4-27-2010

Improving the Experience and Satisfaction of Leaders and Staff in Clusters and Merged Parishes.

Karen M. Rinefierd
St. John Fisher College

Improving the Experience and Satisfaction of Leaders and Staff in Clusters and Merged Parishes.

Document Type
Thesis

Degree Name
MS in Human Resource Development

Department
Education

Subject Categories
Education

Running head: CLUSTERS AND MERGED PARISHES

Improving the Experience and Satisfaction of Leaders and Staff
in Clusters and Merged Parishes

by

Karen M. Rinefierd

B.S. May 1976, University of Rochester
M. Ed. May 1977, University of Rochester
M.A. December 1987, Boston College
M. Div. May 1999, St. Bernard's Institute

A final project submitted to
the Faculty of
the Graduate School of Organizational Learning/Human Resource Development
of St. John Fisher College
in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Science

April 27, 2010

Signature Page

Candidate Name: Karen M. Rinefierd

Paper Title: Improving the Experience and Satisfaction of Leaders and Staff in Clusters
and Merged Parishes

Paper Type: Organizational Assessment

The signatures on this page signify successful completion of the GHRD 590 capstone project requirement.

_____

Timothy Franz, Ph.D., Advisor

_____

Seth Silver, Ed.D., Reader #1

_____

William L. Pickett, Ph.D., Reader #2

_____

Karen M. Rinefierd

Dedicated to:

my sons, Paul and Craig, and "unofficial third son" Nick

who bring joy to my life and who are my greatest blessing.

Executive Summary

Purpose

- To understand the common pitfalls facing those entering ministry in a cluster or merged parish and to identify best practices.

- To recommend ways to enhance the support given by the Diocese of Rochester to leaders and staff members of clusters and merged parishes, including skill training that would allow them to function more effectively.

Method

- A survey designed by the researcher was sent to pastoral leaders, exempt, and non-exempt staff from a random selection of the 17 clusters and 14 parishes with multiple worship sites within the Diocese of Rochester.

- Five focus groups were conducted with exempt and non-exempt staff members from clusters and merged parishes.

- Thirteen interviews were conducted with pastors and pastoral administrators who lead clusters or merged parishes.

- The intent of both the focus groups and the interviews was to follow up on three issues that had been prominent in survey responses (leading change, dealing with resistance to change, and communication) and to solicit input regarding how the Diocese could better support staff and pastoral leaders.

Findings

- Communication, collaboration, administration, dealing with resistance to change, and fiscal management were identified as the top skills required by those engaged in

multiple parish ministry. Respondents named dealing with resistance, leading change, community building, communication, and empowering as areas where they could benefit from training.

- Staff members found themselves dealing with their own reactions to the changes brought about by clustering/merging, facing turmoil in staff relationships, and confronting resistance from parishioners.

- Leaders reported that their energy is sapped by dealing with parishioners' emotions and that they need help in creating a cohesive staff.

Recommendations

- Provide training to pastoral leaders, staffs, and parishioners in leadership positions in the areas of leading change and understanding culture.

- Offer cluster and parish staffs interventions designed to strengthen their functioning as teams and to manage conflict.

- Supply coaching for leaders of communities undergoing change.

- Create opportunities for informal learning through virtual communities of practice and networking.

Conclusions

- This study offers insights and guidance to other dioceses and religious entities that are experiencing similar parish re-structuring.

- This study suggests areas to which HRD professionals should pay attention as well as offering particular strategies they can employ to support individuals, groups, and

organizations in the increasing number of consolidations occurring in the corporate, not-for-profit, and government sectors.

Table of Contents

List of Tables and Figures

Acknowledgements

My gratitude goes to family, friends, and co-workers who helped me to balance work, school, and my personal life over the past two years. In particular:

At the Diocese of Rochester—the pastoral leaders and staff members of clusters and merged parishes who participated in this study; Mary Bauer, Director of Human Resources, who first told me about this degree program at St. John Fisher College; Barbara Fulle, the best listener in the world; Bernard Grizard, Director of Parish Support Ministries, who has offered support of every type throughout my studies; Fr. Joseph A. Hart, Vicar General, who brought me into pastoral planning and encouraged my aspiration to continue learning; Deb Housel, the "other" planning group liaison, who shares my desire to serve the people of the Church of Rochester; and Dr. Bill Pickett, retired Director of Pastoral Planning, who taught me about leadership, coaching, empowering others, and the power of curiosity.

The faculty of the Organizational Learning/Human Resource Development program at St. John Fisher College – especially Dr. Seth Silver who models a passion for learning, human dignity, and organization development; and Dr. Tim Franz who was the advisor every person deserves.

The members of Cohort 12: Ben, Bill, Carol, Christine, Debbie, Janelle, Jen, Joyce, Lindsay, Lori, Niki, Pamela, Patty C., Patty D., Paul, Pia, Ryan, and Stephanie, plus our "latecomer" Mia. From you I learned what teamwork and mutual support really are, while having tons of fun along the way.

CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

Background

Mergers and acquisitions are a common business strategy to produce growth, competitive advantage, and cost savings. However, the expected financial results and operating synergies are not always realized—indeed, according to research, objectives are not reached in the majority of mergers and acquisitions. With focus on their financial and legal aspects, often the human side is ignored and contributes to failure. For a merger to succeed, people need to be informed, involved, and inspired.

Something akin to mergers and acquisitions is occurring within the Catholic Church. The practice of linking two or more parishes under the same pastoral leader is increasingly common across the United States, primarily because of a declining number of priests. Clustered and merged parishes are relatively recent phenomena within the Diocese of Rochester. The first cluster, a joining of four parishes, was created in 1984 when the diocese had 163 parishes. By 2000, 71 of 161 parishes were clustered. Linked parishes often grew closer together over time. In order to reduce administrative work, in 2002 a new parish structure was born: two or more clustered parishes merging under church and civil law to form a single parish with multiple worship sites. By July 2009, the Diocese had 41 parishes arranged into 17 clusters and 14 parishes with multiple worship sites. The parishes involved in clustering and merging have become both larger and more complex over time with suburban parishes beginning to be affected. For example, two new clusters in June 2010 will each include over 3000 households, while a proposed parish with multiple worship sites would have almost 6000 households.

The way the Diocese supports these new leaders and staffs within clustered and merged parishes has evolved. For example, the Office of Pastoral Planning provides direct aid to parishes that are restructuring, including in recent years facilitating the development of transition teams; the Human Resource Department works directly on developing leaders and/or staffs who are experiencing difficulty. Staff serving more than one parish gathered in 2005 to discuss issues they faced and to share effective practices. Because of these successes, the Diocese hosted one of two national multiple parish pastoring pilot training workshops in 2006. However, the Diocese does not regularly offer formal training to those entering or engaged in multiple parish ministry. Leaders and staff members experience stress and burnout as they attempt to figure out for themselves and their communities how best to manage unfamiliar roles and the myriad of emotions parishioners bring to unwanted change.

Problem Statement

Although the practices of clustering and merging parishes within the Diocese of Rochester began in 1984 and became more commonplace during the past decade, there has been no systematic attempt to learn from leaders or staff members the positives and challenges these new parish configurations bring. Also lacking are study of effective practices in these clusters and merged parishes, identification of skills needed by leaders or staff members, and evaluation of the support systems the Diocese of Rochester has put into place.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to understand the common pitfalls facing those entering ministry in a cluster or merged parish and to identify the effective practices utilized in particular

situations. The goal is to improve the experience of leaders and staff members by doing the following:

1) enhance the support given to leaders and staff members preparing to cluster as well as to those working within existing clusters and merged parishes;

2) provide training in skills identified as necessary for effective functioning in these new, more complex parish structures.

Research Questions and Hypothesis

The research questions guiding this study were the following:

1) What are the skills that those within the Diocese of Rochester currently engaged in multiple parish ministry at the leader or staff level believe are important? For which do they believe training should be offered to those entering or those already engaged in multiple parish ministry?

2) What are the best practices currently being employed by leaders and staff and how do these relate to leaders' and staff members' rating of the success of the clustering or merging?

3) What are the areas in which leaders and staff members face the most difficulty and what can the Diocese—particularly the Office of Pastoral Planning—do to improve the effectiveness of leaders and staff members in addressing them?

4) The study was also designed to test a specific hypothesis: parish leaders and staff who have followed "best practices" will rate the success of their parishes' clustering or merging more positively than those who have not.

Significance of Study

This study may be valuable to other dioceses across the United States, particularly those on the east coast that have only recently begun to experience similar clustering and merging of parishes, because it takes an in-depth look at the experience of both leaders and staff members. The recommendations emanating from the study apply the findings of research on the human side of mergers and acquisitions in the corporate sector to the similar dynamic occurring when parishes cluster or merge.

Definition of Key Terms

Catechetical Leader – A lay person, religious, or deacon hired by a parish to provide Christian formation, religious education, and sacramental preparation to members.

Cluster – Two or more parishes served by a single pastor, pastoral administrator, or pastoral team with each parish retaining its own identity according to both church and civil law. Ministry programs and staffing can be autonomous within each parish or may involve partnerships with other members of the cluster. Typically, clusters move toward a more integrated ministry. For example, All Saints, Lansing; Holy Cross, Dryden; and St. Anthony, Groton used to be three independent parishes but they are now led by one priest pastor.

Merged Parish --- Two or more parishes consolidated into a single one under church and civil law. For the purposes of this study, this term will be used interchangeably with "parish with multiple worship and ministry sites." For example, St. Ambrose and St. John the Evangelist parishes in Rochester first clustered with St. James, Irondequoit in 2004 and then were amalgamated into a single parish named Peace of Christ in 2008.

Parochial Vicar – A priest appointed by the Bishop to assist a Pastor in the pastoral care of a parish.

Parish with multiple worship and ministry sites – A parish structure resulting from the combination of two or more parishes into a single parish. While the physical facilities of the previous parishes can be used as worship and/or ministry sites, there is only one parish and a single faith community. For example, Peace of Christ parish, described under the definition of "merged parish," could also be characterized as a parish with multiple worship and ministry sites since all three churches remain open.

Pastoral Administrator – A deacon, woman religious, or layperson, appointed by the Bishop, who serves as pastors in every way except he or she does not celebrate the sacraments. Deacons, however, may baptize and preside at marriages.

Pastoral Associate – A lay person, religious, or deacon hired by a parish to coordinate particular areas of ministry—e.g. adult education, liturgy, social ministry, pastoral care of the sick and bereaved.

Pastoral Leader – A generic term for the person who leads a parish, whether a Priest Pastor or a Pastoral Administrator.

Permanent Deacon – The permanent deacon is ordained—like a bishop or priest—with a particular role. Deacons proclaim the Gospel and preach; preside at baptisms, wakes, funerals, and communion services; witness marriages; assist at Mass; and serve as ministers of charity and justice.

Priest Pastor – A priest appointed by the Bishop to be accountable to him for the pastoral care of a parish.

Sacramental Minister – A priest assigned by the Bishop to provide sacramental ministry for a parish led by a Pastoral Administrator.

CHAPTER 2 – LITERATURE REVIEW

The Human Side of Mergers and Acquisitions

Since the 1980's, mergers and acquisitions have been a common approach for businesses to improve performance. The premise is that through mergers and acquisitions, organizations may gain economies of scale, strengthen market position, and create organizational synergy. However, recent studies have demonstrated that 60 to 80% of all mergers do not achieve their financial and strategic objectives (Appelbaum, 2003; Salame, 2006). Although the financial and strategic objectives of mergers are typically well planned and executed, it is often a lack of attention to human resources planning that is responsible for the failure of mergers and acquisitions to reach financial and strategic expectations. According to a survey by Towers Perrin and the Society for Human Resource Management Foundation (cited in Gemignani, 2001), "people" factors rate high among the prerequisites for success in mergers and acquisitions, but actual performance is poor, whereas financial factors, less critical for success, are handled well.

The human side is important throughout the combination process. Mergers are likely to fail if sufficient attention is not paid to ensure the talent needed to manage the change process, determine the management structures required for the consolidation, plan the specific kinds of management-worker-organization relationships necessary in the new entity, and prepare for the actual fit between the companies being brought together (Krupar & Krupar, 1988). "Post-merger drift," occurring after the merger as management struggles with integrating the two companies, typically takes at least one or two years to resolve. This time is characterized by lowered performance, a slow learning process, and dissatisfaction with the organization (Buono

& Bowditch, 2003). Some of the primary causes of the failure of mergers are a lack of communication, the absence of training, loss of talented employees and customers, corporate culture clash, power politics, and inadequate planning (Salome, 2006). All of these reasons result from the failure to manage and develop people in the new merged organization and are unrelated to failures because of specific legal and financial decisions.

Even though the major cause for failure is issues with people, human resources personnel are rarely involved in the process prior to the merger becoming official and often minimally afterwards (Salome, 2006; Tetenbaum, 1999). Buono and Bowditch (2003) outline reasons why the planning for mergers and acquisitions often ignores human resource issues. In contrast to the technical issues that generally have specific solutions and lend themselves to measured outcomes, interpersonal and organizational issues are more complex, less concrete, and less easily measurable. "Soft" issues like attitudes, beliefs, values, and commitment are considered irrelevant. Human resource professionals may also be left out of the merger process because they are not thought to have the skills required to deal with the merger and the issues it surfaces (Salome, 2006).

There are consequences when people issues are not appropriately addressed. Stress on individuals can create physical symptoms, such as elevated blood pressure, migraine headaches, muscle aches, and insomnia, as well as psychological outcomes including depression, anxiety, anger, lower job and life satisfaction, and preoccupation. These are linked to behavioral and organizational consequences, among which are power struggles, absenteeism, lowered performance and productivity, turnover, and workplace sabotage. There are more subtle costs in morale, loyalty, trust, and commitment among employees who remain

after any downsizing (Ivancevich, Schweiger, & Power, 1987). When companies do not address the human side of mergers and acquisitions, the result will be unforeseen expenses, key staff losses, declining service and customer retention, higher operating costs, and sometimes complete failure (Buono & Bowditch, 2003; Fink, 2009).

Types of Mergers and Stages in the Merger Process

Buono and Bowditch (2003) differentiate mergers and acquisitions along three dimensions: 1) the strategic purpose that undergirds the decision to consolidate; 2) the degree of friendliness or hostility; and 3) the desired level of integration following the merger. There are five basic types of mergers based on their strategic purpose: horizontal, vertical, product extension, market extension, and unrelated. Pritchett (1985) places mergers along a cooperative-adversarial continuum from organizational rescues to collaborations, contested situations, and raids. The degree of integration desired between the two companies can also be delineated along a continuum with the least integrated approach maintaining the functions as totally separate entities and the fully integrated one completely consolidating similar functions into a single unit. How employees experience and react to the amalgamation is related to these factors. For example, in a horizontal merger whose goal is achieving economies of scale, there is likely to be full integration of similar functions and downsizing, both of which increase employee stress and culture clash. In contrast, in a product extension or unrelated merger, employees may be more secure that their jobs and much of the organizational culture will remain intact.

Various authors find it useful to break the merger process into stages and then describe the issues and stressors that arise and the appropriate strategies to employ at each step.

Appelbaum and Gandell (2003) have the simplest model with three stages: pre-merger, merger, and post-merger. The first of these is entirely preparatory, while the second includes the period between the finalization of the merger and its public announcement. Post-merger describes the time after the transition is regarded as complete and the new organization is running smoothly.

Seo and Hill (2005) delineate four: premerger, initial planning and formal combination, operational combination, and stabilization. The premerger stage commences with the consideration of a possible merger and ends with the announcement. The stage of initial planning and formal combination then occurs until the former organizations are legally dissolved and a new firm created. The third stage includes the actual integration of functions and operations, while the stabilization stage is initiated once the operational integration is done.

Ivancevich et al. (1987) suggest five stages, including: planning, in-play, standstill, transition, and stabilization. The names of the first and last of these are fairly descriptive. The "in-play stage" is the time when one firm formally approaches another, while the "standstill stage" is the interval between the closing of the merger deal and the point at which regulatory hurdles are cleared. Their "transition stage" parallels Seo and Hill's (2005) operational combination.

Buono and Bowditch (2003) break down these actions into even more stages: precombination, combination planning, announced combination, initial combination process, formal physical-legal combination, combination aftermath, and psychological combination. These descriptions of stages are temporal in nature. However, Seo and Hill (2005) note that the

boundaries between stages are, in fact, not clear, since the actual integration process is generally quite complex.

All of these authors seem to be describing the same phenomena occurring in the same temporal order. The differences between models are based on the degree of detail the author wishes to delineate in the process of moving through a merger rather than any diverging views regarding what a merger encompasses. For the purposes of this research, the four-stage model of Seo and Hill (2005) seems most advantageous, since church clusterings and amalgamations are not as complex legally or operationally as corporate mergers. Appelbaum and Gandell's (2003) three-stage model omits the critical period of transition and integration subsequent to the announcement of the merger. The five-stage model of Ivancevich and colleagues (1987) focuses on firms approaching one another and regulatory hurdles, neither of which are relevant in the church setting, while the seven stages of Buono and Bowditch (2003) offer too many minute stages to be useful.

Psychological Impact of Mergers and Acquisitions

The change integral to any merger or acquisition brings with it both psychological and behavioral responses on the part of employees. Organizational members wonder if they will be laid off, promoted, or demoted and if they will need to relocate. They worry about whether their benefits and compensation will be altered and how they will be treated by the acquiring company. They may be concerned about what the merged firm will be like, what its mission and values will be. Most importantly, they ask, "What will this change mean for me?" (Buono & Bowditch, 2003).

Resistance to Change

All change—not just that involved in mergers and acquisitions—can lead to resistance. A number of authors identify the underlying reasons for resistance to change. Deutschman (2005, 2007) and Kegan and Lahey (2001) look for the psychological reasons why people resist change. Kotter and Schlesinger (2008) identify a variety of both psychological and situational reasons why resistance occurs. Ford, Ford, and D'Amelio (2008) highlight the contribution of change agents to the occurrence of resistance and underscore the value of resistance in some circumstances. These findings and contributions are discussed in this section.

In *Change or Die* (2007), Deutschman notes that even when individuals are told that they need to alter the ways they think, feel, and act or else they will die much sooner, the odds are nine to one against them that they will, indeed, make the changes critical to their survival. Facts, fear, and force do not inspire radical change.

Kegan and Lahey (2001) focus on situations where an individual or a group wants to change but seemingly cannot. They suggest that a hidden commitment competes with the effort to respond and change behavior. This competing commitment comes from what they call "big assumptions"—deeply rooted beliefs about either oneself or the world at large. Because people want to keep their picture of how they and the world operate intact, these big assumptions drive behaviors that are significantly resistant to change.

According to Kotter and Schlesinger (2008), there are four common reasons why people resist change. First, they think that the change means they will lose something of value. The change does not appear to be in their best interests or those of the subgroup to which they belong. A second reason is that people may misunderstand the change and, therefore, think it

will cost them more than they gain. Furthermore, people sometimes assess the situation differently from those driving the change. They may believe that the proposed change will harm not only themselves but the organization as a whole. Finally, some individuals have a low tolerance for change because they fear they will not be able to acquire the new skills and/or behaviors that will be needed.

Ford and colleagues (2008) criticize understandings of resistance such as that of Kotter and Schlesinger (2008). These approaches focus on the change recipient, in contrast to a conception of resistance as an interactive, systemic phenomenon (Lewin, 1997). They are "change agent-centric" in that they presume that the identification of resistance is an accurate report by an unbiased observer (i.e. the change agent) of an objective reality. In contrast, Ford and colleagues. (2008) portray resistance as the dynamic among three elements: change recipient action, change agent sense making, and the agent-recipient relationship. During a change initiative, both change agents and change recipients are making sense out of what is occurring. The former may attribute any unexpected problems to resistance if that is what they are expecting. Change agents label as "resistance" the behaviors and communications of change recipients without considering whether their own actions or inactions are contributing to the situation. Recipients may instead be reacting to what they perceive to be broken agreements and violations of trust and to communication breakdowns. The change agents themselves might be resistant to the ideas and counterproposals of the change recipients.

Ford and colleagues (2008) go on to state that resistance can sometimes be a valuable resource to an organization undergoing change. Talking negatively about a change underway keeps the change effort in conversation, thereby giving change agents an opportunity to

continue to clarify and legitimize the change. "Thoughtful" resistance may reflect greater engagement with the change than mere acceptance and may present an opportunity for change agents to win over highly committed opponents. Since conflict has been demonstrated to improve the quality of decisions and strengthen participants' commitment to implementation, resistance may be a strengthening value during change.

The way one understands resistance affects the strategies employed to address it. Deutschman (2005) looks to such fields as cognitive science, linguistics, and neuroscience for clues as to how to make change possible. He begins by describing and debunking five myths: 1) crisis is a powerful impetus for change; 2) change is motivated by fear; 3) facts will set us free; 4) small, gradual changes are always easier to make and sustain than radical ones; and 5) we cannot change because our brains become hardwired early in life. In *Change or Die* (2007), he suggests three keys as critical to initiate and maintain change, both at the individual and organizational levels. First, it is important to form an emotional relationship with a person or a community that inspires and sustains hope. This person or community gives the individual or group facing change the confidence that they can, indeed, change. Second, the new relationship helps those undergoing change to learn, practice, and master the new habits and skills required. Lastly, the new relationship provides the ability to reframe or think in new ways about the situation. Lasting change requires new hope, new skills, and new thinking.

Because Kegan and Lahey (2001) believe that a competing commitment prevents change, they suggest a three-stage process to help organizations determine what is getting in the way. First, managers guide employees through a set of questions designed to uncover competing commitments. Second, the employees analyze these commitments to figure out the

assumptions at their root. Then employees are free to start the process of trying to change their behavior.

For Kotter and Schlesinger (2008), the appropriate strategy to use in trying to overcome resistance depends on the particular situation and the reason for the resistance. The circumstances can be placed somewhere on a continuum. At one end are those occasions when the change requires rapid implementation, is clearly planned, and includes little involvement from others. In these cases, manipulation or explicit or implicit coercion may be utilized to overcome resistance. On the other end of the spectrum are slower changes that are not clearly planned from the start. Here, involving others in the design and implementation of the change reduces resistance. Kotter and Schlesinger (2008) suggest that it is best to select a point toward the latter end of the continuum whenever possible.

The strategy chosen also depends on the reason for the change and the power of the resisters. Where the change recipient does not have sufficient information or has misinformation, education and communication are preferred. If the initiators of the change do not have all the information they need to design the change or if others have significant power to resist, participation and involvement are required. Negotiation can be effective if the change recipients have considerable power and will clearly lose out in the change. The most common mistake change agents make is to use only one approach or a limited set regardless of the situation encountered.

In their systems approach, Ford and colleagues (2008) recommend that change agents focus on their relationship with the change recipient and on their own role in building resistance. Change agents should work to repair damaged relationships, address issues of

mistreatment or injustice, and restore trust both before and during any change initiative. They need to provide compelling justifications for the change. Their efforts will be undermined if they advocate the value of the new while maintaining practices that are not aligned with it. Change agents should be truthful and realistic in their description of the change as well as admit what they do not know. Resistance can provide an opportunity for them to improve the change effort, since resistance provides feedback on where the content and process of change need to be modified. The existence of resistance may encourage change agents to employ "best practices" such as communicating extensively, inviting people's involvement, providing needed resources, and developing solid working relationships.

Because a merger or acquisition involves significant change on the part of organizational members, resistance should be anticipated and measures to deal with it, developed, just as they would in any other change initiative. Key insights from the authors discussed include realizing how difficult it is to make and sustain any change and the importance of matching the strategy employed to the specific situation.

Anxiety Theory

The merger process creates stress and frequently results in anxiety. A corporate amalgamation is a major change over which employees have little or no control. Uncertainty about their futures may be combined with disruptions in jobs, work relationships, and family relationships (Ivancevich et al., 1987). Merger-related stress is triggered by the nature of the consolidation events themselves as well as the characteristics of the individuals involved. All employees do not exhibit the same levels of stress. Rather the stress response of any person is determined by the way he or she cognitively appraises and interprets the merger. If the person

deems that the merger is irrelevant or potentially positive for his or her circumstances, there will be little or no stress. But if the situation brings about stress, that stress may be categorized three ways. The stress may be harmful if it is connected to a loss of self-esteem or a sense of powerlessness. Second, the stress might be caused by a perceived future threat. Lastly, it might even be benign if the person perceives that the situation contains the potential for gain or growth. Three factors created by mergers and acquisitions—uncertainty, imminence, and duration--influence the strength of the person's appraisal and the effect of the stress on behavior. The higher the level of uncertainty, the higher the stress level. As the time of merger approaches, the appraisal intensifies. The longer the state of uncertainty and stress continues, the greater is the probability that the person will exhibit health, family, and personal problems.

Ivancevich and colleagues (1987) suggest strategies to decrease stress and anxiety at each of their delineated four stages of the merger process. Beyond ideas for communication that will be described in a later section, they offer the following. Beginning in the "in-play stage," human resource professionals can offer stress management training, provide access to individual counseling where needed, and survey employees to learn the extent of stress-related problems. Team building interventions and training on intergroup conflict resolution techniques may be useful. Employees of the acquired company should be respected and involved in decisions as appropriate.

Social Identity Theory

According to Seo and Hill (2005), part of personal identity is acquired through membership in groups. During a merger or acquisition, several identities can be affected, including professional identity, work group identity, and organizational identity. As the

consolidated company creates a new identity, this theory suggests that employees will try to reach a positive position for themselves and their own group. There can be serious interorganizational conflicts as a result. Some recommended interventions to support the formation of a new identity include the creation of a new vision and common goals, and identifying a common outgroup or competitor.

Acculturation Theory

Acculturation refers to changes in both firms because of the contact between them (Seo & Hill, 2005). These will be described at length in a later section on organizational culture.

Role Conflict Theory

During an amalgamation, employees may be engaged in multiple, incompatible roles and, therefore, face psychological tension. They may experience role conflict because of new job demands or struggle between remaining loyal to previous coworkers and customers and implementing the changes demanded of them through the merger process. Threatened job loss can disrupt their role as family providers (Schweiger, Ivancevich, & Power, 1987). Skilled leaders can act promptly to negotiate roles in the consolidated company and clarify reporting relationships (Marks & Mirvis, 1992).

Job Characteristics Theory

According to this theory, core job characteristics, such as skill variety, task autonomy, career paths, work relationships, and job security, affect employee attitudes, motivation, and behavior. To minimize negative assessments of change during mergers, employees can be involved in job redesign processes, jobs can be refocused so as to maintain or increase job satisfaction, and employees can be trained to adjust to job changes (Seo & Hill, 2005).

Organizational Justice Theory

In mergers, this theory relates to employees' perceptions of decisions about placements and layoffs. The way employees react to a merger can be affected by three types of fairness judgments. Distributive justice is fairness of the actual results as compared to the person's standard of fairness. Procedural justice is the fairness of the processes followed, and interactional justice is how employees are treated by those responsible for decisions about outcomes and procedures. Employees' attitudes and behavior are influenced by their perception of how both surviving and displaced organizational members are treated in the postmerger period. Strategies for managing these perceptions include involving employees from both firms in decisions, ensuring that accurate and unbiased criteria are consistently used in human resource procedures, and handling displaced employees with fairness and respect (Seo & Hill, 2005).

Seo and Hill (2005) link specific stressors to one of the preceding six psychological theories: anxiety, social identity, acculturation, role conflict, job characteristics, and organizational justice (see Table 1). They then categorize the impact of each stressor during the four stages of their merger and acquisition process as ranging from small to large. For example, role conflict has minimal effect on organizational members during the premerger stage, but it can have significant consequences when operations are being integrated.

_____

Stressor	Underlying theory	Impact of Stressors in Each Phase of Merger & Acquisition Integration			
		Premerger	Initial Planning and Formal Combination	Operational Combination	Stabilization
Uncertainty	Anxiety	Medium-large	Large-medium	Small	Small
Loss of identity	Social identity	Small	Large-medium	Medium-small	Small
Intergroup conflict	Social identity	Small	Medium-large	Large-medium	Small
Perceived unfairness	Organizational justice	Small	Medium-large	Medium	Medium-small
Acculturation stress	Acculturation	Small	Medium	Large	Medium-small
Job environment changes	Job characteristics	Small	Small	Medium-large	Medium-small
Role conflict and ambiguity	Role conflict	Small	Small	Large-medium	Small
Prolonged uncertainty	Anxiety	Small	Small	Small-medium	Small or high

_____

Table 1. *Effects of different sources of problems in different integration stages of mergers and acquisitions (Seo and Hill, 2005)*

Psychological Contract Theory

Argyris (1960) coined the phrase "psychological contract" to describe employer and employee expectations of the employment relationship. In contrast to an actual economic contract, this one is characterized by the individual employee's subjective perception of his or her own and the organization's obligations to one another. The longer an employee works for a firm, the greater the breadth of the expectations and responsibilities that are implicitly included. It is a powerful determinant of behavior even though unwritten. The psychological contract is always in flux and affected by any changes in the operations of the company (Huiyuan & Xin, 2008). During a merger or acquisition, the expectations are frequently

unilaterally changed, violated, or unfulfilled, leading to dysfunctional attitudes and behaviors. The divergence between employees' expectations and realities can cause dissatisfaction and poor work outcomes (Lawler & Porter, 1967, as cited in Buono & Bowditch, 2003). Realistic merger previews and participative survey feedback efforts can minimize unrealistic and unfulfilled expectations (Buono & Bowditch, 2003).

Blended Family Theory

Allred, Boal, and Holstein (2005) use the stepfamily literature to provide a framework for insights into the dynamics of why mergers and acquisitions succeed or fail. In an acquisition, the bidding company typically takes on the dominant parent role, while the acquired firm becomes subordinate with its employees in the role of stepchildren. Even in a "merger of equals," there usually emerges a dominant parent.

Three blended family models are applied to merging companies: biological discrimination, incomplete institutionalization, and deficit-comparison. According to the biological discrimination approach, biological parents invest more resources in their own children than in stepchildren. Stepchildren have less influence in family decision-making and maintain stronger loyalty to their biological parents. In mergers and acquisitions, the dominant firm's business units generally have more positive relationships, greater access to resources, and more influence, and its managers are more likely to move to the acquired firm rather than the reverse.

With regard to the incomplete institutionalization model, stepfamilies need to develop clear guidelines for role definition, appropriate behavior, and methods for dealing with problems. However, three polarizing differences make it difficult to establish norms:

differences between being an insider versus being an outsider, differences in attachment, and differences in culture.

The deficit-comparison approach proposes that stepchildren may be deficient either emotionally or physically, as compared to children in traditional families, and this difference may be embodied in behavioral problems and low self-esteem. There does not even need to be an actual deficiency, only the belief on the part of the stepchild that one exists before problems begin to occur. In a merger, the natural children—whether senior executives or line workers-- of the dominant parents generally have greater security and access to resources.

In both blended families and organizations undergoing a merger or acquisition, individuals experience high stress levels, culture shock, and other characteristics. To resolve the difficulties created by the new family or company, they must undertake such tasks as forming new traditions and establishing new relationships. The issues they must successfully address include boundary problems, information asymmetries, and loyalty conflicts. The complete listing of characteristics, tasks, and issues related to both stepfamilies and merging corporations, as identified by Allred et al. (2005), is delineated in Table 2.

_____

Characteristics	Tasks	Issues
High stress levels	Forming new traditions	High failure rates
Culture shock	Creating new coalitions	Power issues
Role ambiguity	Establishing new relationships	Coping with loss and change
Limited shared history		Life cycle discrepancies
Complex structures		Boundary problems
		Unrealistic beliefs
		Information asymmetries
		Insiders versus outsiders
		Loyalty conflicts
		Buyers remorse

_____

Table 2. Similarities between stepfamilies and corporations engaged in mergers/acquisitions (Allred et al., 2005)

Allred et al. (2005) recommend that focused attention be directed toward fostering a general sense of commitment both pre- and post-merger. The dominant firm should engage in activities that communicate its commitment to the acquired company such as quickly integrating employees and nurturing them to develop a sense of acceptance of change.

Mergers and acquisitions will be more successful if senior executives understand and anticipate the psychological impact of this change process on organizational members. Employees are likely to experience anxiety and a host of other emotions because of a loss of identity, role conflicts and confusion, and their perception of the fairness of decisions about placements and layoffs. They may believe that the unwritten psychological contract they have with their employer has been violated. In addition, those employees coming from the acquired firm may feel they are being treated as stepchildren who receive fewer resources and have less influence in decision-making than their counterparts in the acquiring company. Demonstrating commitment and building trust are critical to reassuring, motivating, and retaining employees.

The Role of Culture in Mergers and Acquisitions

Many of the sources of problems evidenced in consolidations are also found in other types of organizational change. These include employee anxiety, layoffs, role conflicts, and changes in the job environment. However, the blending of different organizational cultures is relatively unique to mergers and acquisitions. Seo and Hill (2005) suggest that the organizational change of these amalgamations is more complex than other large-scale organizational changes since it includes both the intraorganizational dynamics of leading change and the interorganizational dynamics of blending two organizational identities into one. According to a survey of 218 major U. S. organizations, 69% indicated that integrating culture was their top challenge during a merger process (cited in Tetenbaum, 1999).

Different Understandings of Organizational Culture

There are a variety of views of what organizational culture entails, ranging from those that differentiate between visible and invisible aspects to more superficial ones connected to some sort of typology. The fullest, most comprehensive definition seems to be that of Schein (2004):

> A pattern of shared basic assumptions that was learned by a group as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems." (p. 17)

Schein (2004) conceives of culture as having three levels. The first level, artifacts, includes the visible aspects of a group such as the physical environment, rituals, myths and stories, and organization charts. The second level is espoused beliefs and values, namely those that the

group proclaims as the beliefs and values guiding its behavior. At the deepest level are basic assumptions that truly do drive the actions taken. These are largely unconscious, taken for granted, and nonconfrontable. Within an organization, these assumptions may initially derive from the values and beliefs of the founder whose actions embed them in the organization. If, over time, they produce success as the organization deals with its outside environment and develops its internal relationships, they become widely shared and the unconscious basis for how new situations are addressed.

Buono and Bowditch (2003) call organizational culture the "normative glue" that holds an organization together and differentiate between subjective and objective organizational culture. The subjective culture is the "pattern of beliefs, assumptions, and expectations shared by organizational members and the group's characteristic way of perceiving the organization's environment and its values, norms, and roles as they exist outside the individual" (p. 137). It includes organizational heroes, rites, rituals, myths about the organization, the managerial climate, and mental frameworks, as well as the ways the organization acts and solves problems. The authors call the objective culture its artifacts. Although the term is the same as that used by Schein (2004), here it strictly refers to a narrow range of visible phenomena, the physical environment. What seems to be lost in this framework, as compared to Schein's, is the insight that visible indicators do not directly point to the underlying beliefs, assumptions, and values that ultimately guide action. There is also no differentiation between espoused values and those actually informing behavior.

Typology models categorize cultures in differing ways. The competing values framework of Cameron and Quinn (2006) places organizations on a continuum between

flexibility/discretion and stability/control. They also articulate a second continuum with external focus/differentiation at one pole and internal focus/integration at the other. This framework creates four major cultural types: hierarchy, market, clan, and adhocracy. The hierarchy is highly structured and concerned with stability, predictability, and efficiency. Formal rules and policies provide cohesion. A market culture is externally focused and results-oriented. It emphasizes external positioning and control while valuing competitiveness and productivity. Clan cultures are more like extended families than businesses. They value teamwork, employee development, and a humane work environment. Adhocracy cultures embrace innovation, flexibility, and entrepreneurship. They have the ability to reinvent themselves quickly as circumstances change.

The typology model of Deal and Kennedy (1999) is based on two other factors: 1) how much risk the company undertakes; and 2) the speed at which employees and the company as a whole receive feedback on the success of their strategies and decisions. The four resulting types are tough guy/macho (high risk, fast feedback), work hard/play hard (low risk, fast feedback), bet-your-company (high risk, slow feedback), and process (low risk, slow feedback).

Cooke and Szumal (2000) divide organizational cultures into three types: constructive, passive/defensive, and aggressive/defensive. They then describe the behavioral norms associated with each. For example, constructive cultures are associated with achievement, self-actualizing, humanistic-encouraging, and affiliative norms, while aggressive/defensive cultures have norms related to opposition, power, competitiveness, and perfection. Culture clash can arise whenever two different types of cultures are brought together.

Culture Change

Schein (2004) offers methods for leaders to utilize to drive any organizational change. The primary mechanisms are what they pay attention to, how they react to crises, how they allocate resources, role modeling and coaching, how they distribute rewards and status, and how they recruit and promote. Secondary methods are organizational structure, systems, and procedures as well as rituals, the design of physical space, stories about important events and people, and formal statements.

When any two organizations join together, there is the likelihood of culture clash. Leaders can choose to leave the cultures alone to evolve in their own way or intervene. Often one culture will dominate and gradually inculturate the members of the other culture or drive them away. A third possibility is to blend the two cultures either by intentionally selecting elements of each or letting new learning processes occur (Schein, 2004).

Buono and Bowditch (2003) propose key intervention points and processes during mergers in order to effect culture change. As an initial step, managers should focus on changing employees' behavior rather than their attitudes. In the long run, though, the beliefs, values, and attitudes of employees need to be consistent with and to reinforce the desired new behaviors. Therefore, managers must explain and justify the culture change required by the merger or acquisition. Third, they should communicate explicit cultural messages through speeches and memos, as well as implicit ones, through such forms as rituals, stories, logos, and symbolic actions. Other methods are to hire and socialize new people into the organization while removing employees who deviate from the desired culture.

Kanter (2009) recommends that merger integration should be envisioned as three sets of activities. During a transition period, it is useful to run the old and the new side by side through parallel operations. This practice helps employees avoid too much change all at once, retain their identities, and open themselves to new ways. Second, it is important to encourage relationship building beyond tasks. Social events can help create an emotionally unified culture prior to consolidated operations. Third, attention needs to be paid to start envisioning and building the future in a way not identical to either of the two previous companies' business models.

Managing Transition

W. Bridges (1991) differentiates between change and transition. Change is external and situational: a new supervisor, new team roles and responsibilities, or a new procedure. In contrast, a transition is an internal, psychological adjustment to new circumstances. It requires three separate processes, all of which are upsetting. These are saying goodbye, shifting into neutral, and moving forward. First, people need to let go of the way that things used to be and even of their former identity. The resulting neutral zone is a state of uncertainty and confusion that is especially difficult during mergers or acquisitions. During this time, some try to rush ahead while others attempt to retreat to the past. Yet this is a fertile time when creativity can abound and transformation take place. Lastly, the third phase requires people to behave in a new way, a demand that can put their sense of competence and value at risk.

Bridges & Mitchell (2008) offer suggestions for leaders to help their organizational members go through the transition process. Among these are the following: 1) learn to describe the change and its rationale succinctly; 2) ensure that details of the change are well

planned; and 3) understand who will need to let go of what. They recommend "boundary" events, acceptance of the symptoms of grieving, and efforts to protect people's interests in order to help people let go of the past in a respectful way. In order to reduce anxiety, leaders can create temporary solutions to the temporary problems that arise in the neutral zone. Finally, they can articulate the attitudes and behaviors needed for the change to be successful and then serve as a model, provide practice opportunities, and reward expected behaviors.

Importance of Communication during Change and Transition

Appelbaum and Gandell (2003) note that in the literature on mergers and acquisitions, corporate culture and communication appear to be the two most critical human resource factors for success. The communication needs during consolidations are qualitatively and quantitatively different from characteristic business communication requirements because of the high level of uncertainty and insecurity (Buono & Bowditch, 2003). The amount and consistency of information shared between an acquiring and an acquired firm is critical in creating meaning out of the uncertainty and ambiguity that are abundant in these situations (Risberg, 1997).

Bridges and Mitchell (2008) offer the 4 P's of transition communications, all of which require regular repetition: 1) The purpose (why the change is necessary); 2) the picture (what the goal will look and feel like); 3) the plan (how the organization will reach its goal); and 4) the part (what the particular employee can do to help the organization move forward). Richardson and Denton (1996) provide a set of guidelines for management to follow. Top management should communicate wholehearted and visible support for the change and provide employees with as much information as possible as soon as possible. "Rich" media (e.g., face-to-face

communication, personal letters, hot lines, interactive sessions) should be used. It is important to realize the key communications role of supervisors and middle managers, train them, and hold them accountable for keeping employees informed. Top management needs to deal with emotional issues, involve employees in the change process, and ensure that their actions match their words.

Various authors offer specific communication actions that should accompany the different merger stages. During the planning stage prior to a consolidation, senior management needs to ensure that an effective communication plan is in place including consideration of the various stakeholders, timing, medium, message, and opportunities for two-way communication (Appelbaum & Gandell, 2003). It is essential to deal with rumors that arise while at the same time working to avoid lying, to take care not to provide inconsistent information, and to avoid making false promises. Even though few details about the approaching merger may be worked out, communication provides employees with at least some time to prepare (Ivancevich et al., 1987).

At the time of the merger, it is critical that the CEO of the acquiring company communicate the following directly to employees: reasons for the acquisition, general facts about the acquiring company, changes in organization structure and management, plans for decreasing the number of employees, plans for emphasizing or deemphasizing the acquired company's services or products, and changes in compensation and benefits (Ivancevich et al., 1987).

As the merger implementation unfolds, additional types of information need to be communicated to employees. Among these are information about changes in job roles and titles, reporting relationships, career paths, and company policies (Ivancevich et al., 1987).

Other Strategies and Best Practices

There are additional strategies, mentioned in the literature, which tend to the human side of mergers and acquisitions. These include transition teams and training.

A series of transition or integration teams, composed of members of both organizations, can recommend new, integrated processes, policies, and systems. They can serve as conduits of accurate information between top management and employees, and provide a way for relationship building between the two firms. Human resource professionals can play an important role on such teams through team building and intergroup conflict resolution techniques (Buono & Bowditch, 2003, Gemignani, 2001, Ivancevich et al., 1987).

A primary purpose of training during the merger process is to provide organizational members with ways to comprehend what is happening and to maintain some sense of control. Workshops may focus on how to cope with anxiety and stress and how to function in situations of ambiguity and uncertainty. Companies may also foster an understanding of organizational culture and culture change (Buono & Bowditch, 2003). Training may include "soft skills," such as techniques to build relationships and networks, and transfer understanding of the organization's purpose, values, and principles (Kanter, 2009). Frontline managers can benefit from training on how to communicate major changes in such a way as to engage and build a relationship with employees (Gemignani, 2001).

Kanter (2009) offers a summary of best practices for mergers based on a study of successful acquisitions:

"Whether integrating giant enterprises across many countries or putting two small offices together in one location, they do not act like conquerors sending out occupying armies. Instead, they act like welcoming hosts and eager learners. Their leaders are attuned to emotions and culture, knowing the importance of symbols and signals in communicating with employees about change. They establish transparent processes to reduce anxieties about changes that have not yet been made. They invest in the future, adding more than they take away and letting people share in the fruits of success. They try to be fixers rather than destroyers, which converts skeptics into fans. They value and facilitate relationships." (p. 125)

Parishes in the Catholic Church of the United States

In many ways the parish restructuring currently underway in the Catholic Church of the United States resembles the process and the dynamics of corporate mergers and acquisitions. Seo and Hill (2005) describe four stages in the merger process: premerger, initial planning and formal combination, operational combination, and stabilization. Similarly, Catholic parishes undergoing clustering, and then oftentimes merger, pass through similar stages. First, they participate in some sort of diocesan planning process that determines which parishes will share resources with one another, which will close, and which will be linked to another parish. In contrast to the corporate world, partners are more likely to be determined by geographic proximity rather than potential strategic synergies. The second stage, the time between the announcement of the parish re-structuring and the formal beginning of the cluster, might last

only a few weeks or several years. In many dioceses, parishes are clustered but never move beyond that relationship to an amalgamation. Therefore, the degree of integration of the churches involved may be minimal and, in some cases, the third stage of operational combination may be omitted. In other situations, staffs and ministries may be combined prior to formal merger or afterwards. As with mergers and acquisitions, the ending stage is stabilization.

Little has been written to date about the human side of this movement from single parishes to merged communities. Zech and Miller (2008) studied parishes that went through change and described the process they used. Their description of the feelings of parishioners when their parish is restructured is consistent with similar portrayals in the merger and acquisition literature. They mention anxiety as parishioners wonder what their role will be in the new entity, a loss of parish identity, the experience of grief and mourning, and culture clash. Their survey of pastoral council members in parishes which had undergone various forms of restructuring, among which were parishes which had clustered or merged, elicited several recommendations for how parish restructuring could be better handled. These were separated into two stages, preparation/planning and implementation, rather than the three to seven in the mergers and acquisitions literature. These parishioners in a key leadership position within their churches stated that the most important activities during the preparation/planning stage were education of parishioners regarding the reasons for the change, prayer, lay involvement in the planning process, and leadership from the pastor. During implementation, the following were critical: keeping parishioners well informed about changes, prayer, all parishes benefiting from the restructuring, clear expectations and roles for each parish, and sufficient resources to

make the changes the restructuring required. Other than the role of prayer throughout the process of bringing communities together, these lists resemble those that have emerged in reflection and research on the merger process. Zech and Miller then applied the corporate merger and blended families literature to the church setting to create a list of seven things dioceses and parishioners could do to help parishes needing to restructure. These recommendations were the following: 1) ensure that parishioners feel a sense of ownership about the restructuring process; 2) provide parishioners with information about the causes contributing to the need to restructure; 3) pay attention to the implementation phase; 4) provide diocesan support; 5) ensure supportive leadership by the pastor; 6) form groups to involve parishioners in various facets of the restructuring; and 7) pray throughout every stage. The first six of these suggestions are consistent with the emphasis in the merger/acquisition literature on the importance of communication and involvement, support to organizational members undergoing change, and attention to the details of implementation.

Thus far there has been no systematic attempt to survey staff members of clustering or merging parishes. Mogilka and Wiskus (2009) included a chapter in their book *Pastoring Multiple Parishes* on parish staffs. Their own experience added to the information gained through two multiple parish pastoring pilot training programs, one of which was held in the Diocese of Rochester, formed the basis for this chapter. The most common problem they identified—tension arising when the shared pastor previously led one of the parishes of the cluster—mirrors the metaphor of corporations as stepfamilies (Allred et al., 2005). Other areas of concerns were communication, stability in ministerial positions and in ministerial

responsibilities following the restructuring, the pastor's level of skill and experience in collaboration, the lack of formation and training for staff, and the supervision of staff.

Although there is still a paucity of research, more attention has been paid to the difference between ministry in single parishes versus clustered or merged parishes than to the experience of going through a restructuring process. Sometimes mention is made of merger-related concerns, such as dealing with the unhappiness of parishioners after a change, but the bulk of the studies undertaken thus far primarily seek to understand the experience of leading multiple parishes in order to identify healthy practices. K. Schuth (2006) surveyed more than 900 priests across the United States and interviewed another 70. After gaining an understanding of what their experience was like, she shared advice, gleaned from survey results, for those newly assigned to lead multiple parishes. Pastors new to this ministry were counseled to tend to their personal and spiritual well being through maintaining a strong prayer life, taking adequate time off from work, and finding a mentor or coach among experienced pastors. Other suggestions focused on priests' relationships with parishioners. Here experienced pastors said to get to know people, learn as much as possible about each congregation, demonstrate concern and love, educate people about new possibilities, and eventually challenge them to grow. It is important for leaders to set for themselves reasonable expectations and limits regarding what they can accomplish. Delegating and involving both parishioners and staff are necessary in order to serve several parishes.

Schuth's (2006) survey also gathered suggestions for ways dioceses could increase ministerial effectiveness in clusters and merged parishes. Topics mentioned for training or

mentoring were how to encourage and train leaders, decrease competition between parishes, and handle conflicts. Those in bilingual parishes requested help with language and culture.

In 2003 six national ministerial organizations joined together for the Emerging Models of Pastoral Leadership Project, one specific aspect of which dealt with Multiple Parish Pastoring. As part of this effort, Cieslak (2006) created a synopsis of original research, done by Rexhausen and the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, to determine specific parish changes made within dioceses of the United States between 1995 and 2000 and to understand the best types of staffing patterns. The survey of parish leaders revealed that the greatest difficulties experienced were "coordination and balance of time between parishes," "finding enough lay volunteers," and "unhappiness of parishioners with changes brought by reorganization." The survey also highlighted the impact of clustering on staff. Some leaders had increased responsibilities for existing staff, while others had expanded the staff size or created new job responsibilities. Somewhat surprisingly, the respondents were twice as likely to indicate an improvement in meeting parish needs as opposed to a diminishment.

The original Emerging Models Project culminated in a National Ministry Summit in 2008. The participants' top four recommendations for multiple-parish ministry were the following: 1) develop and provide training for those engaged in this ministry; 2) develop pastoral planning processes embodying greater consultation between local lay leaders and pastors and diocesan leadership; 3) develop guidelines to aid parishes transitioning from single to multiple-parish pasturing; and 4) study what "parish" means today in light of evolving pastoral realities (Jewell, 2009). The results of the Multiple Parish Pastoring Project were summarized by Mogilka and Wiskus (2009). The authors identified best practices when clustering or merging parishes and

the skills necessary for this type of ministry. Their work formed the basis for the survey portion

of this study.

CHAPTER 3 – METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to understand the common pitfalls facing those entering ministry in a cluster or merged parish and to identify the effective practices utilized in particular situations so that they can be shared with others. The methods used to collect data included a survey of pastoral leaders and staff members, focus groups with staff members, and interviews with pastors and pastoral administrators.

Survey

Sample

Pastoral leaders within the Diocese of Rochester can be either pastors or pastoral administrators. Staffing patterns vary greatly, depending on the size and resources of the parish. Some large parishes might have on staff one or more pastoral associates, a catechetical leader, youth minister, and various part-time ministerial staff such as a liturgy coordinator, music coordinator, choir director, and organists. The pastoral leader could also hire a business manager, bookkeeper, one or more secretaries, a housekeeper or cook, and maintenance people. In contrast, a small parish—more likely rural or urban—might be served by a part-time catechetical leader and a secretary/bookkeeper, in addition to the pastoral leader. Other roles would be filled by parishioners volunteering their time.

The target population for this portion of the study consisted of pastors, pastoral administrators, exempt staff, and non-exempt staff. Five of the 17 clusters and five of the 14 parishes with multiple worship sites were selected randomly by drawing names from a pile of slips. While the clusters and parishes did represent urban, rural, small city, and suburban locations, none of the clusters or merged parishes with four or six worship sites was included

since these were not chosen through the random method. Therefore, staff from the seemingly most complex parish structures were not surveyed.

Data Collection

The data were collected through the use of a survey designed by the researcher. The researcher contacted pastoral leaders by phone to explain the purpose of the survey and seek permission to distribute it to their staffs. In the two cases where the leader was away on vacation, a staff member gave this permission. Most of the surveys were then sent directly in most cases to participants via email; in two of the clusters, a secretary printed and distributed copies. The cover letter informed participants that responses would be kept confidential and that information gathered would be presented in aggregate form to ensure anonymity.

Data collection took place August 3 through August 14, 2009. Forty of 77 surveys were completed and returned, yielding a response rate of 52%.

Instrument

The survey instrument (see Appendix A) included a mix of close-ended and open-ended questions. The close-ended questions gathered information about the cluster or merged parish including when it was created, the number of churches, the distance between them, and the number of households. Respondents were asked to rate the success of the clustering or merging on a Likert scale. Demographic information was also collected about the respondents: job title, how long they have worked in a church position, and then they began this current job in relation to the timing of the beginning of the cluster. Open-ended questions were the following: "What is the top issue facing your cluster/merged parish right now?" "What is your top challenge in your role today?" "What is one piece of advice you would give to someone

entering multiple parish ministry for the first time?" and "What has been your biggest challenge in working for a cluster/merged parish?"

One section was devoted to rating the importance of various skills for multiple parish ministry, a second to the importance of training in those skills prior to entering multiple parish ministry, and a third asking respondents the skills in which they would benefit from training at this time in their current positions. The survey also contained a checklist of practices that have been used in clusters and merged parishes. The lists of skills and best practices were derived from those identified by Mogilka and Wiskus (2009) with the addition of two skills mentioned by local pastoral leaders and staff members but not included in the book *Pastoring Multiple Parishes*.

Data Analysis

With the quantitative data, the responses to the demographic questions were tallied for frequency and then percentages were calculated. The question regarding skills in which the respondent would benefit from training and the question about practices for multiple parish settings were tallied and then ranked in order of frequency. The mean was calculated for the two Likert-scale questions about skills and training. Content analysis was used to analyze open-ended questions. The hypothesis was tested by correlating the number of best practices utilized with the ranking of the success of the clustering or merging. Results are reported in Chapter 4.

Focus Groups

Sample

The target population for this portion of the study was staff members of clusters and merged parishes. Invitations were extended to staff within five clusters and seven merged parishes. One setting was urban, seven rural, and four small city. The number of worship sites ranged from two to six.

Data Collection

Five focus groups were conducted at churches throughout the Diocese of Rochester between November 2009 and January 2010. The number of participants per group varied from three to seven, with 24 participants total. Of these, four were business managers, eight catechetical leaders/youth ministers, one deacon, one liturgy/music coordinator, three office personnel, one parochial vicar, and six pastoral associates. Participants were informed orally and through the consent form that their responses would be kept confidential and that information gathered would be presented in aggregate form to ensure anonymity. (See Appendix B for a copy of the consent form.)

The eight questions posed to focus group participants were written by the author and two other graduate students in the Organizational Learning and Human Resource Development program. The intent was to follow up on three issues that had been prominent in responses to the previous survey: leading change, dealing with resistance to change, and communication. One question was also devoted to soliciting input regarding how the diocese, particularly the Office of Pastoral Planning, could better support both staff members and pastoral leaders.

Once preliminary results were drafted, they were shared with participants who were invited to

submit any necessary additional input.

Focus Group Questions

1. Leading change, dealing with resistance to change, and communication were three areas in which respondents to an earlier survey indicated that they were facing the most difficulty in their positions on the staffs of clustered and merged parishes. Do you agree? What is missing from this list?

2. In what ways have you had to lead changes within your cluster or merged parish? What has been your most positive experience? What factors made it a good experience?

3. Recall an instance when you, another staff member, or parishioners resisted a change taking place in the life of your cluster or merged parish. What factors contributed to the unwillingness to go along with the change? What actions helped (or could have helped)?

4. What are some common changes or difficult changes your parishioners are facing? What ideas do you have for better ways to help parishioners understand and deal with change in their church life?

5. In what ways has communication become more complicated since your parishes were clustered or merged? Where are the communication breakdowns? Who are you having the most communication difficulties with?

6. What are some ideas you have for ways communication can be improved—between pastoral leader and staff, within staffs, between staffs and parishioners?

7. As you look ahead to the next 1-3 years, what are some of the key changes and challenges that you anticipate? What one thing do you wish would change in your work situation that would have the most positive impact?

8. What are some ways in which staff like yourself could be better supported by the diocese—in particular, by the Office of Pastoral Planning? How could pastors and pastoral administrators be helped?

Data Analysis

Content from the focus groups was analyzed for common themes, effective practices,

and recommendations. Results are reported in Chapter 4.

Interviews

Sample

The target population for this portion of the study was pastors and pastoral administrators of clusters and merged parishes. Invitations were extended to pastoral leaders within eight clusters and five merged parishes. One setting was urban, seven rural, three suburban, and two small city. The number of worship sites ranged from two to six.

Data Collection

Thirteen interviews were conducted either in person or over the phone between November 2009 and January 2010. Interviewees included eight pastors and five pastoral administrators. They were informed orally and through the consent form that their responses would be kept confidential and that information gathered would be presented in aggregate form to ensure anonymity.

The eight questions posed to interviewees were written by the author and two other graduate students in the Organizational Learning and Human Resource Development program. The intent was to follow up on three issues that had been prominent in responses to the previous survey: leading change, dealing with resistance to change, and communication. One question was also devoted to soliciting input regarding how the diocese, particularly the Office of Pastoral Planning, could better support both staff members and pastoral leaders. Once preliminary findings were drafted, they were shared with interviewees who were invited to submit any necessary additional input.

Interview Questions

1. Leading change, dealing with resistance to change, and communication were three areas in which respondents to an earlier survey indicated that they were facing the most

difficulty in their positions as leaders or staff members of clustered and merged parishes. Do you agree? What is missing from this list?

2. In what ways have you had to lead changes within your cluster or merged parish? What has been your most positive experience? What factors made it a good experience?

3. Recall an instance when you, a staff member, or parishioners resisted a change taking place in the life of your cluster or merged parish. What factors contributed to the unwillingness to go along with the change? What actions helped (or could have helped)?

4. What are some common changes or difficult changes your parishioners are facing? What ideas do you have for better ways to help parishioners understand and deal with change in their church life?

5. In what ways has communication become more complicated since your parishes were clustered or merged? Where are the communication breakdowns? Who are you having the most communication difficulties with?

6. What are some ideas you have for ways communication can be improved—between pastoral leader and staff, within staffs, between staffs and parishioners?

7. As you look ahead to the next 1-3 years, what are some of the key changes and challenges that you anticipate? What one thing do you wish would change in your work situation that would have the most positive impact?

8. What are some ways in which leaders like yourself could be better supported by the diocese—in particular, by the Office of Pastoral Planning? How could staff members be helped?

Data Analysis

Content from the interviews was analyzed for common themes, effective practices, and recommendations. Results are reported in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 4 – KEY RESEARCH FINDINGS

Survey

Description of Sample

Forty of 77 surveys were completed and returned, yielding a response rate of 52%, adequate to ensure an appropriate confidence level in the findings. Tables 3 and 4 outline the descriptive statistics calculated on the survey sample.

_____

Position	# Surveys Received	# Employees in Clusters/Merged Parishes in Diocese of Rochester by Position	Percent of Employees who were Survey Respondents
Pastor	4	23	17%
Parochial Vicar/Sacramental Minister	2	18	11%
Pastoral Administrators	3	8	38%
Pastoral Associates	3	21	14%
Catechetical Leaders/Youth Ministers	6	57	11%
Business Managers	8	22	36%
Secretaries/Receptionists	9	46	20%
Other	2		
Unknown	3		

_____

Table 3. Frequency distributions for responses by position

The diversity among respondents seemed representative of the population of staff engaged in multiple parish ministry with two exceptions. Although music personnel and deacons providing 10 hours of service per week on an unpaid basis were sent surveys to their home e-mail addresses, none responded. Most priests who were not pastors also did not respond. Therefore, the results are probably not applicable to staff members not regularly on site and perhaps not to priests in assisting roles.

Length of Time in Church Position	Frequency	Percent
0-5 years	13	33
6-10 years	6	15
11-15 years	4	10
16+ years	17	42

Table 4. Frequency distributions for length of service

All but two of the respondents worked for the cluster or merged parish as a whole, rather than for one of the worship sites. Thirty-seven percent began their positions prior to the clustering or merging, 28% at the time of clustering or merging, and 35% afterwards.

Skills and Training

First, respondents were asked to rate the importance of each of a list of 15 skills for those engaged in multiple parish ministry and to write in and rate any skills not mentioned that they deemed critical. One indicated "not important," two was "somewhat important," three was "important," four was "very important," and five meant "extremely important." The mean for each skill identified in the survey was above 3.0, that is rated somewhere between "important" and "extremely important." The ranking of skills, as shown in figure 1, indicates that communication is deemed most important, followed by collaboration, administration, dealing with resistance to change, and fiscal management. Other skills written in more than once under "other" were "building trust and teamwork among staff members" and "prayer."
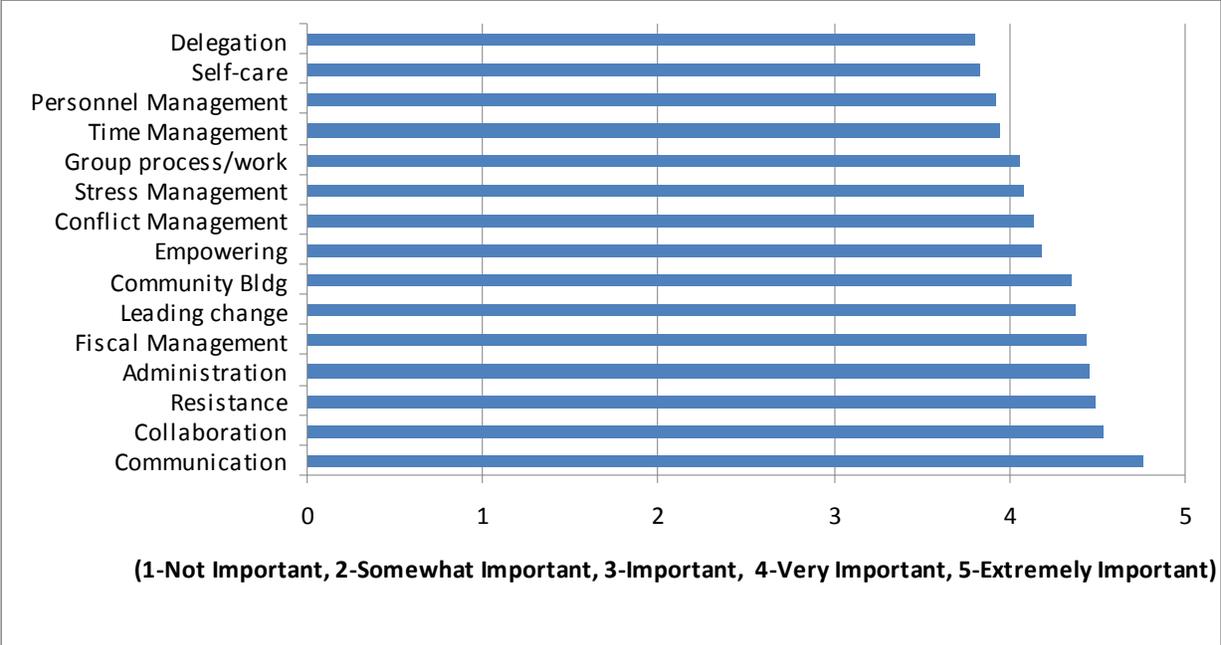
Figure 1. Respondents' rating of the importance of various skills for multiple parish ministry

When indicating skills for which training should be provided for those entering multiple parish ministry, the same skills emerged as the top five but in a slightly different order: communication, dealing with resistance to change, administration, collaboration, and fiscal management (see Figure 2). The only skill written in under "other" more than once was "building trust and teamwork among staff members."
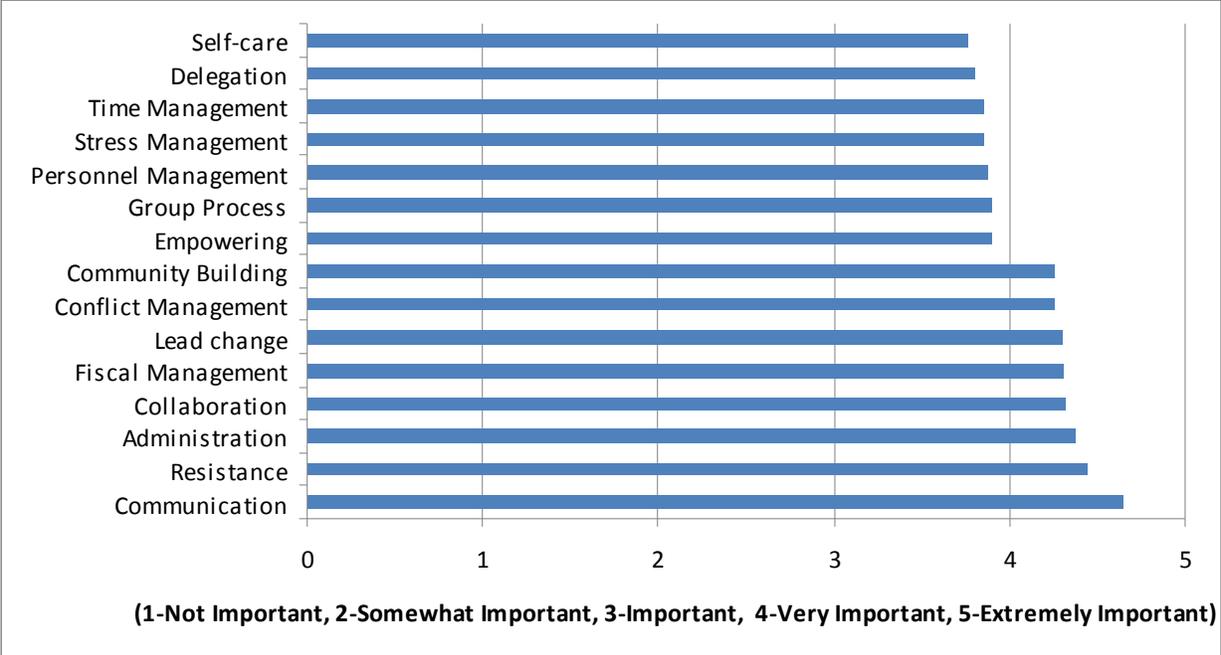
Figure 2. Respondents' rating of the importance of training in various skills prior to entering multiple parish ministry

Respondents identified the skills in which they felt they would still benefit from training in their current position (see Figure 3). Dealing with resistance to change and leading change were rated most highly across the diverse cluster and merged parish situations as well as by both relatively new and long-time staff members.
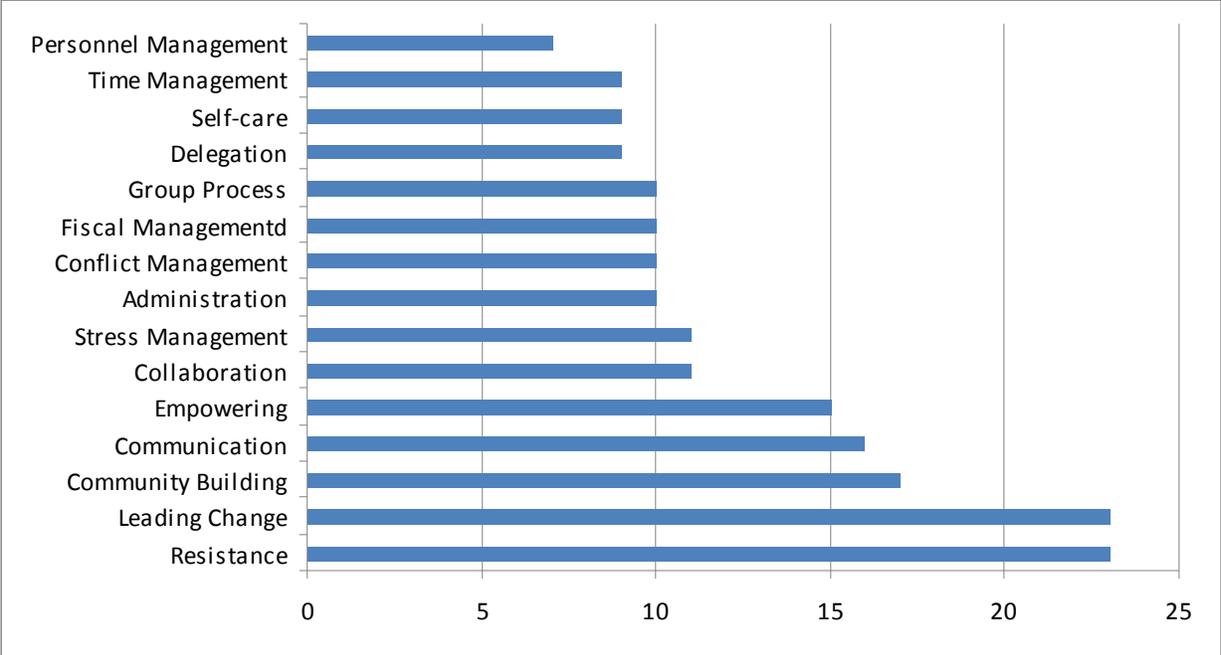
Figure 3. Respondents' indication of skills in which they felt they would still benefit from training

"Best" Practices

Respondents to the survey were asked to indicate which of a list of "best" practices, as identified by Mogilka and Wiskus (2009), had been utilized in their cluster or merged parish. The total number of times a practice was checked by participants was tallied with the results included in Table 5. The most common practices being used within clustered and merged parishes seem to revolve around enhancing communication among staff and parishioners, joining various catechetical programs, and creating single consultative bodies (i.e. pastoral and finance councils) for the pastoral leader.

Practice	Frequency Mentioned
Common bulletin	39
A shared RCIA process	35
Shared preparation for Confirmation	34
Shared catechetical programs for children	32
A single office location for all staff	31
A single pastoral council	31
A common website	30
Shared preparation for First Eucharist	29
Regular joint staff meetings	29
Shared training for catechists	28
A single finance council	28
A designated sacristan	28
Shared spiritual/educational programs for adults	27
Shared preparation for Baptism	26
Shared preparation for Marriage	26
Concerted effort to involve more parishioners	25
Standardized hymnals	25
Shared training for liturgical ministers	25
Standardized missalettes	23
Shared multiple-worship site ministries	22
Clear channels of communication between staff and pastoral leader	22
A common mission statement	21
Shared training for visitors for the sick and homebound	21
Celebrations of unique traditions of each worship site	20
Shared staff day of reflection	20
Staffs developing a common vision	20
Adjusting job descriptions	18
An interparish choir for major holy days and events	18
Regular staff meetings for each worship site	17
New shared traditions	17
A transition team	16
Special ritual at the time of clustering/merging	15
Encouragement of staff time off	15
Clear channels of communication between staff at each worship site	14
All pastoral councils meeting in the same location on the same night	13
All finance councils meeting in the same location on the same night	11
Established annual priorities	8
A single office location for all staff coupled with satellite offices	7
Working with a mentor	5
Participating in a support group	5

Table 5. Rank ordering of respondents' indication that various "best" practices were in place in their cluster or merged parish

Themes

Several themes emerged in responses to the open-ended questions. The top issues facing the clusters and merged parishes were finances, community building and getting people to work together, dealing with change, and buildings, particularly closing buildings no longer needed or worth their cost. There were no patterns in the responses to the question "What is your top challenge in your role today?" Rather, each answer seemed to be particular to the person's position and situation. For example, two responses were "paying the bills" and "recruiting volunteers for parish visitation to all homebound."

However, the most frequent responses to "What has been your biggest challenge in working for a cluster/merged parish?" focused on the following:

1) getting people to work together (either parishioners or the staff)—"staff tension and conflict" "making families and parishioners feel as one community of faith—it hasn't happened";

2) dealing with change and resistance to change—"dealing with the negativity from parishioners who do not embrace change";

3) establishing trust among people—"having the new church parishioners accept me as a member of the staff—I was the only one on staff from the cluster churches to stay on" "establishing trust among all staff members";

4) the sheer volume of working in more than one church— "running back and forth between sites and keeping two sets of records, and now working with some things that have been changed to one and some that haven't and trying to learn the job and get everything in order that's not and maintain everything that is."

A wider range of themes emerged when respondents were asked to give their advice to newcomers to multiple parish ministry. Being open-minded, open to the guidance of the Spirit, and open to change were mentioned most frequently. Engaging in prayer and remembering that God is in charge were also stressed. Other advice included get support from others, be patient since change takes time, listen, and maintain good communication. New staff members were also told to be even-handed when dealing with the people of each parish and not to play favorites.

Testing of Hypothesis

The data revealed a strong positive correlation between the rating of the success of the parishes' clustering or merging and the use of more of the "best" practices, r = .56. Figure 4 shows a scatter chart of the data.
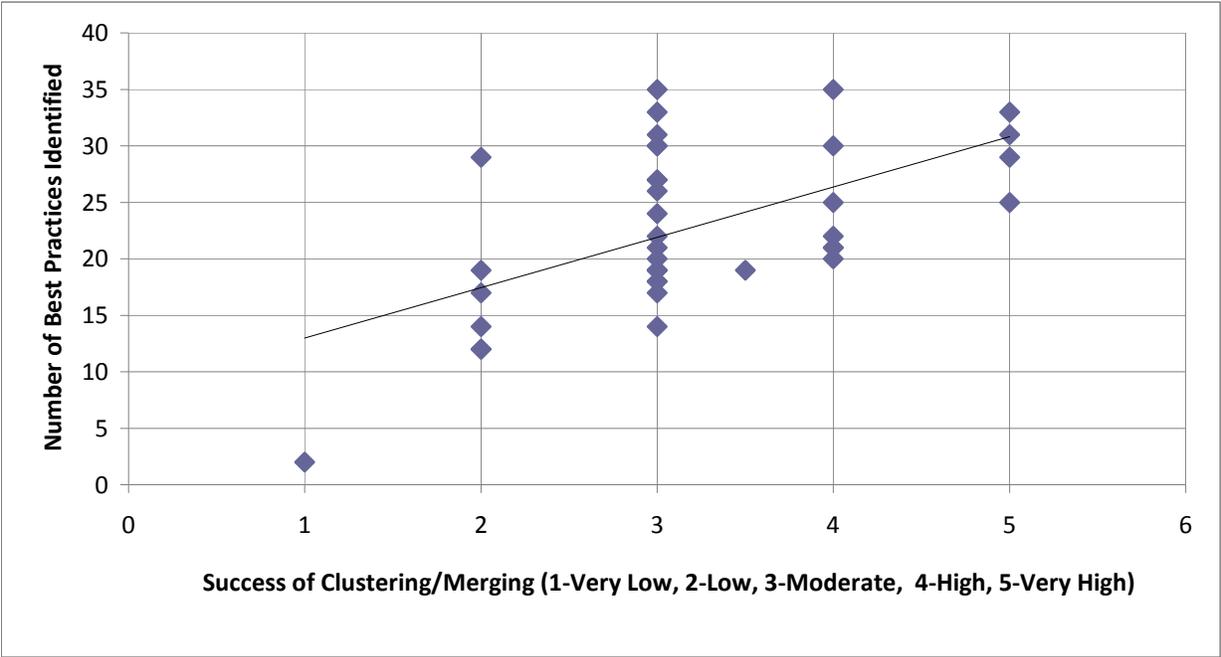
Figure 4. Correlation of the number of best practices utilized and the rating of the success of the clustering or merging.

Focus Groups

Good News/Effective Practices

Pastoral leaders, staffs, and parishioners have contributed to positive experiences of clustering and merging.

- Some of the clusters/merged parishes have moved through changes to become unified communities. "Ours is beyond where the others are. We do feel like one community. We worked very hard at that—bringing three churches into one community."

- In several situations, a talented leader was able to bring staff and parishioners through the changes and build a unified community. Key traits mentioned were excellent people skills, energetic, able to articulate a sense of vision and hope, and available to parishioners and staff. Listening to people, being proactive in addressing potential conflicts, and handling situations in a timely fashion were also mentioned. "The pastor was personable, with vision. People gravitated to him and were willing to follow him. The leader is key—if he or she is energized, with people and sensitive to them, it goes better." "Things are 100% better [since the current leader came]. You need talking from the pulpit, which is happening now. He controls the fires and listens. Fr. X would meet with parishioners but he didn't hear what they said. Just the way he [the new leader] talks helps—he proactively calls people, he's open about his own life, and he handles situations in a timely fashion."

- Staff members themselves have led key change efforts in their communities such as developing new sacramental preparation programs, creating new committees and ministries that involve all of the clustering churches, and implementing shared events.

Some understand their role in helping parishioners to deal with change and the need for the leader and staff to present a united front to parishioners. Some have helped to manage conflict between leaders and parishioners. "In a personnel situation, there may have been injustice, but the church had to go on. I had to be visible every week and positive. I had to be the face for civility and hope. My actions helped." By and large staff members enjoy their work and the opportunity to minister to others.

• Where pastoral leaders offer support and encouragement, staff members can adjust to change and deal with resistance coming from parishioners.

• Both staff members and parishioners have taken more responsibility and become more involved in parish leadership roles with the declining number of priests available. "The involvement of lay people has grown. People are taking real ownership. For example, 38 people volunteered to visit hospitals and shut ins."

Respecting the uniqueness of communities, creating new events, involving parishioners, and good communication are successful strategies.

• It is important to understand the history and traditions of each of the communities involved. This helps leaders and staff members appreciate where people are coming from, honor their traditions, and be more patient.

• New events, groups and methods of faith formation are often well received because they are not associated with any of the particular communities. They help people get to know one another and be a part of something uplifting. "We reorganized all our choirs and musicians in an effort to change the complexion of Masses for people who wanted more energetic liturgies. We invited all the musicians and told them they could choose

where they wanted to go. All were very happy because they had a choice, and the younger people are more involved. The largest choir is the new one for the people who wanted change."

- The pace of change is more of an art than a science. It cannot be too fast or too slow. Involving parishioners in the changes, offering invitations and choices help.

- Regular, consistent communication is critical. Effective communication vehicles with parishioners include pulpit announcements, town meetings/listening sessions, the website, and the bulletin. Having one bulletin and website for the cluster or merged parish and primarily the same announcements and prayers of intercession in every church alleviate communication problems. Of particular importance is preaching which links faith and theology to the changes parishioners are experiencing. The importance of communication from the leader was highlighted, but clear communication is also needed from staff members and the chairs of committees and councils—particularly the finance council.   Parishioners must know whom they should call with various questions and needs.

Support has been available from the Pastoral Center. Some participants expressed gratitude for the support they have received from Buildings and Facilities, Finance, Human Resources, and Pastoral Planning. Often staff members feel that particular individuals at the Pastoral Center are helpful to them. "I think that the support from Pastoral Planning is tremendous; the same with HR. They are supportive. Buildings and facilities are supportive." "I have always found the diocese supportive during crises."

Issues and Areas of Concern

Change and Leading Change

- There are multiple changes beyond the parish reconfiguration itself—e.g., a new pastoral leader or frequent turnover of leaders, turnover of staff members, revised Mass schedules, new ways of doing faith formation. Some communities have been clustered and merged once, only to need to cluster and merge with additional communities later on. Church closures have often been part of this ongoing process. "I'm concerned we will never see the light at the end of the tunnel. It feels like it is going on forever."

- "It is hard to identify who is leading the change in the parish."

- The process of change seems murky. "We know where we are going but we don't know the path of how to get there."

- There may be a mismatch between the parishes clustering and competitiveness because of a history of school and sports' rivalries. "We had three small villages and competitiveness for years because of sports and getting that piece out of the way was hard."

- Parishioners find the changes difficult and often resist. "People see the church as their anchor. The church going through change shakes people." Fear of loss of identity and ownership, fear of church closure, and possessiveness of funds contribute. Some leave and others reduce their level of involvement. "People don't understand why change is taking place. Change is hard generally. If you have a personal investment in something being changed, an explanation doesn't make a difference. It takes one-on-one listening to validate their feelings. I say to them, 'This isn't fun.'"

Leadership

- Leaders are not trained or prepared to lead change in parish communities. "Our clerical leaders are not trained or prepared for this challenge. Should they, or someone on staff, receive more training? Is there a procedure or model to follow?"

- Some leaders do not have basic leadership skills and make wrong-headed decisions with little or no consultation of others. Some are minimally present to staff or parishioners. "Strong leadership is needed from the pastor or pastoral administrator. We don't have that. He can't make a decision and, when he does, it feels like a dictatorship. This should have been an easy cluster but it hasn't been."

- Staff members believe that the success of a cluster or merged parish is highly dependent on its leader. One staff member used this example: "I love going to Staples—the employees are well-dressed, helpful, not intrusive. That is the opposite of Office Max. Their behavior points back to corporate policies on hiring and expectations. It comes from the top down."

Clustering/merging parishes is difficult for parish staff members.

- Staff members are in a unique position. Often they themselves are having difficulty adjusting to the changes, especially if they are parishioners or long-time staff for one of the parishes. Yet they also have a critical role in helping parishioners adjust to the new circumstances.

- Once the cluster is created, staff members often do not have clear job descriptions or know what is expected of them. "Now that the new reality is in place, what is expected of me in my job? What do we expect of each other?"

- There is often considerable turmoil on staffs. There are differences in how quickly--or if--particular staff members can adjust to changes. Loyalty is often primarily to fellow staff members from one's original parish. A desire for better staff relations was mentioned by many of the focus group participants. "When parishes come together and there are duplicate positions, staff wonder if this person is a threat to my security. We need a retreat or workshop—and not just one. We need to build respect for each other. If the staff don't work together tight, parishioners will perceive that." "I wish I had a magic wand to wave over the staff so that they would come to work with a good attitude and be willing to work for the common good every day. But that attitude is never expected or asked for."

- Declining finances often mean that staffs are reduced and staff members need to take on more and more responsibilities.

Communication is complicated.

- Communication is particularly difficult when several communities are involved. Rumors may abound. Distance and multiple churches mean that staff members cannot be as physically present with parishioners as in the past. "The distance physically is an issue. People look for me after Mass but I can only be in one place at one time." While announcements may be written the same, the messenger and the way they are delivered may differ greatly from one church to another. Parishioners may not inform the leader or staff when they need pastoral care and yet expect someone to visit. "Our pastor is criticized because he doesn't visit someone. But he does not live in the same

area as all of the churches and the parishioners, so he does not know they wanted him to visit or that they were sick. Parishioners need to tell him because he will go."

- While some clusters and merged parishes have regular staff meetings, others have them rarely, irregularly, or not at all. "We don't have frequent enough staff meetings. They are supposed to be monthly but often they are every other month. The pastor leaves from them early. They aren't a priority for him." In many situations staff members have no idea when they can expect to see the pastoral leader face to face. "I've turned into a stalker of the pastor."

The future does not seem bright

- Staff members perceive that many changes still lie ahead—e.g., additional closures of churches, schools, and other buildings.

- Some clusters and merged parishes do not have the buildings they need. There may be superfluous, old rectories, convents, and school buildings with expensive maintenance and repair needs. A parish center—a space where large numbers of people could gather—is often not available.

There is a sense of disconnection from the Pastoral Center (the building housing diocesan staff). Parish staff members in the Southern Tier and the Finger Lakes particularly feel disconnected. Those who remember diocesan satellite offices especially feel that they receive limited support. Staff members outside Monroe County do not find an understanding of the differences between life in rural and suburban parishes, resent the timing and locations of diocesan meetings, and think diocesan communication tools focus on life in larger, wealthier parishes. While communication/education through technology is viewed positively by some,

others have difficulty using it and the majority find the human component to be missing more than in the past. "I find support from individuals at the diocese, but not the institution as a whole, the offices or departments." "People at the parish level don't have a feeling of collaboration with the diocese, just a sense of dictates coming down." "We want people to see themselves as part of the larger Church, but the pastoral center is not with them."

Recommendations From Staff

Training

- Leaders need training in leading change and how to give strong, clear leadership. They also need some education about working in multiple parishes since this is not taught in seminaries or schools of theology.

- Staffs need more training and support in building cohesion and collaboration, understanding each other's roles and differences in personality/working style. Retreats and workshops—and not just one—are needed to help them learn to respect each other and work together.

- Leaders and staff need more training on how to listen and walk with people through grief.

Vision -- There needs to be a clearer vision of what it means to be a parish today. There is little sense of what the church of the future will look like and this is particularly disconcerting to younger clergy and lay staff members.

Pastoral Administrators -- Having a pastoral administrator assigned to a cluster or merged parish for the first time brings confusion and often turmoil. Before the pastoral administrator

arrives, someone needs to speak with parishioners about the model, how it has operated in other parishes, and what the responsibilities of the pastoral administrator are.

Interviews

Good News/Effective Practices

Pastoral leaders, staff, and leaders among parishioners have learned many things about change and how to lead change through their experiences

- Once a path for clustering or merging has been set, it is important to keep moving forward in creating a unified community. One pastor quoted the movie "Annie Hall": "Relationships are like a shark. You need to keep moving forward or water gets in your gills and you die."

- When the leader is anxious, there is a ripple effect, like throwing a stone into a pond, and the anxiety of parishioners magnifies.

- It is important to balance uniform practices with respect for the identity of individual communities—in all aspects of community life but particularly in liturgy. According to one pastor, "If it's not required by church law and not forbidden, I don't care. They can do it."

- It is critical to keep working at building "pockets of trust" among parishioners. Constant communication, consistency, and accountability all help.

- As the pastoral leader, one must often just "hold their hands." One pastor remarked that the leader during change has what Walter Brueggemann identified as the three tasks of a prophet: 1) announce the old order is over, 2) help the people sing songs of lament, and 3) help them develop an energizing vision of the future.

- It is important to help parishioners to be part of the process of change. "If they are a part, they will come around." One pastor consults with both groups and individuals affected by any proposed change. A pastoral administrator encourages everyone to develop ideas and bring them to him.

- Bring various groupings of people from the different churches together, using whatever means are effective in a particular situation. For example, in one cluster the various churches' musicians were not interested in meeting and working together. However, they did respond to an invitation to a joint appreciation meal where they got to know one another and they began to feel connected to something bigger.

Pastoral leaders, staff, and leaders among parishioners have developed many effective practices for clusters and merged parishes

- It is most helpful for the leader of a new cluster to enter a situation where many details have been worked out—e.g. single bulletin, single pastoral council, Mass schedules.

- If common committees (e.g. liturgy, social ministry) and the parish pastoral and finance councils cannot at the beginning merge into single groups, at least have them meet the same time in the same place so they can begin to get to know one another. This advice is appropriate for parishes in urban and suburban areas but may not be realistic for all rural communities.

- Different models for where to locate staff are appropriate for different situations. In some cases, a single office within the first couple of years of a cluster increases staff unity and improves communication. In other places, it is important to maintain office

hours at each church, at least on a part-time basis. Sometimes the leaders and full-time staff maintain offices at each church.

Pastoral leaders, staff, and leaders among parishioners have identified many ways to enhance communication between leaders and staffs, and between leaders and parishioners. Some of these are the following:

- Attempt to arrange Mass schedules so that the pastoral leader can be present after Masses as much as possible, even if only for a short period of time before going to the next church.

- Have neighborhood meetings in people's homes. The host invites his or her neighbors and the pastoral leader and staff attend. People can talk about any topics they choose.

- Hold town meetings either on a regular basis or to share information and receive feedback on specific topics. It is especially important for parishioners to understand the financial status of the parish.

- Use the bulletin, especially the leader's column, to share all the ways that collaboration and a sense of unity are building among the parishes of the cluster. When moving toward merging the parishes, frequently and regularly include information about the process.

- Take advantage of technology—e.g., googlegroups, a website, e-mail to parishioners, linked servers, one phone system to multiple sites.

- Consider communication with staff members to be a priority and make it as regular as possible. It is important for staff members to know when they can expect the leader to be present. One pastoral administrator who has staff members in two locations spends

every other Monday at one of the churches having casual visits with staff, problem solving, and choosing next steps. On Friday she walks through both churches to make sure everything is in place for the weekend. Another lets staff members know that he has an open door and includes regular, informal contacts with staff members during his day.

- Regular staff meetings are important but it may take some creativity to figure out the best pattern for a particular cluster or merged parish. One cluster has two monthly staff meetings, one in the daytime and one in the evening. All staff, full and part-time, come to the evening meeting, while full-time staff members participate in the daytime meeting with others welcome if they can come.

- Both leaders and staff members need to be cognizant that staff members are a critical part of communication efforts. Staff members need to realize the boundaries of what information is appropriate to share with parishioners and what should not go beyond the staff.

Clustering or merging parishes can lead to more empowerment of parishioners to take responsibility for ministry. In one situation staff, who previously had done all visits to nursing homes and hospitals, trained 35 others to share in this work.

Clustering or merging parishes can lead to better ministry, new worship experiences, and more parish events for parishioners. Some of the opportunities mentioned were a shared Mass of remembrance, a shared Triduum, a new Mass for youth, and a St. Joseph's table with three different traditions.

Pastoral leaders state that they have been well supported by the diocese, particularly when they ask for help. Pastors have also been aided by Priestly Life and Ministry through the roundtable sessions and the provision of executive coaches. Specific diocesan offices mentioned were Finance, Human Resources, and Pastoral Planning, while both the Vicar General and Chancellor have provided needed support and expertise.

Issues and Areas of Concern

Change and leading change are difficult for all involved.

- The framework for change is not always clear for leaders and, therefore, it is difficult for them to communicate clearly to staff and parishioners. All need to know why we are doing this, what the bigger picture is, and how it will benefit the Church.

- Some leaders inherit problems unknown at the time of clustering which make the change doubly difficult. Staff or committees may not be following diocesan guidelines, and there may be significant financial issues unknown to parishioners.

The energy of leaders is sapped by dealing with parishioners' emotions and sense of loss during the clustering or merging, and they face resistance that at times includes personal attacks.

- One leader said that "leading change is like being whipped. Change within a community of faith means we're messing around with people's sense of the holy. What is good is when you adjust to the change."

- Another leader described how trying to manage change broke down his predecessors, leading one to become more reclusive and the other more autocratic.

- If the new leader arrives as the parishes cluster, he or she may be blamed for all of the changes underway. "You become the focal point for reaction."

- Even with preaching linking change with scripture and faith, it seems that parishioners do not see the application to their own situation. They do not realize that change—the cycle of death and resurrection—has always been a part of the Church.

Pastoral leaders recognize the importance of staff from different churches being able to work together well, but many do not know what to do to create a more cohesive staff.

Being responsible for two or more church communities means the workload doubles--or worse--and leads to fatigue. Presence needs to be divided between two or more communities. It takes longer to build relationships since many occur spontaneously when people are together.

Communication is necessary, complex, and difficult.

- The new leader may enter a cluster where some communities have received clear, complete communication about what is happening and others have been told little.

- The sheer size of parish staffs, their geographic distance from one another, and a mix of part-time and full-time positions create challenges.

- Because pastoral leaders and staff members cannot be present at every Mass every weekend or in each office as much as in a single parish model, communication through personal presence is hampered.

- Some common breakdowns in communication are inconsistency in pulpit announcements across multiple churches and forgetting to communicate changing

information to all affected by it. One pastoral administrator said that "the biggest breakdown is between my mouth and their ears."

• Communication from the pastoral center is not always helpful. For example, when policies and procedures change, there is not always clear communication that a change has taken place nor training on what is expected.

Leaders anticipate that the future holds more situations calling for significant change. They mentioned dealing with diminishing finances, aging buildings, and declining populations both within parish communities and in the larger geographic area. Other expected changes were implementing the new Roman Missal, closing buildings and schools, retirements of key staff members, clergy changes, merging parishes, facing further reductions in the number of priests appointed to the cluster or merged parish, revising Mass schedules, and the bishop's anticipated 2012 retirement.

When one or more of the parishes clustering has no experience with the pastoral administrator model and a pastoral administrator is appointed as leader, the situation is both difficult and complex. It is particularly important that the pastoral administrator and sacramental minister be unified so that parishioners do not perceive or create different camps.

There are few vehicles for bringing people across the diocese together as the Synod process did. Perhaps the best place for parishioners to get a sense of being part of something greater is the bi-annual National Catholic Youth Conference convention.

Recommendations From Pastoral Leaders

For leaders entering a newly-forming cluster

- Gather parishioners from the various churches together to share with the new leader the history of their community, their unique traditions, and their particular fears and needs.

- Find parishioners in all of the parishes to co-lead the change. Some leaders reported that they needed concrete assistance to help them identify healthy, constructive leaders among parishioners.

- Have the transition team or another group of parish leaders meet with the new pastoral leader after one, three, and six months to evaluate the clustering and suggest improvements.

- Unless there are immediate financial issues, it seems healthier to do staff reductions through attrition. Look for opportunities to consolidate positions when someone retires or resigns.

- Pay attention to the number of direct reports you have. A parochial vicar, business manager, catechetical leader, or pastoral associate may be able to supervise some staff.

- Focus on a spirituality of change—tying change to dying and rising--through homilies, parish missions, and bulletin articles.

For the Office of Pastoral Planning

- Before clustering, the planning group liaison should make several appearances at parish meetings to give a preview. It would also help for parishioners from an already-existing cluster or merged parish to be present to share their experiences.

- Consider offering planning groups two options as they begin a planning process. The first is what is currently done. The second is for the community to be able to choose to

have the bishop and his advisors make the decisions. Some people have said, "The handwriting is on the wall. We know change needs to happen but we don't want to have to sort it out when the bishop has the bigger picture." Having two options would help all to know that they really do have input and could give the process more credibility.

For the Pastoral Center in general

- If possible, arrange for the new pastoral administrator or pastor to meet parishioners prior to the official start date. A more formal transition process including more communication between the outgoing and incoming leaders would be valuable.

- If the new leader is a pastoral administrator and this is a new model for the community, there needs to be an orientation for parishioners and staff. Someone from the diocese should help the pastoral administrator and sacramental minister clarify roles and expectations and also speak with the pastoral administrator about the appropriate role he or she can take during Masses.

- Create a pool of mentors to meet with leaders new to clusters or merged parishes.

- Offer training on change management, collaboration, and people skills both to leaders and staff members as well as presentations on a theology of change.

- Provide more leadership training for pastors and pastoral administrators. One leader suggested using the annual Convocation and possibly block meetings to build leadership and change management skills.

- Continue the summer orientation day for new pastoral leaders, the roundtable for priests, and the opportunities for pastors to have a coach.

- Build more familiarity among pastoral center staff with the particularities of rural, urban, and suburban parish life.

- A Human Resource staff member or the planning group liaison should occasionally attend a staff meeting prior and subsequent to clustering, help them see how their roles are changing, and ask what help is needed. There should also be more attention to helping build more cohesive staffs.

CHAPTER 5 – RECOMMENDATIONS

This study examined leaders and staff members of clusters and merged parishes within the Diocese of Rochester through a survey, focus groups, and interviews. The purpose was to understand the common pitfalls facing those entering ministry in one of these parish structures and to identify the effective practices utilized in particular situations with the goal to improve the experience of leaders and staff members.

There are two different but overlapping sets of circumstances facing the leaders and staff members of clusters and merged parishes, and each requires specific skills. The first is particular to those leaders and staff members who are serving parishes at the time that they join together. This situation is similar to that of a merger or acquisition in that different entities are brought together and must forge a new, shared identity. Clusters in the Catholic Church most resemble horizontal mergers where the firms involved produce the same services or products and are located in the same geographical market. It is noteworthy that in horizontal mergers there is likely to be full integration of similar functions and downsizing, both of which increase employee stress and culture clash (Buono & Bowditch, 2003).

Church personnel can learn from the experience of those in the corporate world. In order for the merger to be successful, it is important to plan carefully for the cluster or merged parish and tend to the transition of staff and parishioners once the parish restructuring has occurred. Skills in change management—particularly in communication and minimizing/dealing with resistance—are critical. The leader must be able to understand the psychological impact of parish restructuring on staff members and be able to build a cohesive, functioning staff.

The second circumstance is that of those leaders and staff members who have previously worked solely in traditional single parishes (one entity with a single campus). Whether entering an established cluster or parish with multiple worship sites or one newly forming, they have a different set of challenges. These include learning to understand and appreciate the cultures of the various churches involved, developing a practice of intentional pastoral presence at each church, delegating and empowering others, time management, and self-care. A pastoral leader of a newly forming cluster who has had no prior experience serving in a cluster or single parish with multiple worship sites is at a particular disadvantage since he or she needs to master both sets of skills simultaneously.

As experience with the process of clustering and merging parishes has grown within the Diocese of Rochester, the Office of Pastoral Planning and the Department of Human Resources have become increasingly adept at supporting parishes in the midst of restructuring. In particular, the creation of transition teams—composed of pastoral leaders, staff representatives, and parishioners—has improved communication during the period leading up to the clustering and in the transition time afterwards. These teams have also coordinated the meeting and work of similar groups (e.g. pastoral councils, musicians, business managers, and finance councils) across the parishes involved in the clustering and thereby aided in their integration. Human resources staff have supported leaders dealing with personnel issues and helped with both conflict management and team building.

This study demonstrates the need for more systematic training for leaders, staff members, and those parishioners in leadership positions. Leaders will benefit from devoting more resources to building staff cohesiveness and teamwork as well as the opportunity to be

coached as they lead the changes that their churches are facing. A variety of informal learning methods would allow the transfer of knowledge, skills, and attitudes among those engaged in ministry within clusters and merged parishes.

Training

The Office of Pastoral Planning should create and conduct a one-day workshop on leading change for pastoral leaders and staffs. This learning opportunity would be targeted to those presently serving in clusters or merged parishes, those preparing to enter such roles, and those anticipating parish re-configuration or any other significant change. The components should include the following:

1. Change icebreaker (D. Gannon, personal communication, March 12, 2005)

2. Reflection/discussion on a personal experience of change—feelings experienced as one lived through the change, how it was handled, what would have helped

3. Transition versus change/leading people through the three phases of transition (Bridges, 1991)

4. Resistance to change—why people resist change and practical strategies to deal with it (Pritchett, 1996); application to different stakeholders (e.g. pastoral council, liturgy committee, long-time parishioners)

5. Communication—principles of effective transition communication; developing a communications plan using a template

6. Change agility—what it is, creating capacity for change

7. Spirituality of change—applying the story of Moses leading the Israelites through the desert to the Promised Land or the cycle of dying and rising; prayer resources.

The Office of Pastoral Planning should also develop a series of modules that can be utilized with transition teams and parish staffs as needed and as requested. The components of the one-day workshop on "change" could be adapted and offered on an individualized basis. Other modules may include:

1. Understanding culture—the nature of culture; the three levels of culture (Schein, 2004); identifying and discussing level 1 (artifacts) and level 2 (espoused beliefs and values) in one's own parish and in the cluster partner; when and how will we know that we are dealing with an underlying assumption?

2. Identifying one's own change style and that of team/staff members— participants take the on-line iChange survey (PerceptGroup, 2010), then create a Group iChange Style Profile to learn how each person responds to change. The intent is to encourage the formation of a strategy to assist one another to become more effective in leading change.

3. 360 degree leadership assessment (for staff)—learning how to influence from the middle; three components: 1) followership (the relationship with one's supervisor); 2) helping one's peers (teamwork, relationship building); and 3) leading others (engaging, empowering, building trust) (E. Gordon, personal communication, November 10, 2009).

Staff Development

The results of the focus groups with staff members and the interviews with pastoral leaders revealed that there is a need for intentional staff formation when two or more parishes cluster and different staffs are brought together. Leaders state that they are likely to welcome support in dealing with conflicts that arise within their staffs. These development opportunities could be created and offered through the Department of Human Resources, the Office of Pastoral Planning, St. Bernard's School of Theology and Ministry, or a consultant. Some options:

1. A staff day on understanding how different personality types view and respond to change—The pastoral leader and staff members should take a Myers-Briggs Type Indicator survey (http://www.myersbriggs.org/my-mbti-personality-type/take-the-mbti-instrument/) and learn about their own personality preference as well as that of their team members. They then learn about how people with their personality type cope in times of change, how they contribute, and what they need (Barger & Kirby, 1995).

2. Conflict resolution and team-building intervention—Staff members from each parish meet separately to generate three lists: 1) adjectives describing how they perceive their own parish; 2) adjectives describing how they perceive the other parish; and 3) adjectives describing how they believe the other parish has been perceiving them. Then each team shares its list with the other. The complete staff, or subgroups comprising members from each parish, discuss their perceptions about the lists and then share what is working well within the staff,

what is not, and what can be done to improve the staff's relationships and

performance (Legare, 1998).

The resources available through the diocesan Employee Assistance Program should also

be used more intentionally to support staffs of parishes that are clustering or merging. EAP can

offer workshops on coping with stress and anxiety or how to manage under conditions of

uncertainty. Individual staff members may need to be reminded that individual counseling is

available or may need to be referred.

Coaching

During the last two years, the Diocese contracted with a group of consultants to provide

leadership coaching to a small number of priests. The interviewed pastors who had been

matched with a coach reported how valuable this experience was. Beyond continuing such

arrangements, it might also be beneficial for the planning group liaisons in the Office of Pastoral

Planning to offer to coach interested new leaders of clusters or merged parishes through the

transition period. Bridges and Mitchell (2008) note that leaders need individualized assistance

to learn to create plans to bring their people through their particular transition. The liaisons

could help interested leaders to understand what is needed in their situation and how to

leverage their strengths to lead others through the transition.

Informal Learning

The focus groups and interviews demonstrated that leaders and staff members have

already developed many successful strategies for working in clusters and merged parishes.

Some more seasoned pastoral leaders noted that others had approached them for advice. The

Office of Pastoral Planning could help to structure, encourage, and maintain such informal

learning through a variety of methods. A virtual community of practice could be created or a wiki set up to share information. The office could host "lunch and learn" sessions in different regions of the 12-county Diocese. The planning group liaisons could provide mentor/mentee training and arrange voluntary, informal mentoring relationships.

Conclusion

Because the situation of parishes clustering and merging parallels the process of mergers and acquisitions in many ways, church leaders and staff members can benefit from familiarity with the research regarding the human side of mergers and acquisitions as well as the experience of their counterparts in the corporate world. This research project also provides an in-depth look into the lived experience of pastors, pastoral administrators, and staff members of the Diocese of Rochester who have been pioneers in serving clustering and merging parishes. Their insights, descriptions of successful practices, and suggestions will inform their peers and those who follow them into similar ministry. The results of the survey, focus groups, and interviews will enable diocesan leaders to understand more fully the knowledge, skills, and attitudes required for this ministry and to support these church personnel through training, interventions, coaching, and informal learning opportunities.

While this research study does indeed apply the concepts from the mergers and acquisitions field to the church's current parish restructurings, it also attends to one unique aspect of the amalgamations occurring in parishes; parishioners have no parallel in the corporate world of mergers and acquisitions, yet they are critically important stakeholders within parishes. While pastoral leaders and staff members can somewhat be conceived as "customers" of the diocese as a whole and, in particular, of its pastoral center employees,

parishioners are not simply customers of their parish. Rather, they are the lifeblood of the parish, the ones who maintain the church's vitality through their financial contributions and their involvement. In fact, the local parish ceases to exist without its parishioners. At the same time that staff are dealing with the psychological effects of uncertainty, new roles, and changing expectations, they must attend to the parishioners they serve who are experiencing their own psychological upheaval, sense of loss, and resistance to change. If the strategies recommended in this study are enacted, not only will leaders and staff members be more able to function in their changed roles, they will also be better prepared to lead parishioners through the transition process. Maintaining the engagement of parishioners, creating a more positive atmosphere in parish life, and diminishing the exodus of parishioners from the cluster or merged parish will help prevent the downward spiral of declining finances, declining parishioner base, and increased parish fragility.

This study is not only significant for the Diocese of Rochester, but also relevant for other dioceses in the United States and elsewhere that are experiencing similar parish re-structuring. Even though the practice of pastoral leaders serving multiple parishes has existed for many years in the rural areas of the Midwest and the western portion of this country, larger cities and suburban areas are just now becoming affected. During the next decade, the densely populated east coast will likely also begin to cluster and merge parishes. Similar movement is occurring in other church denominations. This study is one of the first to consider the effect of clustering and merging parishes from the viewpoint of parish leaders and staff members. Its findings should be applicable to others within the Catholic Church who undergo similar changes and to leaders and members of other religious bodies.

The results of this study round out the research that has been done regarding the human side of mergers and acquisitions. This study adds to the substantial work that has already been done documenting the effects of consolidations on businesses and hospital systems, and thereby may offer some different nuances for other situations. As an increasing number of not-for-profits, school districts, and villages/towns consider merging, they may benefit from an understanding of the skills needed and the characteristics of successful planning processes in a wide variety of organizations.

Human resource development is the "process of helping individuals, groups, and organizations learn and adapt to change to become more productive and effective and to become more satisfied at work" (S. Silver, personal communication, January 16, 2009). HRD professionals have the opportunity to play a key role in supporting individuals, groups, and organizations with the increasing number of consolidations occurring in the corporate, not-for-profit, and government sectors. This study suggests areas to which they should pay attention and also offers particular strategies they can employ.

Constant change has become a fact of life. Developing the skills to manage change and to thrive in a changing environment will enable individuals and groups to succeed and to experience more satisfaction in their work and personal lives.

References

Allred, B. B., Boal, K. B., & Holstein, W. K. (2005). Corporations as stepfamilies: A new metaphor for explaining the fate of merged and acquired companies. *Academy of Management Executive, 19*(3), 23-37.

Appelbaum, S. H. (2003). A cross method analysis of the impact of culture and communications upon a health care merger: Prescriptions for human resources management. *The Journal of Management Development*, *22*(5/6), 370-409.

Argyris, C. (1960). *Understanding organizational behavior*. Homewood, IL: Dorsey Press.

Barger, N. J., & Kirby, L. K. (1995). *The challenge of change in organizations: Helping employees thrive in the new frontier*. Palo Alto, CA: Davies-Black Publishing.

Bridges, W. (1991). *Managing transitions: Making the most of change.* Reading, MA: Perseus Books.

Bridges, W., & Mitchell, S. (2008). Leading transition: A new model for change. In F. Hesselbein, & A. Shrader (Eds.), *Leader to leader 2: Enduring insights on leadership* (pp. 246-255). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Buono, A. F., & Bowditch, J. L. (2003). *The human side of mergers and acquisitions.* Washington, DC: BeardBooks.

Cameron, K. S., & Quinn, R. E. (2006). *Diagnosing and changing organizational culture* (Rev. ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Cieslak, M. (2006). A national study of recent diocesan efforts at parish reorganization in the United States: Pathways for the church of the 21st century. In *Multiple parish pasturing in the Catholic Church in the United States symposium report*,

(pp. 30-35). Emerging Models of Pastoral Leadership Project.

Deal, T. E., & Kennedy, A. A. (1999). *The new corporate cultures.* Reading, MA: Perseus

> Books.

Deutschman, A. (2007). *Change or die: The three keys to change at work and in life*.

> New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers Inc.

Deutschman, A. (2005, May). Making change. *Fast Company, 94*, 52-61.

Fink, S. B. (2009). Address the human side of M&As. *Training, 46*(3), 16.

Ford, J. D., Ford, L. W., & D'Amelio, A. (2008). Resistance to change: The rest of the story.

> *Academy of Management Review*, *33*(2), 362-377.

Gemignani, J. (2001). Human lessons from the M&A wars. *Business and Health, 19*(3),

> 35-39.

Huiyuan, M., & Xin, L. (2008). Psychological contract in the process of enterprises'

> merger, acquisition and integration. *Canadian Social Science, 4*(1), 22-25.

Ivancevich, J. M., Schweiger, D. M., & Power, F. R. (1987). Strategies for managing

> human resources during mergers and acquisitions. *Human Resources Planning,*

> *10*(1), 19-35.

Jewell, M. R. (2009). *Linking parishes: 6 strategies for the future: Creative ways to meet*

> *today's challenges.* Retrieved March 1, 2010 from

> http://www.emergingmodels.org/doc/Linking%20Parishes%20-

> %20Today's%20Parish%20Minister.doc

Kanter, R. M. (2009). Mergers that stick. *Harvard Business Review, 87*(10), 121-125.

Kegan, R., & Lahey, L. L. (2001, November). The real reason people won't change.

Harvard Business Review, 79(10), 85-92.

Kotter, J. P., & Schlesinger, L. A. (2008, July-August; originally published 1979).

Choosing strategies for change. *Harvard Business Review, 86*(7), 130-139.

Krupar, K. R., & Krupar, J. J. (1988). Consider the people-fit issues during mergers.

Personnel Journal, 67(3), 95-98.

Legare, T. L. (1998). The human side of mergers and acquisitions: Understanding and

managing human resource integration issues. *Human Resource Planning, 21*(1), 32-41.

Lewin, K. (1997). Resolving Social Conflicts; and Field Theory in Social Science.

Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Marks, M. L., & Mirvis, P. H. (1992). Rebuilding after the merger: Dealing with "survival

sickness." *Organizational Dynamics, 21*(2), 18-32.

Mogilka, M., & Wiskus, K. (2009). *Pastoring Multiple Parishes*. Chicago, Illinois: Loyola Press.

Myers Briggs Type Indicator. Retrieved March 23, 2010 from

http://www.myersbriggs.org/my-mbti-personality-type/take-the-mbti-instrument/

PerceptGroup iChange Survey. (2010). Retrieved March 25, 2010 from

http://docs.perceptgroup.com/Link2Lead/PDF/iChangeDiscussionGuide.pdf

Pritchett, P. (1985) *After the merger: Managing the shockwaves*. Dallas, TX: Pritchett &

Associates, Inc.

Pritchett, P. (1996). *Resistance: Moving beyond the barriers to change.* Pritchett & Associates,

Inc. [Brochure].

Richardson, P., & Denton, D. K. (1996). Communicating change. *Human Resource

Management, 35*(2), 69-82.

Risberg, A. (1997). Ambiguity and communication in cross-cultural acquisitions: towards

a conceptual framework. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, *18*(5),

257.

Salame, R. (2006). Why do mergers fail? What can be done to improve their chances

of success? Retrieved March 8, 2010 from

http://www.peoplemix.com/documents/articles/Why%20Do%20Mergers%20Fail.pdf

Schein, E. H. (2004). *Organizational culture and leadership* (3rd ed.). San Francisco, CA:

Jossey-Bass.

Schuth, K. (2006). *Priestly ministry in multiple parishes*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press.

Schweiger, D. M., Ivancevich, J. M., & Power, F. R. (1987). Executive actions for managing

human resources before and after acquisition. *Academy of Management Executive,*

1(2), 127-138.

Seo, M., & Hill, N. S. (2005). Understanding the human side of merger and acquisition: An

integrative framework. *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science, 41*(4), 422-443.

Tetenbaum, T. J. (1999). Beating the odds of merger & acquisition failure: Seven key practices

that improve the change for expected integration and synergies. *Organizational*

Dynamics, 28(2), 22-36.

Zech, C. E., & Miller, R. J. (2008). *Listening to the people of God: Closing, rebuilding, and*

revitalizing parishes. New York: Paulist Press.

Appendix A: Survey Instrument

Multiple Parish Survey – Pilot – August 2009

About the cluster or merged (consolidated) parish
Year created: _____ cluster _____ merged parish (please indicate both years if applicable)

How many churches are in the cluster/merged parish? _____

How many churches were there originally? _____

What is the greatest distance in miles between churches in the cluster/merged parish?
_____ less than 5 mi. _____ 6-10 mi. _____ 11-15 mi. _____ 16-20 mi. _____ 21+ mi.

What is the total number of households in the cluster/merged parish?
____ 100-500 ____ 501-1000 ____ 1001-1500 ____ 1501-2000 ____ 2001-2500
____ 2501-3000

How would you rate the success of the clustering/merging?
_____ very low _____ low _____ moderate _____ high _____ very high

Skills/Training
Please rate the following skills on their importance for multiple parish ministry by placing an "x" in the correct box:

	1-Not Important	2-Somewhat Important	3-Important	4-Very Important	5-Extremely Important
Administration					
Collaboration					
Communication					
Community Building					
Conflict Management					
Dealing with resistance to change					
Delegation					
Empowering/involving others in ministry					
Fiscal Management					
Group process/group work					
Leading people through change					
Personnel Management					
Self-Care					
Stress Management					
Time Management					
Other:					
Other:					

How important is training in the following skills before entering multiple parish ministry?

	1-Not Important	2-Somewhat Important	3-Important	4-Very Important	5-Extremely Important
Administration					

	1-Not Important	2-Somewhat Important	3-Important	4-Very Important	5-Extremely Important
Collaboration					
Communication					
Community Building					
Conflict Management					
Dealing with resistance to change					
Delegation					
Empowering/involving others in ministry					
Fiscal Management					
Group process/group work					
Leading people through change					
Personnel Management					
Self-Care					
Stress Management					
Time Management					
Other:					
Other:					

In which of the following skills would you yourself benefit from training at this time in your current position? (Please check all that apply.)

_____ Administration
_____ Collaboration
_____ Communication
_____ Community Building
_____ Conflict Management
_____ Dealing with resistance to change
_____ Delegation
_____ Empowering/involving others in ministry
_____ Fiscal Management
_____ Group process/group work
_____ Leading people through change
_____ Personnel Management
_____ Self-Care
_____ Stress Management
_____ Time Management
_____ Other: _____
_____ Other: _____

What is the top issue facing your cluster/merged parish right now?

What is your top challenge in your role today?

What is one piece of advice you would give to someone entering multiple parish ministry for the first time?

Practices for Multiple Parish Settings
Please check all of the practices that have been used in your cluster/merged parish:
_____ Special ritual at the time of clustering/merging
_____ Transition team prior to clustering/merging or immediately after
_____ Regular staff meetings for each worship site with the pastoral leader
_____ Regular joint staff meetings with the pastoral leader
_____ A shared staff day of reflection
_____ Staffs developing a common vision
_____ Clear channels of communication between staff and pastoral leader
_____ Clear channels of communication between the staff at each worship site
_____ Adjusting job descriptions to create a manageable workload
_____ Encouragement of staff time off for renewal and rest
_____ Working with a mentor (formally or informally)
_____ Participating in a support group
_____ A single office location for all staff
_____ A single office location for all staff coupled with satellite offices
_____ A common mission statement for the cluster/merged parish
_____ Established annual priorities for the cluster/merged parish
_____ All worship sites working together to develop some new shared traditions
_____ Celebrations of the unique traditions of each worship site
_____ Shared multiple-worship site ministries
_____ A concerted effort to involve more parishioners in the ministries of the cluster/merged parish
_____ Shared training for catechists
_____ Shared training for liturgical ministers
_____ Shared training for visitors for the sick and homebound
_____ Shared catechetical programs for children
_____ Shared spiritual/educational programs for adults
_____ A shared RCIA process
_____ Shared preparation for Confirmation
_____ Shared preparation for First Eucharist
_____ Shared preparation for Baptism
_____ Shared preparation for Marriage
_____ A designated sacristan in each church (to unlock doors, prepare for Mass, etc.)
_____ An interparish choir for major holy days and events
_____ Standardized missalettes
_____ Standardized hymnals

_____ A single pastoral council for the cluster/merged parish
_____ All pastoral councils meeting in the same location on the same night
_____ A single finance council
_____ All finance councils meeting on the same night
_____ A common bulletin
_____ A common website

Feedback regarding this survey
How would you rate your experience with this survey compared to others you've taken?
_____ very poor   _____ poor   _____ average   _____ good   _____ very good

Comments/suggestions about the survey:

About you
Your job title:

How long have you worked in a church position?
         _____ 0-5 yrs.   _____ 6-10 yrs.   _____ 11-15 yrs. _____ 16+ yrs.

Did you begin this position _____ before the clustering _____ at the time of clustering _____ after the clustering?

Do you work _____ for the cluster/merged parish as a whole   _____ for one of the worship sites?

What has been your biggest challenge in working for a cluster/merged parish?

Thank you for taking the time to fill out this survey.
Please return the completed survey <u>by Wednesday, August 12</u> to

Karen Rinefierd
1150 Buffalo Road
Rochester, NY 14624
or
krinefierd@dor.org

Appendix B: Informed Consent Form

St. John Fisher College
Informed Consent Form

Title of study: Improving the Experience of Leaders and Staff Members in Clusters and Merged Parishes

Name of researcher: Karen Rinefierd

Faculty Supervisor: Timothy Franz, Ph.D.

Purpose of study: 1) to gain a better understanding of the factors making leading or working in a cluster or merged parish challenging; 2) to identify possible ways in which the difficulties could be lessened or eliminated so that the experience of the leaders and staffs members could be improved.

The long-term goal is to improve the experience of leaders and staff members in clusters and merged parishes by 1) providing training in skills necessary for effective functioning in these new, more complex parish structures; 2) improve the support given to leaders and staff members of parishes preparing to cluster as well as those working within existing clusters and merged parishes.

Risks and benefits: No perceived risks. Benefits might include opportunities for training and improved support.

Method for protecting confidentiality/privacy: Records will be kept confidential and available only to the researcher and the faculty advisor. When results are disseminated, the data will be presented in group form and individual participants and parishes will not be identified.

Your rights: As a research participant you have the right to:
1. Have the purpose of the study and the expected risks and benefits fully explained to you before you choose to participate.
2. Withdraw from participation at any time without penalty.
3. Refuse to answer a particular question without penalty.
4. Be informed of the results of the study.

I have read the above, and I agree to participate in the above-named study.

Print name (Participant)   Signature   Date

Print name (Researcher)   Signature   Date