functions.

...convict the consultative process of "manipulation" simply because the administrators fail to adopt their recommendations in every instance.
APPENDIX A:

NUMERICAL RANKING FORMULAS FOR PRIORITIZING AGENDA ITEMS:

1. A very simple scale may be used for prioritizing agenda items for a meeting as follows:

+3 - I feel that this item is very important and should be considered definitely at tonight’s meeting.

+2 - I feel that this item is quite important and should be considered soon but need not be considered at tonight's meeting necessarily.

+1 - I feel that this item is somewhat important but should probably be considered at some future time.

0 - I am unsure or undecided as to the importance of this item for our agenda, whether now or at some future time.

-1 - I feel that this item is not very important and, if considered at all, should probably be considered later.

-2 - I feel that this item is quite unimportant and definitely should not be considered at this meeting, and perhaps not at all.

-3 - I feel that this item is of no importance and should not be considered now or at any foreseeable future time.

Each participant may give the appropriate score to each numbered agenda item on a slip of paper. These may be collected by the chairperson or facilitator and tabulated and the results posted where all can see. Then a consensus decision may be made in light of the outcome, though not necessarily determined by it.

2. Agenda items may be eliminated by using a process of negative voting (See Appendix K).
APPENDIX B:

SAMPLE AGENDA WITH WORKING INFORMATION INCLUDED:

MEMO

TO: Members of the St. Elisabeth Parish Council

FROM: Fr. Richards, pastor

Mrs. Woods, chairperson

SUBJECT: Agenda for parish council meeting

The next monthly consultation meeting of the parish council of St. Elisabeth parish will begin promptly at 7:30 P.M. on Wednesday evening, September 7 in the church undercroft and will end by 10 P.M. at the latest.

At that time, we will be seeking the evaluations and recommendations of the community regarding the following agenda items:

1. THE MISSION STATEMENT OF THE NEW SOCIAL ACTION TEAM.

The statement was published in last week's bulletin. What is the community’s reaction? At this time, we are looking more for evaluations of the statement than for recommendations as to how it might be changed.

We would like to hear from all members on this. Mr. Brown will act as our recorder to list the reactions you have gathered or that you yourselves have on newsprint. The estimated time for this will be from 8 to 8:30 P.M. The final decision maker is Mr. McBride, leader of the Social Action Team. A copy of the mission statement is attached for the benefit of those who no longer have last week's bulletin.

2. THE PARISH RENEWAL PROGRAM.

Last month we looked at the community’s responses to the parish renewal program. The responses from those who have participated in the program seem to differ significantly from the responses of those who have not participated. What is behind this? We are asking you to analyze the input recorded at last month's meeting, so please bring your copy of the transcribed newsprint from last month's meeting. To help you think about this before the meeting, we pose the following questions:
A. What strengths and weaknesses in the renewal program are suggested by these evaluations?

B. What forces are helping or blocking the achievement of the program’s goals?

C. What accounts for the difference in the evaluations between those who have participated in the program and those who have not?

Mrs. Woods will facilitate this part of the meeting. The estimated time for this analysis is from 8:30 to 9 P.M. The final decision maker for this issue is Fr. Richards. A copy of the goals of the parish renewal program is attached. Those who need copies of the transcribed newsprint from last month may pick them up at the rectory.

3. POSSIBLE CHANGE IN THE PARISH ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE. As noted at last month’s meeting, the missions, goals, and programs of the Altar Rosary Society and the Liturgy Planning Team seem to overlap in some significant ways. The consensus evaluation was that this overlapping constitutes a needless duplication of effort among our service teams. What modifications in the structure of our Parish Service Organization do you suggest? Or is there another solution to this problem besides adjusting the structure? Please bring your copy of the parish organizational diagram and be ready to brainstorm solutions. Ms. Chang will be the facilitator for this part of the meeting, and the final decision maker is Fr. Richards. The time we have set aside for brainstorming is 9:15 to 9:45 P.M.

The following, then, is an overview of the meeting:

7:30 -7:45 Prayer (Ms. Donnelly)
7:45 -8:00 Finalize the agenda (Mrs. Woods)
8:00 -8:30 Social Action Mission Statement: Evaluation
8:30 -9:00 Parish Renewal Program: Analysis
9:00 -9:15 Break (Refreshments: Sr. Judy)
9:15 -9:45 Structural Change: Recommendations
9:45 -10:00 Pastor's Report. Fr. Richards will report back to the council what has been happening with the evaluations and recommendations concerning the shortage of volunteers to teach C.C.D. classes this coming Fall.
APPENDIX C:

SAMPLE AGENDA FOR THE YEAR:

MEMO

TO: Members of the St. Elisabeth Worship Commission

FROM: Fr. Bryant, Associate Pastor Mr. Billings, Chairperson

SUBJECT: Topics for consultation at this year's meetings

The evaluations and recommendations of the Worship Commission will be focused upon the following areas within the parish worship program over the months ahead. We are formulating this schedule at this time in order to give you plenty of time to gather responses from the community in advance for each of these areas. Other items may be added to specific monthly meeting agendas on an ad hoc basis as needed.

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<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>Eucharistic ministry</td>
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<td>October</td>
<td>Lectoring</td>
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<td>November</td>
<td>Ministries of hospitality: ushering, hosting, greeting</td>
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<td>December</td>
<td>Servers</td>
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<td>Liturgical music</td>
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<td>February</td>
<td>Liturgical dance</td>
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<td>March</td>
<td>Liturgical planning</td>
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<td>April</td>
<td>Liturgical decoration</td>
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<td>May</td>
<td>Worship space</td>
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<td>June</td>
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APPENDIX D:

QUESTIONS THAT GENERATE SPECIFIC AGENDA ITEMS FOR CONSULTATIVE MEETINGS, GROUPED IN TEN CATEGORIES:

Category 1: The People to be Served

Whom do our existing programs serve?

Are those the people that the Lord is calling us to serve?

Are there other people that the Lord is calling us to serve at this time? Is the number of people that we are trying to serve realistic, given the limitations of human and material resources available to us?

Are proposed parish programs being adopted or rejected on the basis of a clear and shared understanding of whom we exist to serve?

To what extent are the people we are called to serve clearly identifiable to us at the present time?

Do we have a common and clearly focused understanding of exactly who they are? Can we name them?

Are we serving some people that we really should not be serving at this time?

Is there an organizational chart showing clearly who serves whom?

Category 2: The Needs to be Serviced

What needs do our existing programs serve?

Are those the authentic pastoral needs of the people we serve? Are those the needs that the Lord is calling us to serve?

Are there other needs that the Lord is calling us to serve at this time? Is the number of needs that we are trying to service realistic, given the limitations of human and material resources available to us?

Are proposed parish programs being adopted or rejected on the basis of whether or not they are addressed to authentic pastoral needs?
To what extent are we aware of the needs that our programs are serving?

Are we servicing some "needs" that are really not authentic needs and that we should not be servicing?

Are our current programs addressing what Jesus needs, what the Church needs, what history needs, what the Reign of God needs, or only what we want?

What do the gospels tell us we need that our current programs are not providing?

How sensitive are we to the needs and wants of those we have chosen to serve?

How directly are we channeling our resources to meet the authentic pastoral needs of those we have chosen to serve, and how much of our resources are being diverted to meeting other "needs" and wants?

Do we see assessment of the authentic pastoral needs of those we have chosen to serve and of the ways in which they are and are not being met as an important function?

Do we have current and accurate information about the needs and wants of those we have chosen to serve?

Category 3: Mission and Goals

What is our mission to the authentic pastoral needs of the people the Lord is calling us to serve right now?

What conditions do we want to create in our parish and in our community that will meet the needs of the people the Lord is calling us to serve?

Do we have a written statement of our mission with which all members are familiar?

What does our expenditure or allocation of human and material resources tell us about what our mission actually is right now (regardless of what we may say it is or what we may have on paper)?

What promises does the Lord want us to make to the people we have chosen to serve?
Is the general direction we are taking right now helping or hurting the growth of the Reign of God in our midst?

Is our mission in keeping with gospel values?

Is it "good news" to those we are called to serve?

Is it an adequate expression of the mission of Jesus to the modern world?

What areas of mission are we currently overlooking or ignoring (e.g., service to the poor or the unemployed)?

What areas of mission are we claiming for ourselves (e.g., in our mission statement) but we are not performing on our promises in those areas?

To what extent do we know in an explicit way exactly what we are about and what we are not about?

Is our mission clearly identifiable to us?

If asked what our mission is, do we all say the same thing, and can we say it without hesitation?

How closely is our mission related to the authentic pastoral needs of those we are called to serve? (For a truthful answer, look at how the human and material resources are being spent.)

Has our mission changed to accommodate changes in the people we have been called to serve or in their needs?

Do we adopt or reject proposed programs on the basis of whether or not they will make a contribution to our mission?

What three-to-five-year goals are we pursuing right now?

What three-to-five-year goals does the Lord want us to pursue at this time?

What does our expenditure or allocation of human and material resources tell us about what our goals actually are right now?

Are our goals behavioral, realistic, worthwhile, measurable, and are they adequate translations of our mission to meet the authentic pastoral needs of those we are called to serve?

How much "ownership" of and excitement about our mission and goals is there in the community? Within the Parish Service Organization itself?
Category 4: Objectives and Programs

What are the objectives of our current programs? Do existing programs have written objectives?

Do others know about our program objectives?

Are our objectives stated in advance of running our programs?

Do the objectives of our existing programs "fit" the goals that they are designed to achieve?

Are our existing programs designed step by step to meet their objectives before launching the programs?

Are existing programs achieving their stated objectives?

Are current programs ministering to the needs that they were designed to service?

Are they doing so efficiently, effectively, and responsibly?

Are we running programs that we should no longer be running (i.e., because they are not serving the authentic pastoral needs of the people we are called to serve, or are not in keeping with our mission and goals or with the mission and ministry of Jesus, etc.)?

Are there any new programs that we should be considering?

Are there ways in which the efficiency or effectiveness of our programs might be improved without compromising the value base supporting Christian ministry?

Are we managing to avoid the "activity trap" of piling up programs without too much prior attention to needs assessment and mission and goal setting?

How enthusiastically are the people we are called to serve responding to our current programs?

Are our existing programs feeding the spirit of our people and giving them life and life more abundantly?

Are existing programs designed so that no step in the program is too complicated or difficult in itself?

Are existing programs designed so that the connection of each step in the program to the next step is logical and clear?
Is there an existing program for the achievement of each of our goals?

Are we managing to avoid adopting or implementing programs that look good in themselves but are not organically related to our mission and goals or to the authentic pastoral needs of the people we are called to serve?

**Category 5: Policy**

What values underlie our administrative decisions? Are there any written statements of parish policy? Are existing policies or policy statements in keeping with the values expressed in the gospels and in our Christian tradition?

Is existing parish policy uniform and consistent, or are some of us operating out of policies that are based on values contradicted by others who are operating out of different policies?

Do existing policies provide sufficient room for the administrator to exercise his or her own discretion in applying the policy to reach a decision?

Are the decisions of our administrators in keeping with parish policy, or are the administrators doing their own thing without regard to existing policy?

Are all of our parish administrators aware of what our policies are?

When the administrators make decisions that are contrary to policy, how can they be held accountable?

**Category 6: Priorities**

What are the actual priorities among the people we serve, the needs we service, our goals, objectives, and programs as revealed by the way in which human and material resources are expended?

Are these the priorities that the Lord is calling us to have at this time?

What other priorities might we have?

Given our limited resources, which people and which of their needs should be served first, second, third?
Given these priorities, which areas of our mission and which goals, objectives, and programs should take priority in the allocation of those resources?

**Category 7: Human and Material Resources**

Are our current programs using human and material resources efficiently, effectively, and responsibly?

What additional human and material resources do we need, and how will they be provided?

How are our human and material resources currently being provided? Is that the way in which the Lord wants them to be provided? How else might they be provided?

Are our material resources provided in a manner that is in keeping with gospel values?

Are we drawing the very best volunteers available into our service programs?

Are our current programs making the best use of the time, energy, and talent of our volunteers?

Do our volunteers have a real opportunity to improve the working knowledge and skills they need for their service to the parish?

Do we have the equipment, supplies, and facilities we need to do our current programs with at least minimum standards of effectiveness?

Are the equipment and supplies we need to do our current programs with at least minimum standards of effectiveness there when we need them?

Can we get the things we need to do our programs when these things are supplied by people or groups outside our own group?

Do we have the number of volunteers we need to run our existing programs?

Do our programs make full use of the experience, training, and expertise of our volunteers?

Are people from outside hired or appointed only when the necessary qualifications and skills for a position cannot be found among our present volunteers?
Do new volunteers receive adequate preparation, orientation, and training for their roles?

Do we have reasonable expectations about what our volunteers can handle given their current levels of knowledge, skills, and experience?

Do we have reasonable expectations about what our volunteers can handle, given their current levels of knowledge, skills, and experience?

Are we letting our volunteers do the things that they can do best?

Are our volunteers sufficiently motivated to grow by learning new skills, having new experiences, etc.?

Do volunteers feel competent to do what they are being asked to do?

Do our volunteers have the knowledge, skills, and experience to be able to do more good than harm?

Why do volunteers quit or withdraw their commitments and their service?

Are people given tasks to perform on the basis of their ability and willingness to perform effectively, efficiently, and responsibly, or on some other basis?

Do we carefully identify, recognize, encourage, and develop our volunteers, or is our care and feeding of volunteers haphazard or negligible?

Are we identifying and developing the talents of many people for parish volunteer service, or are we becoming over-reliant upon the talents of a few?

**Category 8: Organizational Structure and Role Relationships**

What kinds of service teams do we need in order to pursue our mission and goals efficiently, effectively, and responsibly?

Do our service teams plan together and coordinate their efforts when possible or desirable?

Is the way in which we are organized flexible in adapting to existing needs and goals?
Is the manner in which our mission and goals are divided up among service teams a logical one?

Is this division effective and efficient in helping us to achieve our mission and goals?

Does the way we organize ourselves flow out of our mission and goals or vice versa?

Does our structure clearly exist to get after our mission and goals, or does it tend to exist as an end in itself?

Have we managed to avoid needless duplication of effort among our service teams (i.e., service teams with much the same mission, goals, or programs)?

Are relationships within and between our service teams friendly and life-giving as well as productive and contributory to achievement of our mission and goals?

Are there non-creative or harmful conflicts within or between our service teams that divert time, energy, and talent from our mission to meet the needs of those we are called to serve?

How well do those within service teams as well as entire service teams know exactly how their service fits into the mission and ministry of the whole Parish Service Organization?

How much negative conflict is there about who is supposed to be doing what?

How clear are individuals and service teams about exactly what their authority, responsibility, and accountability are?

Do individuals and groups freely share with one another the information needed to be about the mission and goals, or do they withhold essential information in a spirit of negative competition?

Does information move freely within the Parish Service Organization both vertically and horizontally?

Do individuals and groups feel comfortable sharing all essential information, including the "bad news," or do they protect themselves by sharing only the good news?

Do all service teams solicit ongoing evaluative feedback (i.e., recognition and reinforcement of what is going well and recognition and correction of what is not going well)?
Do we have adequate ways of binding ourselves together an one Parish Service Organization, or do we exist as separate and competing kingdoms?

Are individuals and teams helpful to one another when assistance is requested or required?

**Category 9: Processes and Procedures**

Do we have a system of performance appraisal that is helpful to us in providing us with useful information about how each individual or team is doing in its chosen service?

When people have ideas about better ways of doing things, what happens to these ideas?

Are our planning and control processes helpful to our mission and ministry?

Are we generally quick or slow to use improved service methods?

By what process are differences and disagreements among us handled?

Is that the way in which the Lord is calling us to handle our differences and disagreements?

By what process are mission, goals, and objectives set? By what process are programs designed in service teams?

When decisions are being made, are the persons to be affected by the decision asked for their input?

By what process are decisions made?

Are these processes effective, efficient, and responsible? What other processes might be used?

Are we hemmed in by longstanding rules and regulations that no one seems to recall the explanation for?

How much red tape do we have to go through to get things done?

By what process do team leaders review their followers' performance?

How clear and reasonable are the administrators' explanations concerning why things are done as they are?
Does the consultative process appear to be having a positive effect upon the quality of administrative decision making and action taking?

Are administrators truly open to the input of consultors?

Are administrators responsive to the initiatives of consultors in bringing certain matters to their attention?

Are administrators and consultors involved in a creative partnership, or in a contest of wills?

Are our processes open to the Lord in a spirit of prayerful discernment? How could our meeting be run more effectively and efficiently?

**Category 10: The Quality of Life within the Parish Service Organization**

Do we see positive reinforcement as more effective than negative control?

Is there a climate of trust, or is there cautiousness, suspicion, and self-protectiveness among us?

Is the Christian use of human beings a value in the way we carry out our programs and strive to achieve our mission and goals?

Is public airing of opinions and theories welcome and encouraged among us?

Are both positive and negative expressions of emotion accepted as part of full human living in Christ and given a place in our life?

Is our overall effectiveness on the increase or decrease?

Is there strong internal commitment to the Parish Service Organization, its mission and goals on the part of its members?

Is collaboration valued above competition or vice versa?

Do we challenge members to grow and provide them with the means to do so? Is this generally a good organization within which to serve?

Are the needs of those we are called to serve met at the expense of the needs of those who serve, or vice versa?

Do we provide both support and challenge for those who serve and those who are served?
How well are individuals and teams able to respond to unusual service demands placed upon them?

Is there recognition for service rendered? How open are we to the prospect of change?

Are we following Jesus more and more or less and less?

Are we coming to know God more and more or less and less?

Are we coming to know ourselves more and more or less and less?

Are we coming closer and closer to a better way of living than the world’s way or are we getting absorbed by the world’s way?

Are we experiencing more and more call to conversion, community, and service and more and more response to these callings, or less and less call and response?

Are we experiencing more and more giftedness even in our littleness and brokenness, or less and less?

Are we experiencing more and more cause for celebration of the life we share in Jesus or less and less?

Are we stepping out in faith and taking more and more risks, or are we turning inward and becoming more and more self-protective?

Are we washing the feet of our brothers and sisters--especially the poor and the powerless--or are we looking out more for our own needs and wants?

*N.B.: These ten categories could be set as a permanent, long-term, regular agenda for ten months of council meetings.*
APPENDIX E

SENSING MEETINGS: THREE DESIGNS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose of Sensing Meetings:</th>
<th>Generate and clarify evaluations and recommendations.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elements of Sensing Meetings:</td>
<td>Participants sharing evaluations and recommendations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Facilitator(s) recording shared evaluations and recommendations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Facilitator(s) setting time limits and establishing ground rules (see below).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Participants identifying situations that need attention by administrators.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Participants:**
Representative sample of the parish community, including especially new parishioners, women, minority groups.

**Leader:**
A council or commission chairperson who has been coached by a group process facilitator.

**Facilitator's Role:**
Making sure that the leader listens, records data accurately, and is non-defensive.

**Agenda:**
Predetermined list of topics.

**Techniques:**
Writing, interviewing, group discussion.

**Dangers:**
Participants use the occasion to gripe, blame, grind a personal axe, accuse. There is a lack of immediate results.

**Ground rules:**
1. Speak for yourself.
2. Be specific.
3. Do not argue.
4. Build upon the ideas of others.
DESIGN A: PARISH STAGNATION AND RENEWAL

1. The leader tells the participants what sector of the Parish Service Organization or its activity they are being requested to focus upon (e.g., liturgical music, ministry to the divorced and separated, adult education in the faith, the Parish Service Organization as a whole, the congregation, the community, etc.)

2. Each participant spends time writing personal responses to the following questions posed by the leader:

   A. What is stagnating or passing away with regard to the focus selected above?

   B. What is so stagnant or so deteriorated that it's almost late if not certainly too late to bring it back?

   C. What is dead and buried or seemingly gone forever?

   D. What is just beginning to show some signs of life with regard to the focus selected above?

   E. What is showing lots of signs of new life but has not yet reached its full potential?

   F. What is most fully renewed and alive in our midst with respect to the selected focus?

Responses may vary in length from one or two words to a brief phrase, but they should be kept brief and to the point. There should be one response per person per question.

Participants indicate after each response how they feel about the response (e.g., long homilies are passing away and I'm delighted, or greeting people before Mass is seemingly gone forever and it saddens me).

Participants are invited to use magic markers to plot their responses on a huge graphic posted on the wall as follows:
5. During a break, participants are allowed to view the responses of others clustered about the six points along the curve.

6. After the break, the group is invited to take some quiet reflection time and to complete the statement: “What I seem to hear the Lord saying to us in all this is...” or "What all this tells me is that..."

7. Participants break up into groups of four. In round-robin fashion they share their statements and try to make a composite statement.

8. The composite statements of groups are posted, and the leader and/or facilitator(s) ask questions of clarification and try to clarify a consensus position for the group as a whole. If that is impossible, they may strive to consolidate consensus positions for the various factions or camps that are present and indicate whether these are majority or minority positions.

9. The leader and facilitator(s) report out the results to the consultors, who formulate their evaluations and recommendations for the administrators.

**DESIGN B: THE ONCE AND FUTURE PARISH**

1. The leader tells the participants what sector of the parish to focus upon as in A1 above.

2. Each participant spends time writing personal responses to the following questions posed by the leader:
A. What facts or forces do you think will be having the greatest effect upon our __________ (e.g., parish community, worship, service ministry, school, etc.) in the next three-to-five years?

B. What things or events or behaviors do you think will be phasing out in our __________ in the next three-to-five years?

C. What facts or forces do you think might have a significant effect on our __________ that are still over five years off?

3. Participants meet in groups of seven to ten and newsprint common responses to the three questions.

4. Group newsprints are posted and during a break, participants are invited to get in touch with how other groups have responded.

5. Proceed as from #6 in the Stagnation and Renewal design above.

**DESIGN C: FORCE-FIELD ANALYSIS**

1. The leader or facilitator presents a focus in the form of a specific problem or suspected problem (e.g., the D.R.E. is unable to get volunteers to teach in the school).

2. The leader or facilitator indicates the aspect of the problem where change is desired (choose only one aspect at a time), e.g., it would be desirable if parishioners would willingly come forward to serve as C.C.D. teachers.

3. The leader or facilitator explains that the present status of the problem situation represents a temporary balance of opposing forces and asks participants to respond to the following questions:

A. What forces do you see operating in this situation that are driving toward realization of the desired change? (e.g., What forces do you see that might motivate parishioners to volunteer as C.C.D. teachers?)

B. What forces do you see operating in this situation that are restraining the desired change from occurring? (e.g., What forces do you see that might be blocking people from coming forward to volunteer as C.C.D. teachers?)
4. Participants get together in groups of four and share their driving and restraining forces, newsprinting the most common responses in each category.

5. During the break, these are further consolidated by facilitators from the group newsprints into ten most commonly mentioned driving forces and ten most commonly mentioned restraining forces.

6. After the break, participants rank each of the ten driving and restraining forces using the following rating scale:

   1 - has almost nothing to do with the drive toward or restraining change in the problem.

   2 - has relatively little to do with the drive toward or restraining change in the problem.

   3 - is of moderate importance in the drive toward or restraining change in the problem.

   4 - is an important factor in the drive toward or restraining change in the problem.

   5 - is a major factor in the drive toward or restraining change in the problem.

7. Points may be totaled and posted for each driving and restraining force, showing a group ranking of the importance of each force to the problem.

8. Participants may break into groups of three or four, assigned one of the high-point-value restraining forces and asked to outline a strategy for reducing the potency of that restraining force. (More than one group might be given the same restraining force to work on.)
APPENDIX F:

RANDOM SAMPLING

In the context of sampling or polling the opinion of the parish community, the term "random" does not have its ordinary dictionary meaning but designates a selection process based upon a definite system where everyone within the population from which the sample is to be selected has an equal chance of being chosen.

One of the simplest procedures for selection of a random sample is to set up file cards for every individual in the population from which the sample is to be chosen, shuffle the cards to prevent "alphabet bias," and then select every _th card (the number of individuals in the population divided by the number of people desired for the sample).

For further information on determining sample size and on random selection with specific applications to parish, see Chapters 5 and 6 of Leon McKenzie’s excellent book Decision Making in Your Parish: Effective Ways to Consult the Local Church (West Mystic, Ct.: Twenty-third Publications, 1980).
APPENDIX G:

BRAINSTORMING

Purpose: To generate an extensive number of ideas, options, alternatives or solutions to a problem by suspending criticism and evaluation.

Groundrules: 1. There is to be no criticism during the brainstorming.

Nobody says –

"No"

"That won't work"

"That's a dumb idea"

"That will cost too much" "That's been tried"

"That's a terrific idea"

Etc.

2. There is to be no pausing for seeking or giving explanation or clarification during the brainstorming.

3. Keep moving as rapidly and possible and generate as many alternatives, options, solutions as possible during the allotted time for the brainstorming.

4. Far-fetched ideas are encouraged because they may trigger more practical ideas.

5. Building and expanding on the ideas of participants who have already suggested ideas is encouraged.
APPENDIX H:

CHECKERBOARD MATRIX

**Purpose:** To evaluate the relative merits of alternatives or options.

**Process:**

1. The brainstormed alternatives or options are set aside while the group develops a list of evaluation criteria by coming up with high-consensus answers to the question: What criteria must be met by a good alternative or option?

2. A grid is constructed with the alternatives listed along the left side of the grid and the evaluation criteria listed along the top.

3. Participants work through the boxes of the grid indicating with a yes, no, or maybe (?) whether each alternative meets each criterion.

4. The preferred option will be the one meeting most of the criteria.

A sample grid is reproduced on the following page. The alternative means for coming up with a mission statement for the Parish Service Organization were brainstormed first. These are listed down the left side of the grid. Then they were put aside, and the group developed the evaluation criteria listed across the top of the grid. Finally, the group worked through the grid, indicating whether or not each alternative met each criterion. The fifth alternative, the one circled in the grid met more of the criteria than any other alternative. It was therefore clearly preferable. The fourth and seventh alternatives also show a larger number of yes's than no's or maybe's, but since the evaluation criteria are listed in the order of priority, the fourth alternative is probably preferable to the seventh, since the yes's are farther to the left (the higher priority criteria).
The mission statement must directly and clearly address the authentic top-priority needs of our parishioners.

The mission must be unique to our parish.

The congregation must feel that it has had significant input to the process of formulating a mission statement.

The staff must have ownership of the process as well as the finished product.

The self-perceived wants of our parishioners must be addressed to the greatest possible extent consistent with their real spiritual welfare.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Staff will write a mission statement and announce it to the parish.</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Pastor will write a mission statement, run it by the staff, and then announce it to the parish.</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We will use “The Parish: A People, A Mission, A Structure” four our parish mission statement.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The staff will consult with the council and the congregation in discerning needs, prioritizing them, and developing a mission statement.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The staff will hire a consultant to develop a mission statement.</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The staff will examine the survey data to see what parishioners want and then write a statement promising to do it.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N.B.: The suggested option is marked in red.
APPENDIX I:

CONSENSUS

**Definition:** A consensus decision is a decision that everyone involved can "live with." It is a decision that does not compromise any strong convictions or needs of those involved. It is not necessarily a unanimous decision. A given participant may think or feel that it's not the very best decision possible, but s/he can accept it without feeling that s/he is losing anything really important.

**Benefit:** Consensus decisions enable everyone involved to feel that they have had their positions incorporated at least to some extent in the decision.

**Prerequisites:**
- Time to develop the consensus.
- Flexibility
- Maturity
- Trust
- Openness

A backup plan for making the decision in case consensus cannot be reached in the allotted time.
APPENDIX J:

PREFERENTIAL RANKING

Any number of numerical formulas are available for prioritizing or otherwise ranking items in a list of options or alternatives. One of these is already cited above in Appendix A for the purpose of prioritizing agenda items but with modifications can obviously be made to suit other purposes.

The benefit of the preferential ranking formula given below is that it tends to provide a wider numerical spread between the rankings of the alternatives, making the emerging consensus a little clearer.

The formula is \( n \cdot (n - 1)/2 \) where \( n \) represents the number of alternatives to be ranked. If there are ten alternatives, for example, it would be ten times nine (\( n - 1 \)) divided by two or 45. The highest ranking item would then be assigned 45 points, the second ranking item 45-1 or 44 points, the third 42-2 or 40 points continuing to subtract one more from each previous score until the last option, which should get 0 points if the system is being used correctly. A complete table of the values for the example appears on the next page.
**PREFERENTIAL BALLOT**

**Ranking Formula:** $n (n-1)/2 = 10 (10-1)/2 = 10 (9)/2 = 90/2 = 45$

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>44 (45-2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3&lt;sup&gt;rd&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>42 (45-2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>39 (45-3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>35 (39-4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>30 (35-5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>24 (30-6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>17 (24-7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>9 (17-8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>0 (9-9)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX K:

NEGATIVE VOTING

**Purpose:** To eliminate alternatives from a list by voting against those the participants want to eliminate.

**Prerequisite:** Best to use with seven or more alternatives.

**Process:**

*With 7 alternatives:*

- Round one: Three votes eliminate three alternatives.
- Round two: Two votes eliminate two alternatives.

*With 10 alternatives:*

- Round one: Four votes eliminate four alternatives.
- Round two: Four votes eliminate four alternatives.

*With 13 alternatives:*

- Round one: Six votes eliminate six alternatives.
- Round two: Five votes eliminate five alternatives.

In each round the number of options with the most negative votes corresponding to the number of negative votes each person has been allowed is eliminated.

When you get down to two alternatives, switch to positive voting. If the vote is close (5-7, 6-5, 8-4) it is probably best to declare "No Decision" since the representativeness of the decision is in question. If the vote is close but still not unanimous (10-2, 11-1, 6-1) ratify the decision but check with the dissenters to test their willingness to "own" it.

If the final two alternatives differ only in minor ways, the chairperson may observe this to the group and ask if they want to ratify the decision and delegate the working out of the details to the chairperson.
APPENDIX L:

QUAKER CONSENSUS

If, after a preferential ranking of alternatives, one alternative is clearly far more acceptable than any others, the chairperson (or any member of the group) may suggest that a decision has already been reached and ask for unanimous affirmation. If all show by some sign that they can live with the ranking alternative, the decision may be announced.

If the two leading alternatives are very close or similar or are not mutually exclusive, the chairperson (or any member of the group) may suggest a combination of the two alternatives and call for unanimous affirmation of the decision, as described above.

If agreement cannot be reached, the group can revert to negative voting or (where there are two alternatives remaining) positive voting.
APPENDIX M:

WHAT TO DO WHEN CONSENSUS CANNOT BE ACHIEVED

1. Hold a brief discussion period to see if anyone can think of a way to resolve the conflicting alternatives. (This must not be prolonged or allowed to degenerate into an argument.)

2. Develop additional alternatives and continue the process from that point after a short break if the group is willing and there is sufficient time.

3. Go to an alternative or "back-up" style of decision making.

4. Simply pass the division of opinion on to the administrators, indicating the percentage of support or the specific number of consultors supporting each conflicting alternative.
APPENDIX N:

SAMPLE QUESTIONS FOR STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

Below are listed questions for each of five levels of evaluation of a program. Beneath each generic question is an example of how that generic question might be adapted to a specific program, in this case, a youth retreat program:

First Level: Monitoring Program Activities

1. Are ministerial or pastoral service obligations being met?
   --Did you attend the recent youth retreat weekend?

2. Is ministerial activity taking place where and when it should?
   --Was the retreat held at the school building as planned? Did the sessions start and end on time?

3. Are staff members and parish service volunteers ministering where and when they should?
   --Was Fr. Brown (the youth moderator) there? Was the retreat team present to you on the weekend? Were they available or hard to find and be with?

4. Is the program administratively sound?
   --How were the meals, the sleeping arrangements?

5. Are ministerial tasks being carried out efficiently?
   --Was there enough time for everyone to meet with a staff member one-on-one as planned during the weekend?

6. Are staff and volunteers adequately trained for their roles?
   --How do you feel about the team’s qualifications to lead a weekend like yours?

Second Level: Assessing Program Activities

1. What is done to whom? What activities are taking place?
   --What happened on the weekend? Describe it to me.

2. Who is the target of the activity (numbers and types of people with what problems/needs, from what areas, etc.)
   --Who was on the weekend? What was the proportion of boys to girls, of high school to college students, of African Americans to whites?
3. How well is the activity implemented?
   --Did the weekend perform on its promises? Did the team do what they said they would do? Did everything planned go off as promised?

4. How could it be done more efficiently?
   --Do you have any ideas for how the weekend might make better use of the time, facilities, and team that are available?

5. Were those to be served satisfied?
   --What did you think of the weekend? How did you like it? Name three things you liked best. Three things you liked least.

6. Does the program have a favorable image?
   --What are the kids saying about the retreat? What about the kids who didn't go? What do they say?

**Third Level: Enumerating Outcomes**

1. What is the result of the activities described in the Second Level?
   --What effect has the retreat weekend had on you? 2. Should different activities be substituted?
   --What would have made the weekend a more satisfying experience for you?

3. Have the program objectives been achieved?
   --One hope the team has was that this weekend would effect your prayer life. Has it? And if so, how?

4. What happened to the target population? How is it different from before?
   --What changes do you see in yourself or have others told you about or do you see in other weekend participants since the retreat experience?

5. Have unanticipated outcomes also occurred and are they desirable?
   --Were you surprised by anything that happened on the weekend? Is it a pleasant surprise or an unpleasant one?

6. What activities might be repeated to ensure their future occurrence?
   --What parts of your retreat experience would you want to make sure happen for all the kids who make the weekend?
**Fourth Level: Measuring Effectiveness**

1. What would have happened to participants in the absence of the program?
   --What difference do you think it would make around here if we didn't offer a youth retreat?

2. What are all the factors that may have contributed to the changes documented at the Third Level?
   --Tell me more about your improved relationship with your grandmother since the weekend. Are there any other factors that might be causing that relationship to improve right now besides the retreat?

**Fifth Level: Assessing Impact of the Program on the Problem**

1. Has the problem been reduced as a result of the program? -- Earlier this year, the kids were complaining that the parish doesn't offer anything for them. Do you think the retreat program has any effect on that situation?

2. What new knowledge has been generated for the parish community about the problem or ways to solve the problem?
   --Has your participation in the youth retreat changed your perception of the parish at all? How do you see it now?
The Consultative Process in Action

APPENDIX O:

DISCERNMENT

*Conditioning factors:*

1. Discernment will be most natural and effective when the deciders share a consistent prayer time.

2. Discernment will be most effective where there is an honest search for God’s will.

3. Discernment will work when the choice to be made is between two or more goods. Any alternatives that would be obviously evil or sinful should be eliminated first.

4. Discernment will work when deciders have prayed earnestly for freedom and openness and have waited until this comes, i.e., when they are truly indifferent and ready to go either way.

*Process suggestions:*

1. Deciders ask themselves individually and then share their answers collectively: "On our deathbeds or on the Day of Judgment, which of these alternatives would we want to have adopted, supported, or spoken up for?"

2. If the sharing on this question is not quickly productive of an answer, take the alternatives one at a time. For each alternative, list the pro's and con's (or post these if they have already been generated by the consultors).

3. For each alternative, pray together, then go off alone and prayerfully reflect over the pro's. Then come back and share together what you have heard: "This is what I heard..."

4. Do the same for the con's for each alternative.

5. Use the questions on the next page to form the evaluation criteria for a checkerboard matrix (See Appendix H) and prayerfully work through the boxes of the matrix.

6. Select an alternative and sit with it in prayer for a few days to see if it brings you peace. If it does, report the decision back to the deciders. If it doesn't select another alternative or, if time permits, postpone the decision.
**Questions to be Used in Making a Discernment Decision:**

In the context of our universal mission to be Church, and the values assumed therein...

1. Which alternative or combination of alternatives will meet the authentic pastoral needs of our parish community most efficiently, effectively, and responsibly?

2. What alternative or combination of alternatives will be most in keeping with gospel values? (What are the gospel values involved, and how might they best be implemented?)

3. Which alternative or combination of alternatives will bring us closest to the Reign of God in our midst?

4. Which alternative or combination of alternatives will give the kind of collective witness to the world around us that we are called to give?

5. Which alternative or combination of alternatives is most feasible, given our limited human and material resources and the priority assigned to this program, activity, or area of mission?

6. Which alternative or combination of alternatives will provide what Jesus needs, what the Church needs, what history needs, and not just what we want or will be comfortable with?

The alternative or combination of alternatives that conforms most clearly to this set of criteria may be the best pastoral decision. At least it should be a strong, sound alternative.