

The History of Congregational Development in the Episcopal Church

Please suggest additional information that will help fill out this history.

The first section offers an overview of the field, then the history. That's followed by a reflection on the current state of the field.

There are three broad streams of practice to the history.

1. Pastoral and ascetical theology – This thread is seen in the work of Martin Thornton, especially in *Pastoral Theology: A Reorientation* and K.E. Kirk in *The Vision of God: The Christian Doctrine of the Summum Bonum*.

Pastoral or practical theology reflects on and informs the pastoral oversight and functional tasks of the Christian community, especially the parish church. The part of the field that most directly connects with congregational development is the theological work to understand the contemporary society and human need, and from that to shape parish communities in a manner that will effectively address that society and those needs. The concern is the relationship between the parish system and its context or external environment. What kind of oversight, structure, and spiritual life do we need in the parish church to effectively form Christians, in our tradition, for this age?

Ascetical theology is especially about spiritual practice. It is grounded in an understanding of the church's spiritual teachings as seen in Scriptures and the writings of the early church. It is concerned with the on-going task of living the Christian life and reflecting upon it. What kind of person and human community do we want to form? How might the parish contribute to that task? What are the practices that will best do that in our time? What are the "spiritual life maps" that offer us an integrated and systemic approach?

2. Behavioral science, specifically Organization Development – This was what merged out of the Episcopal Church's early involvement in T-group and other lab training and the emerging field of organization development. Project Test Pattern (PTP) which later became Alban Institute picked it up. Mid Atlantic Training Committee offered training in this approach for thousands of clergy and lay leaders. James Anderson wrote *To Come Alive: Revitalizing the Local Church* in 1973 and *The Management of Ministry: Leadership, Purpose, Structure and Community* in 1978. Also in 1978 Bruce Reed wrote *The Dynamics of Religion: Process and Movement in Christian Churches*¹ in which he applies social psychology to religious behavior and the church's life.

There were cautions. In 1973 Geddes Hanson, of Princeton Theological Seminary, wrote an article in *Pastoral Psychology* on "Overdosing on Organization Development: Towards Criticalness in Pastoral Administration." It was largely positive about the usefulness of OD in the church but had a caution in regard to the authoritarian personalities of some clergy and laity who would resist the communal and participatory approach of OD. Hanson wrote, "How does one free persons to participate as fully as possible in the sanctification of their individual and corporate lives in the face of their often irrational resistance to such participation?"

Organization Development, or OD, is about improving an organization's ability to become more effective in doing what it exists to do. It's about fulfilling an organization's mission and primary task by developing the system's climate, structures, processes, people, and leadership. In 1969 Warren Bennis defined OD as "an ongoing, systematic effort to change an organization. Organization Development is a response to change, a complex educational strategy intended to change the beliefs, attitudes, values, and structures of organizations so that they can better adapt to new technologies, markets, and challenges, and the dizzying rate of change itself."

3. A blending of pastoral and ascetical theology with Organization Development. In relation to congregational development this begins with the 1982 work of Bob Gallagher in *Power from on High: A Model for Parish Life and Development*, and a few years later in what is now the Church Development Institute.

Interestingly enough as Thornton's thinking develops he discovers the behavioral science work of Bruce Reed from the Grubb Institute on oscillation theory (extra-dependence – intra-dependence) and writes about it in *Spiritual Direction* in 1984. The same year saw Thomas Oden's *Care of Souls in the Classic Tradition* where he turns to the "classical Christian pastoral tradition" in exploring the thinking of Gregory the Great as a more integrative approach to pastoral practice than he saw in the behavioral science methods he had worked with in the 70's.

Of course these three themes didn't usually appear in some pure form. As you can see even in the brief introduction there has frequently been a lot of overlap and cross discipline learning.

The other part of the story is the process by which congregational development has been carried out in various programs and dioceses.

The first might be called "best practice" sharing. The gathering together of people face-to-face or on the web to talk about what they have been doing that works. CDI ran such a forum on inclusion between new and old members in a parish at General Seminary in the 90's in partnership with several dioceses. On occasion the national church has brought together practitioners and diocesan staff people. These sessions are most useful when: 1) the participants include a significant number of people with substantial training and experience in the field and 2) focuses on sharing what has worked (nit just blue sky talk about what might work if the world and the church were different).

The second is competency development in some limited area. For example programs in appreciative inquiry, interim training, or self-differentiated leadership.

A third has been longer-term leadership training programs of 12 – 24 months with reading and application work in between sessions. Such raining has generally been both experiential and broader in scope. This is what we see in the Church Development Institute and its offshoot programs—College for Congregational Development in Olympia² and the Cooperative College for Congregational Development in several southern dioceses.

Because these programs are long-term they may also end up providing a certain amount of accountability and emotional support.

A fourth effort is the new Shaping the Parish program. Its focus is on providing a kind of container for a parish wanting to become healthier. The process includes: 1) training in change theory and methods, spiritual practices, and emotional intelligence, 2) six strategic developmental initiatives in the parish, and 3) intensive support from the training staff throughout the program.

The fifth approach has been efforts of accountability and or support. This has mostly been carried out in dioceses. Many dioceses have attempted this in creating three-year agreements and three-year placements of priests in charge. This has been very hit-and-miss work. In many places once the agreement is in place the diocese moves onto something else and fails to provide the needed face-to-face accountability and support that can make a difference.

A sixth way has been to focus on the placement of the right kind of priestly leadership. This is generally very difficult to manage financially. Our practice has generally been to put in younger or new clergy lacking experience, or clergy who are simply worn out.

The most successful efforts to date have probably been in dioceses with a CDI type program where the diocese is intentionally working on an overall developmental strategy, careful placement of clergy, and providing systems of accountability and support.³

There's also the issue of how people have understood congregational development in diocesan offices.

For some it is about starting new parish churches. That may involve special training or not. If there is any training it may focus on a short-term, entrepreneurial approach to development or it may include consideration of longer-term development dynamics and how to start the new parish with clarity about the primary task of formation.

Others seem to think of congregational development primarily as a division of work that includes anything related to revitalizing congregations or starting new parishes. In such cases people may have been appointed as diocesan congregational development officers with little or no training in the field.

An approach that's always been out there and has reemerged in recent years is congregational development through "big ideas." It has shown itself in the "big parishes are better" schemes seen in the national church for many years and now in the current emergent church fascination. Both have made important contributions. However, they tend to offer little to what most parishes face.

The approach we're taking in this document is to understand parish development in a manner consistent with its roots in pastoral teleology and organization development.

Congregational development as a field of study and category of strategic action emerged in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The major contributor to its appearance was the work of

Loren Mead and Project Test Pattern (PTP), which later developed into the Alban Institute.

PTP was an initiative of the national church generally concerned with evangelization but more specifically with how to best revitalize parishes. What Loren Mead quickly discovered was that the emerging discipline of organization development had application to church systems. PTP's work builds on what the church had been doing since the 1950s in the field of group dynamics and experiential education. The Episcopal Church was among the first religious organizations to involve itself in this new way to understand and influence organizations. In the field of Organization Development the Episcopal Church has been seen as an "early adapter" along with the militaries of the US and UK, the National Education Association, TRW systems and General Mills.

In the 1970s and early 80s there were large ecumenical training programs that equipped church leaders and consultants in "organization development in religious systems." The training often involved a minimum of three years, 300 hours of experiential workshop training, reading in the field, application projects, work with mentors, and a supervised internship. Today that approach continues in the work of the Church Development Institute (CDI).

The Church Development Institute created a training program that includes organization development but has integrated ecclesiology, pastoral theology, and ascetical theology. In recent years CDI has reintegrated in its training more experiential work that helps participants in the "use of self" and group dynamics and development. CDI and the new Shaping the Parish program, now offer the most complete program available in congregational development.

Early human relations and group process labs at [NTL \(the National Training Laboratory Institute\)](#) - late 40's, early 50's. T-Group (training groups) use an unstructured, non-directive small group setting to help participants study group dynamics. For information on [T-Groups](#). For information on T-Group training available in the Episcopal Church go to [LTI \(Leadership Training Institute\)](#). An Episcopal layperson made a significant donation (George Peabody was responsible for gaining the layperson's interest), used in the development of a national training program. Most Episcopal clergy were invited to participate in a 2-week "Church and Group Life Laboratory." Many active clergy participated in the training. For the most part these early efforts were concerned with helping parishes be better educational systems and improving meetings. Over time there was a reduction in the polarization over "churchmanship" (theological and liturgical differences). Clergy that were active during this period report a reduction in the conflict, partly related to the cost it was having on the church and partly because of the new skills clergy at gained in lab training.

NTL develops an [OD \(Organization Development\)](#) training program (a number of universities begin to offer advanced degrees in OD and organizational behavior).

Before a link gets created between what is happening at NTL and religious systems, there was notable work taking place in developing **rural and urban parish ministry**. In the late 40's, 50's and 60's the work and writing of **Paul Musselman, Paul Moore, and Kilmar Myers** impacts the church's understanding of the urban parish. Roanridge (National Town

& Country Church Institute) was established around 1945 as a training center for rural parish work. The first director was **Norman Foote**, **Boone Porter** was director at a later time.

Training programs are offered in church systems, several networks were established -- **MATC** (Mid-Atlantic Training Committee, led by **John Denham**), **NETI** (New England Training Institute, led by **John Swanson**, now John Julian of OJN), **LTI** (led by **Bill Yon**) -- strongest in the late 60's through the mid 80's; "**three phase training**" is at the core (human relations, group development, experiential education design skills).

The professional recognition program of **ACC (Association for Creative Change)** provides a development and accountability system for practitioners in religious systems. ACC continues into the 80's.

MATC - Organization Development in Religious Systems program trains hundreds of clergy and lay leaders – a year long OD training program with "three-phase training" as a prerequisite. MATC also began to offer consultation skills training. This MATC OD training was largely started because of the initiative of Project Test Pattern.

PTP (Project Test Pattern) – was established and funded by the Episcopal Church in 1969 -- **Loren Mead** as the director. PTP was an experimental program in parish renewal; did research, produced resources for consultants, books, occasional papers. PTP tested the use of OD (Organization Development) as a means of strengthen congregations. In 1970-72 twenty-eight people with human relations training and consulting backgrounds were brought together and oriented to OD. PTP evolves into Alban Institute. Other programs were also the result of the "three phase training" to which so many clergy and laity had been exposed. Two examples are EFM (Education for Ministry) and the Alabama Plan (in stewardship).

A variety of projects started in dioceses to strengthen congregations; for example -- in 1966-67 the Diocese of Southern Ohio trained about 24 people in consulting and planning to work with parishes; in 1969 parish teams were trained in organizational dynamics and change strategies. In 1968 the Diocese of Pennsylvania formed "The Committee on the Renewal and Mission of the Local Church" with recommendations that focused on planning and launching a series of pilots to experiment with new forms of parish ministry; the diocese followed up with "The Viable Parish Commission" that trained facilitators to work with parishes in a problem solving and envisioning process; in 1973 a more highly trained network of consultants was formed. The diocese of Michigan (1970-72) equipped a group of human relations trainers with OD and consultation skills working with parishes with the same purposes as PTP. A number of structural approaches to renewal emerge or are renewed during this period including, team ministries, cluster ministries, and local ordination.

Herb Gravely was an early PTP consultant and the rector of a parish in Kingstree, SC. He developed a consulting ministry in the small parishes of South Carolina. When LAND was beginning, **Loren Mead** let LAND leaders know about Herb's work. That lead to Herb being part of the early LAND training staff. Loren Mead and others made an effort to link people together in the emerging field of congregational development.

A gathering was held by PTP for leaders of Diocesan Consulting Networks, at Claggett Conference Center, MD, April 9 – 11, 1973 This was a significant event in advancing

diocesan efforts. The leaders of around 30 networks meet for a couple of days to share their experience. A paper by **Ted Blumstein and John Bowers** was produced on "Consultant Issues: Networks and Teams", PTP August 15, 1973. The paper and the gathering addressed issues such as -- level of consultant skills, fees, relationship with the hierarchy, the development of the client system, etc.

LAND (Leadership Academy for New Directions) began in 1970. LAND developed a significant training program based on a particular set of principles for work in small communities. Many of the early LAND people received their training in the M ATC OD program. LAND has played a significant role in establishing cluster and multi point ministries.

"Local ordination" (initially Canon 8) rose out of the needs of the Diocese of Alaska. **Bill Gordon** as bishop, faced too many situations where there was no way to maintain a viable Eucharistic community given the existing norms about clergy training and deployment. Working along with **Boone Porter, and later Wes Frensdorff**, a variety of ways have been developed to provide for the ordination to the priesthood of a person in a parish who would not complete the "standard" process of seminary education. In broad terms two pathways emerged. One was with people who had the time, intelligence, and energy for training that would allow them to exercise a rather standard set of priestly functions; the second was to ordain someone for a more limited role, usually just to perform certain sacramental functions. The pattern of having ministry team take on responsibility for a congregation has been part of this second approach. Someone would be the liturgist, others would deal with pastoral care, education, etc. Another common element of this approach has included supervision by a seminary-trained priest. The writings of Roland Allen have been part of the culture of the local ordination movement. Allen proposed that "local churches" (referring to what we think of as areas that would make up a diocese or province, not a parish) raise up their own ordained leadership. The "movement" quality of the local ordination effort has gone by several different names including Total Ministry, Total Common Ministry, and Ministry of all the Baptized. Over the years there have been concerns about issues such as separating the presiding role at the Eucharist from the presiding role in the parish community (a set of hands? A shaman?), diocese not maintaining adequate systems of accountability and support, and the tendency of some locally ordained clergy to have limited leadership skills (one bishop saw a tendency toward autocratic behavior).

Hartford Seminary's work in congregational studies with **Jackson Carroll** and others. The Seminary's [Hartford Institute for Religion Research](#) works at "policy-relevant research, anticipation of emerging issues and commitment to the creative dissemination of learning." Many Episcopalians have participated in the seminary's programs and made use of the Institute's research.

Alban Institute was founded in 1974. Alban carries out work in research, training, publishing, consulting. **Loren Mead** was the first director. He was joined by **Celia Hahn, Roy Oswald, and Speed Leas** in breaking new ground in our understandings of religious communities. Consultations and action research provided a means for new ways of looking at and helping congregations. Alban held a commitment to the idea that trained consultants working with the people facing a particular challenges in a congregation were together, best suited to discover ways to approach that challenge. Action research projects addressing

issues such as: visioning and planning, congregational growth, welcoming and involving new members, congregational dynamics when clergy leave, managing conflict in congregations, exploring the role of lay leadership, financial crises, etc. Incorporating new knowledge in the fields of sociology, human relations, and organization development, Alban shares its research through publications and training events.

Church Development Institute -- Started By **Bob Gallagher** in Philadelphia in 1978 as a program for training diocesan consultants; later used in Connecticut to train parish leaders and consultants (1981 - 1993, and 2000); was also co-sponsored by the **Order of the Ascension** and General Seminary as a national training program in NYC (1985 -1995), this becomes the first intensive and broad training resource in Congregational Development for the Episcopal Church. CDI is another program that has roots in the MATC OD program.

All of the early CDI trainer-consultants had completed the MATC program. The content and design of CDI drew on the MATC program and integrated understandings of religious dynamics in the congregation and Anglican spirituality. Early CDI's make significant use of the work of **Martin Thornton** in pastoral theology, **Bruce Reed's** "The Dynamics of Religion". **Jim Anderson's** "To Come Alive" and **Urban Holmes** "The Priest in Community".

An irregular CDI starts at Sewanee in 1995. Within a short period that program became part of a larger CDI network. With the formation of **CDI Trainers** in 2000 that group becomes the primary system for initiating and supporting a number of diocesan-based CDI's. All CDI's offer 110 workshop hours, common worship, readings in OD and CD, the development of CD projects, reports on the projects, participation in a participant Learning-Application Team between sessions. Diocesan CDI's tend to draw parish teams of lay and clergy leaders. CDI Trainers also sponsored a national CDI in NYC, then Maine, then Seattle as an open registration program that people from dioceses without a CDI might attend. Diocesan CDI's in 2011 include: Georgia, Northern Indiana, Milwaukee and Colorado. Over the years other dioceses have sponsored CDI's: Western Massachusetts, Southwest Florida, Connecticut, Western NY, Rochester, North Carolina, Washington, and Newark.

CDI Trainers and the earlier forms of CDI have also sponsored workshops and forums that focus on particular issues and skills. On occasion these workshops have helped individuals generate new or enhanced offerings for the church—Rob Voyle's appreciative inquiry efforts have roots in his first encountering AI at a CDI workshop at Sewanee; the work of Gretchen Pritchard with children and families and Jane Tomaine in the Benedictine Toolbox also had connections with early CDI work.

CDI Trainers efforts through the Leadership Training Institute are a continuation of that workshop tradition.

The Episcopal Church's Office of Congregational Development has offered national meetings to explore methods; produces material on size, life cycle and new congregations—Start Up- Start Over, sponsored by the Church Building Fund and congregational ministries. Initially lead by **Arlin Rothauge**.

Seabury Institute (of Seabury-Western) with **Arlin Rothauge** offers an D'Min in Congregational Development beginning in 1995. A program of three summer sessions, back home work reading and writing projects; provides an understanding of the factors related to the decline and growth of congregations, theological reflection on the nature and meaning of congregational development, and practical skills necessary for starting new congregations and revitalizing churches in transition and decline.

Reemergence of "three phase training" -- LTI - Leadership Training Institute Is offering human relations, group development, conflict management, consultation skills, and experiential education design skills training. A critical event in re-launching lab training was the Next Harrah Conference in November of 1998 at Kanuga. Loren Mead and Bill Yon convened about 50 people for several days. In the years after that Bill Yon reestablished LTI as an organization connected with the Episcopal Church to offer lab training. Smaller efforts were also launched by Loren Mead and later Roy Oswald. In 2007 LTI became part of CDI Trainers.

CDI spin offs -- The best among them is the College for Congregational Development, and its spin off the Cooperative College for Congregational Development. The CCD emerged after the Diocese of Olympia and CDI Trainers could not reach an agreement about program standards. CCD does pay CDI Trainers a yearly fee in acknowledgment of its use of the training approach and culture initially created by CDI.

There is a congregational development e-list sponsored by CDI Trainers and Shaping the Parish. It currently has around 700 members.
<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/congregationaldevelopment/>

Shaping the ParishTM is a new program to equip lay and ordained leaders to develop and nurture healthier parishes in a two-fold program of providing a support system for the parish and competency development for the leaders. It focus on immediate, tangible improvements in the parish while building long-term health. Shaping the Parish assumes that vibrant, faithful churches will flourish as leaders and parishes improve their own: spiritual practice, emotional and social intelligence, and change theory and methods. Founded in July 2010 by Michelle Heyne and Bob Gallagher.

Some Reflections

A Developmental Process with a focus on CDI and Shaping the Parish

From OD to OD with spirituality and practical theology

CDI was grounded in the early work of the MATC OD in Religious Systems program. The yearlong MATC program required that participants came having already completed labs in human interaction, group development, and educational design skills. So participants ended up with a considerable amount of training by the time they were finished.

The program didn't however make very useful connections between OD and the unique dynamics of the congregation or the impact of denominational culture.

The shared experience of many other church members going through the training offered in the 70's and early 80's was that while the skills and methods were seen as very valuable, there was not an explicit exploration that related it all to faith and practice. The Church Development Institute was the first program that addressed that issue. In many places in the church we simply stopped making use of human relations and OD training.

During the same period the focus in the church shifted to a variety of approaches, some around spiritual renewal and others around new structural forms for leadership and parishes. Training that was rooted in the base provided by the earlier work began to be offered around topic areas and in shorter, smaller segments. You can see it in most Fresh Start programs. The skills and knowledge that these programs rested on was shared by a smaller and smaller group in the church. At the same time the reverse was happening in the rest of society -- increasing numbers were going through advanced degree programs and certificate programs in Organization Development and related fields.

One participant in the 1976 MATC OD training shared his experience this way -- "Other than Verna Dozier, there was no other trainer/consultant who spoke of the spiritual part of the equation of OD. It was assumed When I took the Congregational Development Course (later becomes CDI) in Connecticut, '83-84, there was more integration that spoke of the spiritual issues such as the Christian Life Model. When I decided to do it again in '96-97 (in NYC), there was definitely that piece. The centrality of the Eucharist, the Benedictine Promise, the Order of the Ascension and the life of the worshipping/studying community. I think Alban Institute and the others have also sought that integration as I read their material and take their course offerings."

The current situation

Most people who now receive some form of substantial training in congregational development do that in a program with most of these characteristics:

- 85 - 120 hours of workshop time over a period of 16 - 18 months or over two summers
- An integrated program drawing on [Organization Development](#) and ascetical and practical theology
- Application in the parish with a process of report and critique
- A course of readings in the field
- Lay and clergy receiving the training, often in parish teams
- Increasingly experiential
- A norm that each participant must complete the entire program. Make up sessions and work are provided.
- Training focused on leadership development or the development of practitioners in the field.
- Sees congregational development as directed at increasing the health and faithfulness of parishes

All of these elements as an integrated offering were introduced to the church by CDI. Even the academic programs in congregational development only appeared after CDI had shown the extent of interest in the church. The most common ongoing objections to provide such programs in a diocese are 1) that people won't make that level of commitment and 2) the cost. In some cases it's apparent that diocesan leaders believe they can get the same, or at

least adequate, results with less commitment. That hasn't proven to be true. In other cases diocesan leaders simply don't want to do the work involved.

While we still hear diocesan leaders objecting that clergy and especially lay leaders will not commit to the amount of time and work involved in such programs, it's now apparent that isn't so. Diocese of various sizes across the country have discovered that people will make the commitment.

CDI transitions and developments that created the new norm

We're going to provide a bit more background on CDI transitions over the years because of the role CDI has played in raising the bar for congregational development training.

CDI started as a two-year program with almost all the elements noted above in place. The learning from your experience process of the CDI trainers did bring several new elements that are now part of all the CDI and spin off programs. There are three we'll mention.

1) *From* it being about training consultants *to* it being about training CD practitioners, leaders and consultants. [1981]

What became CDI, started in the Diocese of Pennsylvania as part of a consultant training program. As now, it was a two-cycle program. The participants also had to complete 3 or 4 labs with MATC (the major church training program back then) and serve as intern consultants. That lasted two years.

Bob Gallagher moved to Connecticut to join the bishop's staff. In Connecticut the question became whether to offer the program as it had been in Pennsylvania or to broaden it and involve parish leaders. The decision was to broaden it. We thought if we could get 10 people to spend two years in the program it would be worth it. That first year we had around 70 participants split between a morning session in Hartford and an evening session in New Haven.

A couple of years later the national CDI was started at General Theological Seminary. It was co-sponsored by the seminary and the Order of the Ascension. That program also focused on developing leaders as skilled practitioners.

2) *From* an understanding that you could participate in some elements of the program and not others *to* a learning agreement that required "full participation." [mid 1990's]

For many years there were two ways of being in CDI. There were people who were working to receive the certificate (maybe 15 – 20% of participants) and others who would just show up for the workshop time. Participants now needed to agree to register for both cycles, do the readings and projects, come to all sessions or do a make up. For the first time everyone was there on the assumption they would receive a certificate.

This change had a tremendous impact on the climate among participants. The level of work became significantly better.

Around the same time a first day exam was introduced. That also had a great impact. We could get to work more quickly and participants “knew that they knew.”

3) *From* being mostly about theory and cases *to* including strongly experiential elements in the program. [2003]

In all CDI's participants now receive some feedback and do some reflecting on their team experience. The national CDI became a real lab experience including T-group work and a deeper level of feedback and reflection than in the diocesan programs.

The significance of those changes became apparent in both diocesan CDI's and the national program. Here are two comments from participants.

A priest about to begin the bishop election process. She had been a participant in one of the first diocesan CDI's. Here's what she said. “I am grateful to you for having been part of my journey on this path - I still use the CDI materials on a regular basis. Your work was so superior to anything else I've encountered. Just led a retreat this past Saturday doing planning and visioning for a not-for-profit board using my CDI education.”

Charlotte Weaver-Gelzer went through the national CDI when it was in Maine. Here's part of what she wrote, “Since taking CDI, I've participated in other leader development, quasi congregational development programs (Interim Ministry Network training, for one), and none of them offers a close comparison to the depth of learning, the range of tools, the confidence of skills, the flexible strength of the CDI experience. To my surprise—because the program is hard and the work is very challenging and I didn't think I'd learned much by the time it was over—I continually find that I learned more than I knew. The CDI learning opens continually in one circumstance after another, years later. To be fair, I continue to do a lot of OD reading, and I regularly use the CDI manual and *Fill All Things* as primary reference tools. ... CDI asks for a great deal of openness and commitment, and in return, the experience is profound. Looking at the website for Shaping the Parish, it appears to ask for as much, if not more, in the way of letting go of assumptions and being open to change.”

Another significant force in program improvement has been competition. The various programs have in fact spurred another to find better ways to serve the church. Competition has contributed to program innovation. This organic process does face obstacles as some church circles want to deny the reality of competition. The result is that we are too often talk about new ideas and produce little real, practical innovation. It's all made worse by a tendency to hide information about the training methods. There's a pattern of acting as though there is competition while denying the reality of it. Embracing competition might both be more honest and help us better receive the benefits. The need is for acknowledged, open competition that is also transparent and in some sense collaborative in the service of the church.

[Shaping the Parish](#) brings with it a major shift in emphasis. It is focused on revitalizing parishes in the short term while building long-term health. CDI and its spin offs often have the effect of revitalization but the process is less direct than is proposed in Shaping the Parish. As designed Shaping the Parish will:

- 1) Get at both short-term improvement in parish health and long-term transformation
- 2) Focus on parish health and change rather than the development of the practitioner
- 3) Expect more of participants - parish interventions between all weekends, more reading
- 4) Give significant attention to the spiritual practices and emotional intelligence of the participants.
- 5) Provide a high level of guidance and support to participants from the trainers throughout the program.

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¹ Reed wrote an earlier short piece on the oscillation theory called “The Task of the Church and the Role of its Members.” Alban Institute published it in 1975.

² The Diocese of Olympia has recognized the extent of its debt to CDI in an agreement to pay a licensing fee to CDI Trainers for a five-year period. Both the Bishop and the Canon for Congregational Development were trained by CDI. That program, and the Cooperative, is shaped with the mix of elements and a culture that was developed by CDI from 1973 through 2005 (CDI had different names in earlier years).

³ A resource for dioceses wanting to work this way is “The Elements of a Diocesan Congregational Development System.” Available at

www.congregationaldevelopment.com/Parish%20Booklets%20and%20Handouts.htm