

What have we learned about doing stewardship in a small/rural parish?

- 1) Tell us about your own experience in a small/rural parish?
 - People who live in small communities have decided that the place that they worship at is important
 - Money isn't the most important thing – themes like gratitude, generosity and faithful living are important
- 2) How do you talk about money in a small/rural parish?
 - Seek out those people who have the moral suasion in a smaller parish and become allied with them (AA)
 - A challenge is that if you take a stand you risk becoming alienated (AA)
 - Money talked about in the context of the parish story – folklore is important
 - Small group meetings in people's homes – takes pressure off one on one
 - Time and talent are valued – perhaps more valued than treasure – rely more heavily on volunteers
- 3) What is the role of matriarchs/patriarchs in small/rural parishes? How do they inspire/hinder ministry?
 - Many small churches rely on a sugar daddy to rescue the parish in times of difficulty. This is destructive as they do not challenge others to give generously and they can have negative influence on the direction of the parish (MH)
 - You need to win over this lay leader for progress to be made. The M/P is the key influencer in a small parish – clergy must patiently and lovingly encourage these people (AA)
 - The M/P is the lay witness in a parish
 - With the right kind of loving the M/P can open doors that clergy don't have access to. (AA)
- 4) What do small/rural parishes do better than larger parishes?
 - Community connection
 - High visibility of clergy and lay leaders
 - Not same financial pressures – people don't expect "the best" of everything
 - More forgiving
 - Everybody knows everybody
- 5) I have experienced a tremendous resourcefulness in small/rural parishes. Why is that?
 - Rural people are tougher – they stick together – they know their neighbors
 - You make things work with what you have (HM)

- 6) Some parishes are consumed about merely surviving year to year. How do you break that paradigm?
- Language of missional church is helpful – find where Christ is active in the community – what is God inviting us to be a part of (MT)
 - Ask people you use their imagination – instead of looking at what you are as what the parish might look like if we had a strong parish community (AA)
 - Ecumenical movement is stronger in small communities – seek out cross pollinating opportunities with other denominations (HM)
 - Deemphasize the crisis language about money (HM)
 - Take a fresh look at your community – look through different glasses (MH)
- 7) How do you de-recruit a leadership volunteer in a small/rural parish who is impeding progress?
- Peer to peer method – others can help move a person along – priest generally can't do this on their own (MH)
 - Always pursue human dignity – find graceful ways to let people off the hook (AA)
 - Things will fester and kill a parish without some movement (MT)
 - In some parishes you don't have the luxury of dealing with this people because you only have what you have (HM)
- 8) How do respond to the oft heard refrain that “people in this parish are giving all they can and can't afford to give anymore”?
- Respond to concerns with gratitude
 - Visitation or small group meetings in people's kitchens can be helpful (HM)
 - Between 30-50% of every congregation is giving only 1% of the total parish budget (AA)
 - Talk about intentional and faithful giving
 - People who give generously never say we can't give more (AA)
- 9) If you could offer one single piece of advice to parish leaders in small/rural parishes, what would it be?
- Stop arguing over spoons and quilts and focus on the ministry (MH)
 - Don't ask a little of people, ask for a lot (AA)
 - Don't lose faith in your presence in the community – you are a powerful symbol of Christ at work in people's lives – the church is worth something in the community (HM)
 - Help people experience generosity whatever their circumstances are (MT)