

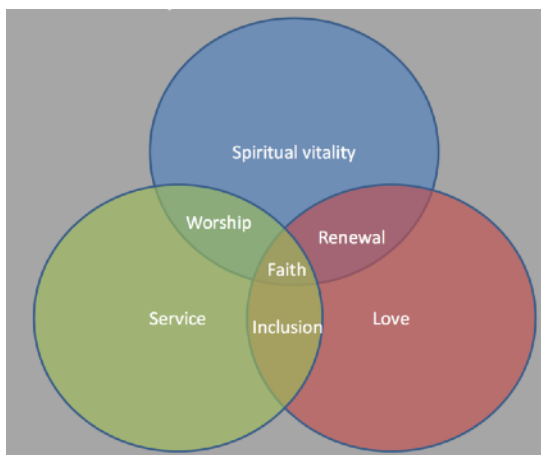


All Souls Moving Forward in Faith

On Palm Sunday (April 8) during the Adult Forum I presented my initial thoughts and observations after meeting with you over the last several months in various small and large group configurations. Since not everyone in the parish was able to attend that session, I offer here a summary of my presentation with key slides.

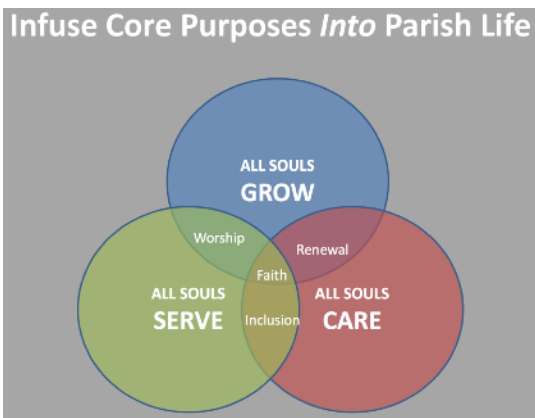
Before I arrived in DC I signaled to you that these first six months would be a time of continuing transition. It was my sense that there was some important interim work that had been left undone in the year prior to my coming. I think we are making good progress with this work. And while it may feel tedious at times, I am also hearing from many of you that it has been helpful and rewarding.

On Palm Sunday I shared a glimpse of some metrics that are used to measure our vitality, including: Average Sunday Attendance, Number of Communicants in Good Standing, Number of Pledgers, Average Pledge, etc. Over the last ten years, the trend lines of these metrics at All Souls have been essentially flat. Although, importantly, while attendance has gently declined, average giving has increased. This suggests a deep (and deepening) level of commitment to All Souls on the part of those who are here now. On the other hand, while we are not in sharp decline, long, essentially flat lines like ours make people assessing them wonder about our future vitality. But what I saw in you before I came, and what I have seen since, suggest to me that these metrics may not be the best predictors of All Souls' future.



Over the last several months we have engaged some formal and informal ways of assessing the various senses of purpose and energy people are bringing to All Souls. This diagram is my way of reflecting what I have heard. Many bring to All Souls passions for worship, renewal, and inclusion. Above all else, however, you want All Souls to manifest Christian faith primarily through service, love, and spiritual vitality. As these are the core purposes you bring to All Souls as individuals, I believe that we are called to engage them more and more deeply individually and in community.

Infuse Core Purposes *Into* Parish Life



To that end, our first priority in the year(s) to come is to infuse these specific purposes into every aspect of our parish life. How can already vibrant parish structures like our choir, our men’s and women’s groups, our 20s and 30s group, our seniors group, and our vestry become groups and gatherings where **all** souls SERVE, CARE, and GROW? How do we build upon the good work that has been accomplished by committees in these areas and engage the whole parish in these core purposes?

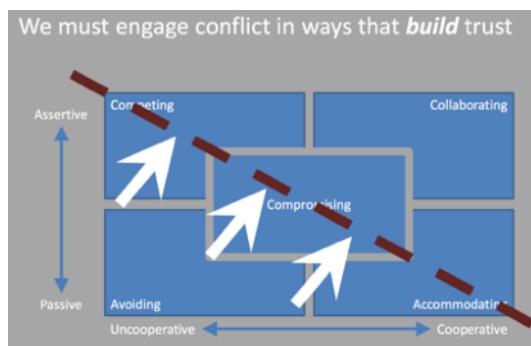
• Build Capacity for Growth



In terms of growth, our primary pursuit will be depth rather than breadth. We are looking first for spiritual growth. However, communities that are obvious places of spiritual fruitfulness are magnetic and draw others. So we must also build capacity for numerical growth. We must renew our committee structures, clarify roles and responsibilities, confront some serious needs and limitations of our physical plant, examine the ways we invite, welcome, and connect newcomers, and engage all we are doing in processes of dynamic evaluation.



While we are doing all of this, we must pay attention to the values about decision making you have expressed. Widening participation through working groups, surveys, forums, vestry processes, and the ways we share information will help us build trust among one another. This will take time and patience, however, and we must acknowledge that this work will may slow us down and bit or take bandwidth away from other things we might enjoy more.



We must engage conflict in ways that **build** trust

All of these efforts will, inevitably, create some disagreement. What we have learned from our conversations during Lent is that All Souls, as a system, has tended to avoid conflict. Disagreements have been avoided, often at the expense of more collaborative approaches. This has led to a little more “playing in our own sandboxes” than a growing church can sustain and may actually be curtailing our spiritual, interpersonal and numerical growth. So we must ask how we might engage conflict in ways that build both trust and capacity.

More than anything, what I have learned in these nearly five months among you is that there is a captivating spirit of renewal and forward movement among the people of All Souls. I am confident that this is *the* Spirit, ready to lead us.