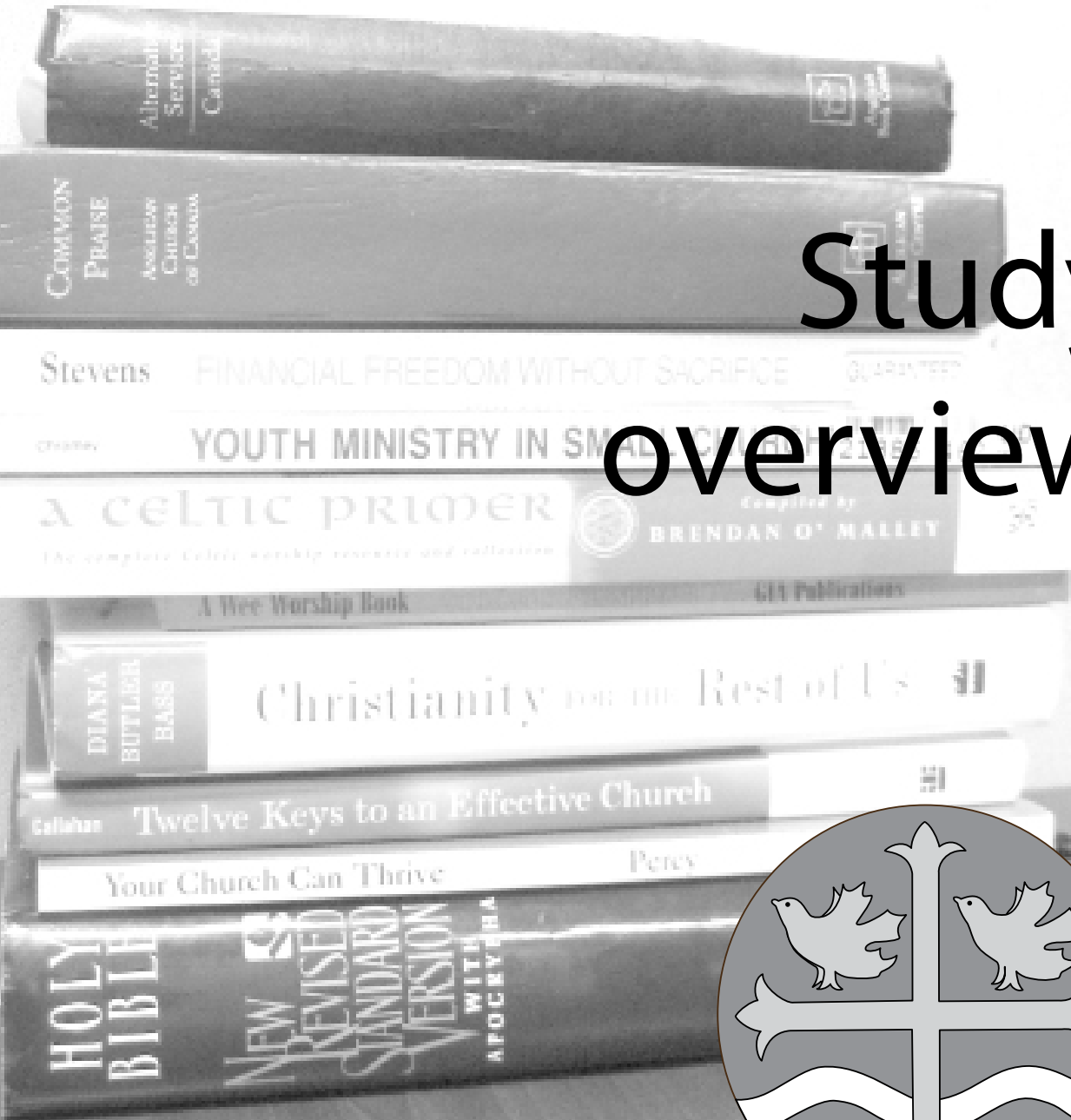


Stage 3: The Story

The Parish Study

Study
overview



Acknowledgements

This workbook and discussion guide was written by Paige Dampier and Tasha Carrothers. Prayers were collected by Carla McGhie.

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Dorothy Brooker et al, *In Other Words: Worship Resources for Women's Groups* (Association of Anglican Women: Waiapu, New Zealand) 1993, pp. 40, 48, 69, 72

Gertrude Lebens, *Out of the fire* (Worship and Theology of Liberation) (artemis enterprises, Dundas, Ontario) 1992, p.117

Permission is still being sought from the following sources:

_____, *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, (Augsburg Fortress: Minneapolis) 2006, p. 304

_____, *Iona Abbey Worship Book* (Wild Goose Publications: Glasgow), 1988

Frank Colquhoun (ed), *New Parish Prayers* (Hodder and Stoughton) 1999

Janet Morley (ed), *Bread of Tomorrow: Prayers for the Church Year*, (Orbis Books: Maryknoll) 1992, pp. 125, 130

Wild Goose Resource Group, *Wee Worship Book: 4th Incarnation* (Wild Goose Publications: Glasgow) 2004, pp. 29, 52, 54

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Outline

The Parish Study is designed to help you and your parish analyze parish ministry, buildings, and finances, and think about next steps. It includes bible study and prayer.

The Parish Study forms part of the storytelling stage of MAP. Knowing your story will help you discover where God is calling. Once the study is done, your parish will know what it does best and where needs are in the wider community.

The study is also designed so that participants learn more about themselves and how they live out God's call. We suggest that each session include refreshments, and we hope that people enjoy the exploration.

Total time needed: one short planning meeting plus six full meetings

Planning your parish study 4

The study begins with a planning meeting. You will choose a book to study, identify people to interview, delegate someone to study the official community plan, assign someone to begin the financial analysis, and find someone to arrange the building inspection.

Time needed: One short meeting

Exploring your ministry 6

You will explore ministry practices through interviews with parishioners and members of the wider community, and looking at the parish through the lens of one of three texts.

Time needed: Three evenings

Resources you will need:

- one of three recommended texts
- workbook and discussion guide (if applicable)
- interviews with parish and community leaders
- notes from storytelling events
- Community Profile (from Synod office)
- Official Community Plan

Exploring your finances 7

You will focus on parish finances and how they support present and future ministry.

Time needed: One evening

Resources you will need:

- *Our finances: workbook and discussion guide* with completed Treasurer's portion

Exploring your buildings 8

You will focus on the state of the buildings and their suitability for present and future ministry.

Time needed: One evening

Resources you will need:

- building inspection report
- *Our buildings: workbook and discussion guide*
- parish booking calendar and average cost of utilities

What next? 9

You will review your parish's ministry practices, buildings and finances, and reflect on directions for future ministry. You will also plan how to report this material to the whole parish.

Time needed: One evening

Prayers for meetings 10

Planning your study

Planning lays the ground for exploring the parish's ministry, buildings and finances. In this session, people will volunteer to gather specific kinds of information that will help the whole group. Together, you will assemble a detailed picture of your present ministry, the shape of your buildings, and the state of your finances. Everyone has a role.

While six sessions are recommended, your team can choose how much time and effort they want to put into this study.

Who participates in *The Parish Study*?

MAP team
treasurer

clergy
building committee chair
any interested people

A study coordinator is needed to make sure that people understand their tasks.

A core group should attend all sessions.

Special guests are encouraged for specific sessions.

Preparation

A detailed analysis starts with gathering information. In the planning meeting, people need to volunteer to gather several kinds of information.

The ministry practices section invites you to analyse what your parish does and what the neighbourhood needs. For this, you need to **choose and purchase copies of a book** that will help you analyse your parish's practices. You may also choose to **interview members of the parish**.

To explore what the neighbourhood needs, you will review your **official community plan** and **talk with community leaders** to get their perspective. (Every municipality or regional district develops an official community plan that outlines expectations for future growth.)

For the buildings section, someone needs to arrange a **building audit** through the Synod office. This includes an inspection and follow up meeting with the external inspector. The building committee will need to do some advance work on *Our buildings: workbook and discussion guide*.

For the finances section, the treasurer or envelope secretary needs to do some advance work on *Our finances: workbook and discussion guide*.

Choosing a book

Works by Diana Butler Bass, Kennon Callahan and Harold Percy have been selected to support your analysis of parish ministry. Each has visited the diocese in the last few years and worked with our clergy and lay leaders. These three authors also represent different theological perspectives, so each parish can gravitate to an author that supports and challenges their underlying worldview.

Regardless of which book your team chooses to buy, interviewing community leaders should form part of your exploration of your ministry.

Choose one of...

Christianity for the Rest of Us by Diana Butler Bass

Diana Butler Bass identifies ten practices that she observed in visiting vital mainline Christian communities. The congregations she visited do not engage all ten practices; rather, they are intentional about a few of them, and build on what they do well.

Suggested process

Diocesan staff have developed a companion workbook and discussion guide for *Christianity for the Rest of Us* in which the study group reviews the ten practices of vital congregations, then chooses three that resonate. Over the following two to four sessions the group looks at parish life through these practices. The workbook integrates parish values and census data, an analysis of community needs, and bible study.

Christianity for the Rest of Us: How the Neighbourhood Church is Transforming the Faith. HarperCollins: New York, 2006.

Twelve Keys to an Effective Church by Kennon Callahan

Kennon Callahan identifies 12 “keys” that contribute to a church’s being effective and successful. For Callahan, congregations must work from what they do best and continue to add strengths in order to minister to the world’s hurts and hopes.

In addition to being firmly grounded in theological principles, Callahan’s work walks participants through a practical analysis that includes scoring their congregation’s performance in several different areas.

Suggested process

Callahan has developed several resources around the *Twelve Keys*. There is a book, a study guide, a workbook, and a leader’s guide. Parishes can complete the study over several sessions, or in a weekend retreat.

Twelve Keys to an Effective Church: Strategic Planning for Mission. Jossey-Bass: San Francisco, 1983.

Your Church Can Thrive by Harold Percy

Harold Percy identifies four categories of people that a typical church can influence and offers thoughts on how to connect with these people. Before jumping to church growth, however, Percy says that parishes must know *why* they should grow.

This book includes many suggestions for creating a parish that reaches out. It does not include detailed analysis of attendance and community needs, so participants will need to refer to diocesan materials for that element.

Suggested process

Having read the book, the group can start with Percy’s bible study on Matthew 9:35-38, with the balance of the evening given over to Chapter 1: Thinking About Growth. Two further evenings can be given over to Chapters 2 to 5, which propose strategies for connecting with specific groups of people.

Your Church Can Thrive: Making the Connections That Build Healthy Congregations. ABC Publishing: Toronto, 2003.

You’ve finished planning when...

- A coordinator for the study is in place
- Participants have been recruited, both by personal invitation and more generally
- Participants understand what will be expected of them (reading, interviews, active participation)
- The group has chosen a book and assigned tasks
- The time and place for meetings has been broadcast

Exploring ministry

The focus of this part of the study is on reflecting on ministry practices in your parish, and connecting these with the wider community.

Who participates in *Exploring ministry*?

MAP team
clergy
special guests
any interested people

Why this work?

Detailed, focused exploration of your parish's ministry practices forms part of your storytelling. By examining what your parish does, you will gain a better understanding of how you reach out into the world.

You will need

- one of the recommended texts and a workbook (which you choose at the planning session);
- an updated Community Profile (provided by the Synod office);
- An Official Community Plan for your municipality or region (available on-line)
- input from interviews with parishioners
- input from interviews with community leaders.

The Community Profile describes some of the social and economic features of the community around your parish. MAP invites you to look at these numbers as one way to understand who is in the community. More than that, the numbers can be useful for inferring what human 'hurts and hopes' may be present in your community, and so provide more clues (or reinforce previous knowledge) of how to serve your neighbours.

The Official Community Plan is a document prepared by every municipality or regional district that outlines expectations for future growth.

In addition to thinking about numbers through the Community Profile and Official Community Plan, MAP urges you to talk to parish and community leaders. The study group may wish to interview members of the parish or invite special guests to reflect on the values of the parish. This should be determined at the planning session.

Community leaders have direct experience that will put human faces on the numbers you find in the Community Profile and in the Official Community Plan. If your team chooses to do the workbook based on *Christianity for the Rest of Us*, there are specific suggestions about who to talk to. Otherwise, start from what your parish is passionate about. If you love food, talk to the Food Bank or local farmer's associations. Children or education? Approach the principal of a local school. Justice? Try your MLA, or advocacy organizations. Start from what you know and love, and find out what the needs are in the neighbourhood. The numbers don't tell the whole story; rather, they serve to point you in the right direction.

You've finished *Exploring ministry* when...

- You've met with parish and community leaders
- You've thought about how the parish relates to the neighbourhood around it
- You've discussed your book and explored how your parish practices mission and ministry

Exploring finances

This part of the study focuses on how your finances support your ministry.

Who participates in *Exploring finances*?

MAP team
clergy
treasurer
any interested people

Why this work?

The purpose of the financial analysis is to help parishes assess their financial resources and plan for future ministry. This includes examining and analyzing past sources of parish income and patterns of parish expenses, as well as projecting into the near future.

Treasurer's role

This workbook and discussion guide is designed to be completed in two stages. Some portions are to be completed by your parish treasurer and/or envelope secretary before meeting with the MAP team because that person will need to refer to information that should be kept private. Once the treasurer has filled in those tables, the whole team will complete the rest of the tables and reflect on the questions.

Many parishes have found that one or more of these tables, presented in annual vestry meetings or during stewardship campaigns, have been helpful... so there will likely be other ways to use this work beyond the Ministry Assessment Process.

You will need

From the Synod Office:

- a parish-specific version of *Our finances: workbook and discussion guide*
- number of identifiable givers for

Gathered by the treasurer:

- annual contributions of individual parishioners from 2005 to 2008
- budget for 2009

You've finished *Exploring finances* when...

- You have completed *Our finances: workbook and discussion guide*

Exploring buildings

This part of the study focuses on how your buildings support your ministry.

Who participates in *Exploring buildings*?

MAP team
clergy
chair of building committee
any interested people

Why this work?

We love our buildings. They are a link to our past, our home of the present, and our plan for tomorrow. These buildings hold sacred memories of baptism, weddings, funerals, and countless community and personal memories. These buildings can be our great blessing, but they can also be a costly and limiting factor in ministry. How well they are designed, maintained and equipped are important for parish life.

The building analysis has two main components. One set of questions facilitates a discussion around buildings and ministry, including initial impressions and thoughts about the present and future.

The second component invites parishes to analyse their building's environmental footprint. How much energy is used to operate the building? How many people use it? How much of the building is used by the parish and how much by renters? This component requires some advanced preparation by the Environmental Steward or chair of the building committee.

Reflecting on these questions will help the parish see what role their buildings can play in their future ministry.

You will need

From the Synod Office:

- A copy of *Our buildings: workbook and discussion guide*
- Completed building assessment checklist and report

Gathered by the MAP Team:

- Completed copy of *Our finances: workbook and discussion guide*
- Average monthly cost of utilities
- Your parish's booking calendar, or some analysis of building use.

What building inspection?

Part of the Ministry Assessment Process is a building inspection by an external inspector, arranged through the Synod Office. If your parish has not already had a building inspection, contact the MAP Resource Associate.

You've finished *Exploring buildings* when...

- You have completed *Our buildings: workbook and discussion guide*

What next?

The focus of the last part of the study is to pull together the numbers, conversations, insights, and reflections that have come up in the previous parts. Now is your chance to make some sense of them, draw some tentative conclusions, and present them back to the parish.

Who participates in *What next?*

MAP team
clergy

Why this work?

In this course of *The Parish Study*, the MAP team plus others have gained particular insight into your parish's ministry, finances and buildings. This part of the study encourages the team to put it all together and present some of this information back to the parish.

Ministry

- What did you learn through the book study and looking at the Community Profile?
- What are the parish's core values?
- What things do you do well that aren't found elsewhere?
- How do you connect with the neighbourhood?
- What opportunities for ministry have emerged?

Buildings

- What shape are your buildings in?
- Is major work required?
- How well do they support your ministry?
- What is the environmental impact of running the buildings?

Finances

- How healthy are your finances?
- Does your budget correspond with your ministry priorities?
- What are the trends in giving?

Early ideas for your future

You may have some preliminary thoughts on the following questions:

- How you do things now? What changes will be necessary to bring your vision to reality?
- What are your greatest assets?
- What opportunities present themselves?
- What is your preferred future?
- What are the measurable results?

Sharing with the parish

Having reflected on these questions, your team's task is to present this information back to the parish. Think about how best to communicate this information. Would people come to a special meeting? Would you reach more people with a forum after a service? Is parish council planning a retreat? The information should be communicated as broadly as possible, and the team should be listening to people's reactions.

You've finished *What next?* when...

- You have reflected on your parish's ministry, buildings and finances, and
- You have shared these reflections with the parish.

Note: There is no workbook for *What next*

Prayers for meetings

Opening prayers

You, O Eternal One, are in the midst of us, and we are called by your name.
Jeremiah 14:9

O God, the source of our common life, when we are dry and scattered, when we are divided and alone, we long for connection, we long for community.

Breath of God, Breathe on us.

With those we live beside, whom we may be afraid to approach, with those we have only heard of, who see with different eyes, but whose lives are linked with ours, we long for connection, we long for community.

Breath of God, Breathe on us.

When we are dry and scattered, when we are divided and alone, when we are cut off from the source of our life, open our graves, O God, that all your people may be free to breathe, strong to move, and joyful to stand together to celebrate your name.

Breath of God, Breathe on us. Amen
Bread of Tomorrow, p. 125

I wait for you, O God, my soul waits and in your word I hope. My soul waits for you, O God, more than those who watch for the morning, more than those who watch for the morning.

Ps 130.5-6

Help us, O God, to live this day quietly, hopefully; to lean on your strength trustfully, restfully; to wait for the unfolding of your will patiently, serenely; to meet other people peacefully, joyfully; to face every task confidently, courageously; This we ask in the name of our ever present God. **Amen**

New Parish Prayers

Christ, you are risen with the sun: You are light in our darkness, warmth in our cold. You are peace and hope and joy. Be with us as we share your Resurrection hope and the promise of new life. **Amen**

In Other Words, p. 40

Throughout this day, Enliven our minds, Inspire our conversation, Inform our decisions, And protect those we love. And should today bring What we neither anticipate nor desire, Increase our faith and decrease our pride Until we know that, When we face the unexpected, we do not stand alone. Hear our prayers Made in the name and presence Of our beloved friend Jesus Christ.

Amen

Wee Worship Book, p. 52

O come, let us sing to the Beloved, let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation! Psalm 95:1

To you, God of creation, we sing a new song of praise. A song of trees planted by streams of living water, a song of mountains clapping their hands for joy, a song of cities delighting in heavenly harmony, a song of people that were lost and have been found.

For the whole earth belongs to our God,

and we shall rejoice and be glad in it.

Alleluia, Amen

Origin unknown

Breath of God,
Breath of life,
Breath of deepest yearning,
Come Holy Spirit come.

Comforter,
Disturber
Interpreter,
Encourager,
Come Holy Spirit come.

Heavenly friend,
Earthly companion,
Lamplighter,
Sun maker
Revealer of truth,
Midwife of change,
Come Holy Spirit come.

Our Holy God is here.
God's spirit is with us. Amen

Wee Worship Book, p. 54

Prayers for the journey

O God, you have called your people to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through changes unknown. Give us faith to go out with good courage, not knowing where we go, but only that your hand is leading us and your love supporting us; through Jesus Christ.

Amen

Evangelical Lutheran Worship, p. 304

Reshape us, O Holy God,
until in generosity,
in faith,
and in expectation
that the best is yet to come,
we are rendered truly Christ-like.
Make us passionate followers of Jesus
rather than passive supporters.
Make our hearts as well as our churches
places of radical discipleship
and signposts to heaven,
then, in us, through us, and—if need
be—despite us,
let your dream for Earth come quickly.

Amen

Wee Worship Book, p. 79

Blessings

May God bless us;
May God keep us in the Spirit's care
And lead our lives with love.
May Christ's warm welcome
Shine from our hearts
And Christ's own peace prevail
Through this and every day,
Till greater life shall call. **Amen.**
Wee Worship Book, p. 29

The desert will sing and rejoice and
the wilderness blossom with flowers;
all will see God's splendor,
see the Eternal One's greatness and
power.

Tell everyone who is anxious:
Be strong and don't be afraid.
The blind will be able to see;
the deaf will be able to hear;
the lame will leap and dance;
those who can't speak will shout.
They will hammer their swords into
ploughs
and their spears into pruning-knives;
the nations will live in peace;
they will train for war no more.
This is the promise of God;
God's promise will be fulfilled. **Amen.**
Iona Community Worship Book, 1988

Lead us Gentle One into the world,
Help us tread lightly on the good
earth,
For it is the dwelling-place of God;
Help us deal gently with all living
things,
For they are created by our God;
Help us live simply, humbly, and
joyfully,
Remembering that we are the beloved
children of our Generous God.

And the blessing of God—
Lover, Beloved and Love—
renew us, sustain us
and strengthen us,
now and always. **Amen.**

In Other Words, p. 69

Spirit of beauty, Spirit of love,
Spirit of hope; comforting Spirit,
healing Spirit, patient Spirit,
Spirit of peace; Holy Spirit of God,
come into our hearts
and stay with us now,
and forever more. **Amen.**

In Other Words, p. 482

Closing prayers

Alpha and Omega, from the beginning to the end, you are God, the mystery beyond our knowing, yet revealed to us by your Beloved and revealed within human life. Come into our hearts that we may be born again to new relationship with each other and to a new commitment to the spirit of abundance. Come, O Holy One; come reawaken the bones of this dying age and fill us with resurrected life.

Amen

Out of the Fire, p. 117

Loving God,

Open our hearts, so that we may feel the breath and play of your Spirit.

Unclench our hands, so that we may reach out to one another and touch and be healed.

Open our lips, that we may drink in the delight and wonder of life.

Unclog our ears, to hear your agony in our inhumanity.

Open our eyes, so that we may see Christ in friend and stranger.

Breathe your Spirit into us and touch our lives with the life of Christ. **Amen**

Bread for Tomorrow, p. 130

From where we are to where you need us.

Jesus, now lead on.

From the security of what we know to the adventure of what you will reveal.

Jesus, now lead on.

To refashion the fabric of this world until it resembles the shape of your kingdom.

Jesus, now lead on.

Because you promise to feed and heal all those who come to you.

Jesus, now lead on.

Let us become the presence of Jesus in our world.

Jesus we are following you. Amen.

Wee Worship Book, p. 24