

## **Program FAQs**

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Also see [National Program FAQ](#) and [Diocesan FAQ](#).

*Q. How much of what I learn early in the program is likely to have some immediate application in the parish?*

A. Almost all of it.

In between workshop sessions you'll be implementing developmental initiatives in your parish. You'll usually select the initiatives, or interventions, from a list of possibilities. These initiatives are all designed to move a parish toward a healthier, more faithful and vibrant life.

As you work on the initiatives you'll have the opportunity to learn how to be more effective in shaping your parish.

For example:

1) Being able to see what's appropriate for your parish given the strategic needs of the parish, the readiness of the parish for a particular intervention, and your skill level.

2) Learning how to focus your efforts on work that contributes to long-term parish health and faithfulness. This is different from being on the treadmill of having to plan and implement an endless series of new programs and activities. Real congregational development is about shaping a parish culture that is for the long haul.

3) Learn to design and implement interventions.

In addition to these developmental initiatives, during the workshop time you'll use methods and tools that can immediately be brought back to your parish.

The program will also assist you see and try out new behavior and skills. Expanding your range of choice is an important part of Shaping the Parish. If you stay with your own growth as a person and leader, you'll find yourself trying new behaviors in the parish as well as the rest of your life.

We focus on immediate, tangible improvements while building long-term health.

*Q. What kind of stance do I need to take if I'm to gain the most I can from the program?*

A. You need to come with a stance that you will open yourself to new ways of thinking and behaving. The program will offer you an opportunity to expand your range of leadership behaviors and skills. You need to be willing to engage that process; to use the skills, methods, and interventions "as given." This is to give ideas and methods that may be new to you a "fair chance" before evaluating and modifying them in the future.

*Q - Any suggestions for handling the normal routine and demands of parish life along with those of the program?*

A - The program requires a full commitment of your time and energy. It needs to have some priority. This isn't so much about the program itself as it is about developing a long-term habit. Improving the parish calls for continuous attention.

Start with the assumption that your participation in the program means that what has been routine needs to change. One thing you can do is to look for opportunities to integrate things. For example, make some of your developmental initiatives the parish's programs of education and spiritual or leadership development. Don't plan all your programs until you have time to look over the list of projects. Do the same with your vestry or leadership retreat.

From *In Your Holy Spirit: Shaping the Parish Through Spiritual Practices*, Robert A Gallagher: "In organization development there's an assumption that all organizations have a "demand system." That demand system is the web of expectations and pressures calling for energy, time and money. The demands may be external or internal. All parishes have the regular flow of work it must attend to. There's the occasional crisis, problems to solve and deadlines to meet. We also get caught up in work that just isn't very important to what we exist to do and be. Some meetings, phone calls and e-mail are like that. Most of us also have routines that are in fact either busy-work or time wasters. All those things, the important and the unimportant, consume most parishes and most of our individual lives.

The activities that transform parish and personal life can take a back seat to the routine business that must be done and to the unimportant interruptions and trivia of life. What renews life and develops the parish waits for when there's time. This means relationships don't get built, people don't receive training and coaching in spiritual practices, strategic issues aren't addressed, and so opportunities are missed and crises not foreseen and prevented.

We can turn all that around by adding elements to the demand system. We need to add activities and resources into parish life that keep the important, transformative matters in front of us. In congregational development it means things like a yearly leadership retreat that works only on strategic matters; having a skilled external consultant; leaders receiving in-depth leadership training for congregational development, and developing a richer parish life of prayer through the Daily Office and increasing the ability of members for participation in the Eucharist and their own personal devotions.

I think it was Stephen Covey who said something like, 'Don't prioritize your schedule; schedule your priorities.'

Q. What do you mean by emotional and social intelligence?

A. We are thinking of competencies such as self-awareness and self-management, empathy, our use of influence, communication skills, and our ability to work collaboratively while being self-differentiated. See the paper ["The Emotional Competence Framework."](#)

Q. *How emotionally demanding is the program?*

A. Exploring new ways of leadership behavior and receiving feedback can be stressful. Much of the workshop time uses experiential education methods - a group experiences an assigned task followed by disciplined reflection on what happened in the group, role play and simulation, and feedback on the impact of your behavior on others.

There's also a weekend that takes place in what's called a T-Group. These groups are a wonderful opportunity to work on emotional and social intelligence. T-Groups provide an opportunity to learn about your own willingness and ability to be independent and interdependent in a group. Such groups can also help you increase your ability to be grounded and effective in situations where designated leaders aren't providing much structure and

direction. You should carefully review the page on [T-Groups](#) and be convinced that you're able to engage the work. If you're in therapy, consult your therapist. If you are currently having a difficult time coping with stress or are experiencing significant emotional difficulties you should postpone attending the program.

*Q. What level of congregational development competence does Shaping the Parish prepare me for?*

A. For most people the program can help you develop enough competence to make a significant difference in the life of your parish.

Becoming professionally competent in the field usually requires the following:

1. Training - A program like Shaping the Parish or the Church Development Institute and at least four weeks of experiential workshops in areas such as human interaction, conflict management, design skills (education and program), consultation skills. An experiential-based degree program in organization development would accomplish most of this. Some additional work in the unique issues and dynamics of congregations would be needed as well. D Min congregational development programs are generally not experiential enough to develop the needed competency; they can, though, be useful as a structure for reading and writing in the field.
2. Interning/Being mentored - Working with someone with more experience in the field. Seeing how someone else leads, trains, or consults. Having someone else help you critique your work.
3. Experience - Having three years experience beyond your training.
4. Reading in the field - During all the above while engaging a course of reading in the field.

For more see- [Congregational Development Leadership - Consultant Assessment](#)

*Q - Could you offer a comparison between Shaping the Parish and similar programs?*

A - First, a comparison with the Church Development Institute. We believe that Shaping the Parish moves the work of the past 35 years in CDI, and in similar programs (for example in Olympia), to a whole new level of effectiveness. Remember this is coming from the founder of CDI and experienced CDI trainers.

CDI is a wonderful program. It has always received very high ratings and positive evaluation from over 95% of its participants. Shaping the Parish offers benefits not available in CDI. For example:

- 1) It offers more immediate and tangible results while also building long term health. CDI has been more oriented toward the long term. 2) It is focused on helping parish leaders improve the health of their parish now. CDI has been more focused on developing congregational development practitioners. 3) Shaping the Parish engages the issues of spiritual practices and emotional & social intelligence more than any other congregational development program. 4) Change management and theory is clearly fundamental to CDI, but the applications are quite broad and there is a strong element (highly useful in its context) of developing a CD practitioner. In CDI there is, of necessity, lots more trial and error, and lots more organization development (OD) theory. Shaping the Parish weaves the OD theories into greater opportunities for experiential learning within a context of spiritual practice, development of emotional and social intelligence, and a greater number of projects that are much more clearly laid out and directed in terms of process and outcome. 5) In its diocesan program Shaping the Parish takes less time in transitioning the program to diocesan control.

There are also a number of academic programs in congregational development. They are what they are. Stronger on theory and research, weaker on practical application. Shaping the Parish is

a very experiential program. That's rarely the case with academic offerings. We believe that experiential education is more effective in developing the competencies needed to improve parish life. If one can do both the two approaches can complement one another. Finally, the academic programs are largely oriented toward the clergy. Shaping the Parish is geared toward lay and clergy leadership teams.

*Q - The program requires a significant commitment of time, is that really necessary?*

A - Our experience has been that for the participant to become proficient the program needs to be long enough, and require enough work, to develop a critical mass of learning. Too many dioceses seem to assume congregational development can be done on the cheap, asking for a Saturday here and there. While we work at being as efficient as possible about time, we will not tell people that results can be produced without an adequate investment.

*Q - Where did Shaping the Parish come from?*

A - Shaping the Parish emerged in part because Michelle Heyne and Bob Gallagher had been working on companion books in spiritual practice and conducting a parish development program with four parishes that provided a kind of container and demand system for their parish development efforts. Bob's cancer provided him with forced-down-time that gave him lots of time to think when he couldn't do much else. In early June the program sprung itself on Bob. The broad overview was just there in his mind. Bob brought it to Michelle; she picked up on it immediately and within a few weeks we had fleshed out a total program.

The three themes were each being worked on in recent years by Bob and Michelle. They both had the background of OD consulting with parishes, non-profit groups and businesses. Change theory and methods had been part of their work for many years. Both were involved in experiential lab training through LTI and had integrated emotional intelligence elements to CDI programs. They were also working on the books about spiritual practices and were noticing the excitement around spiritual practice in both CDI and in what we were doing in our own parish and in some consulting engagements. They had developed a map of spiritual practices a few years ago and tested it in a variety of parish and training situations.

*Q - I'm familiar with CDI. What is being changed from CDI to Shaping the Parish?*

A - As you'll see both programs are remarkable efforts. But they are different.

<b>From CDI</b>	— —>	<b>To Shaping the Parish</b>
Focus on developing congregational practitioners. Secondarily on revitalizing the parish.		Focus on revitalizing the parish; shaping healthy parishes. Helping parish teams renew the parish. Secondarily on the professional development of the participant.
Broad, theoretical. Long term development.	— —>	More experiential, immediate and tangible application combined with long term impact.
Usually takes 1 – 2 years before participants begin to think differently		Participants asked to behave differently immediately in initiative and workshop; thinking differently will follow.
Participants come in teams or as individuals	— —>	Emphasis on having a parish team. Coming as a parish team if possible (though individuals permitted). Otherwise on having team in the parish that does the readings and implements the initiatives.

Two projects designed and implemented		Six developmental initiatives designed and implemented. Selected from projects with demonstrated ability to bring results
Broad knowledge and skill		Focused on integrated themes -Spiritual practice, emotional & social intelligence, change the & methods
Trainers work with participants is mostly during the workshop sessions.		Trainers spend a lot of time coaching participants in-between sessions.
More accepting of learning even when failing at the improvement effort	— —>	More guidance provided on thinking through interventions in parish.

Q - Is this a continuing education program for clergy?

A - Not really. The program is about the parish's revitalization. It's not about the continuing education of the clergy. So, there is no certificate provided, no CEU's offered. We of course hope clergy will learn a great deal. That learning however is directly about the health of your parish.

Q - How transferable is this into a secular work setting? If I'm a lay person having to ask my boss for time off to attend - how might I explain it?

A - The program is grounded in organization development and systems thinking. We are applying to a church setting what we know broadly about the field of organization development, including change methods; coaching and people development; ways to increase buy-in and accountability, thereby improving team functioning; and effective analysis and decision-making. These areas are critical to the health of any organization and we will be using methods and theories that can be easily transferred to different organizational settings. Our specific aim is to increase the skills of participants in all of these areas, while building flexibility and depth.

Areas of focus that are particularly applicable to secular work include:

- Use of the MBTI and FIRO B with individuals and teams to increase leadership competencies and improve emotional and social intelligence.
- Considerations in evaluating whether a proposed goal or change fits strategically with broader organizational goals, and what impediments to the change or goal are likely.
- Ways to effectively implement change, monitor effectiveness based on observable data, and make mid-stream adjustments as needed.
- Methods to overcome learning anxiety to increase the capacity of team members to learn new skills and better support new organizational goals.
- Ways to share information constructively within a team to increase internal commitment.
- Identifying skills needed for a particular project and selecting the right team members to accomplish it.
- Development of a range of leadership styles, and the capacity to move between them to fit the specific needs of the situation (e.g., appropriate and effective use of coaching skills; recognizing when a "democratic" style fits and when a more "authoritative" style is more appropriate).
- Creating improvement processes and learning plans.

In Michelle's secular career, she's the Chief Compliance Officer for a regional financial services company. Her training work with the church has led to significant and tangible improvements in her own leadership skills and in her ability to further the organization's goals. For many years Bob's consulting work was primarily with non-profit organizations and a few small businesses.

Major contracts were with WomenRising in Jersey City (domestic abuse shelter, social services, affordable housing), the Affordable Housing Network of NJ, and Tom's of Maine.