

Understanding Parish Revitalization

2004 Evangelization Conference
*“Continuing the Mission of the North
American Saints”*

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What They've Known...

- For 10, 20 years or more...
- 500 members, now 200...or less...
- 100 children in church school, now 15...
- “Nobody” lives in the neighborhood anymore...
- Fewer people to do the work...
- Fewer people to pay the bills...

Some Statistics...

The OCA in the continental US has been declining between 6 and 9% for nearly 20 years.

29,775 (1994) → 27,169 (2004)

Note: This is just the continental U.S.!

Some Statistics...

In the last 10 years:

177 have declined in membership or have had flat (i.e., no) growth; of this,

148 in double digits (DGR)

Loss = 6,129 people (declining churches)

Gain = 2,960 people (growing churches)

We are not Reaching America

*From
1990 - 2000
in America*

11% population →

13% census →

And We're Not Alone

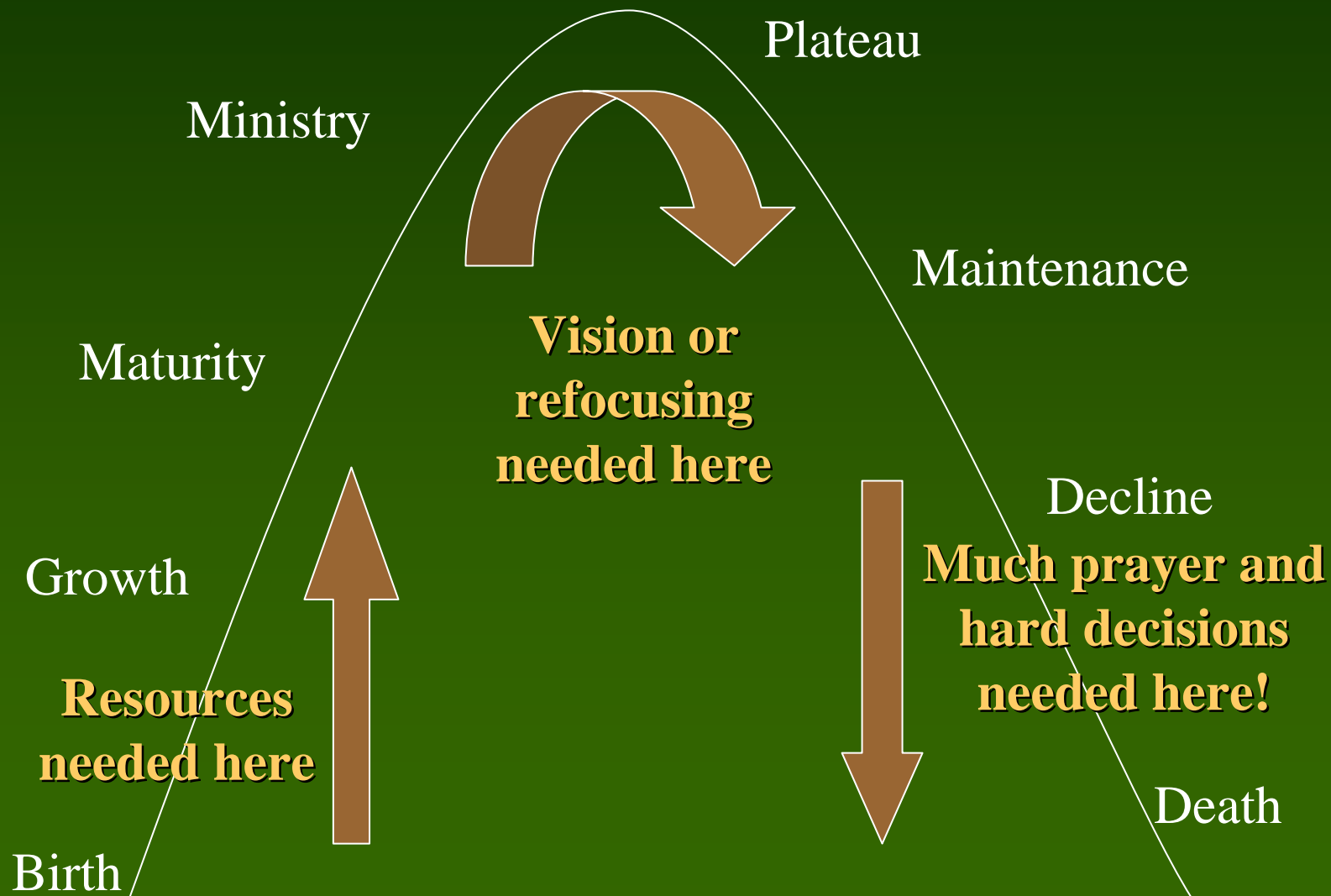
Among the Protestants and Evangelicals:

- **10** churches are closed everyday
- **70-85%** are thought to be in decline or plateaued
- **60,000** churches did not report a single convert last year (almost **16%**)

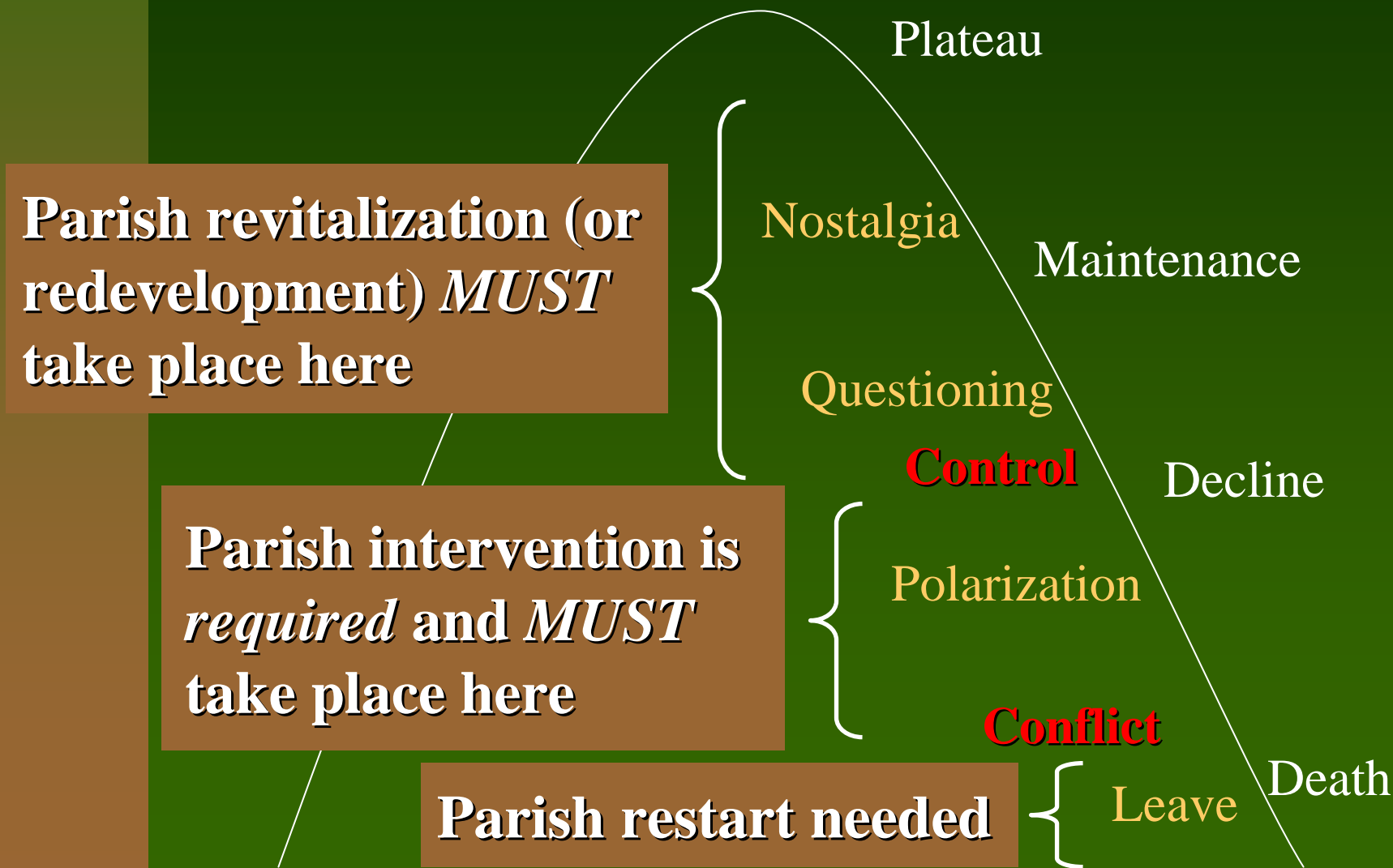
The Parish Life Cycle



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The Parish Life Cycle



Symptoms of Decline

- External factors (crime, demographics)
- Inadequate leadership
- Poor management
- Old blood
- Building campaigns
- The “Ingrown Family”
- Resistance to change
- Poor spiritual health – mere existence

Symptoms of Decline (cont.)

- Extreme member dissatisfaction
- Low morale
- Declining bottom lines
- Consistent rewarding of activities unrelated to the main thing
- Activities do not follow church's purpose
- Power struggles

A Word @ Power Struggles

Result from two unresolved questions:

1. *Where is our church headed?*
2. *Who determines that direction?*

Are We Asking the Right Questions?

NOT:

“What can I do to make my church grow?”

BUT RATHER:

“What am I doing that is preventing my church from growing?”

How Does a Church Grow?

“I planted...”

“Apollos watered...”

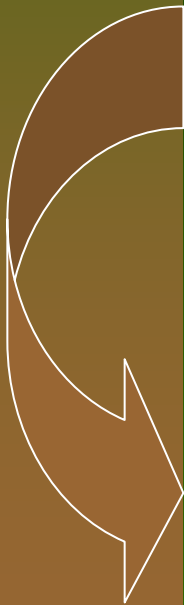
*We have to do
our part*

“But GOD gave the growth.”

“We are God’s **fellow workers**”

– St. Paul, I Corinthians 3:6-9

*So God can do
His*



The “*All by Itself*” Principle

“The Kingdom of God is like a farmer who casts seed upon the ground, and goes to bed at night and gets up day by day, and the seed sprouts up and grows – how, he himself does not know. The earth produces crops, *all by itself*, first the blade, then the head and then the mature grain in the head.”

– Mark 4:26-28

Turnaround Ministry is NOT:

- Spiritual formation
 - “Theology of Ministry”
 - Using programs
 - Administrative principles
 - Pointing fingers and laying blame
- ➔ “Sheep are the **work** of the ministry, **not the reward** of the ministry” – G. Wood

Turnaround Ministry IS:

All about *change*:

**Recovering the essential elements of
what “church” is all about:**

- 1). Evangelizing the lost to make them believers
- 2). Preach and teach so that the believers can become saints
- 3). Enable the saints to worship God in spirit and in truth

How Do We Begin?

Turnaround ministry begins with
“leadership” -
bishop, chancellor, dean, priest

**Strong leadership is the key element in
parish revitalization**

Revitalization is a Process

- Be “past” sensitive but “future” focused
- Spirituality has to be modeled and lived
- Do few things, but do them excellently
- Return to the basics
- Let people enjoy some successes

Revitalization is a Process

- Build the “Big Mo”
- Emphasize people, not programs
- Help and encourage people to develop and deepen personal relationships with one another
- Never let up!

1st Step: Diagnosis

Begins with asking the right questions:

- Is there resistance to change?
- “Small Church Mentality” – do they think smaller is better?
- Is there growth paralysis?
- Do they lack a sense of identity?
- Are they teachable?
- Are they willing to submit to authority?

1st Step: Diagnosis

- Can God's will be discerned?
- Is parish leadership leading the church in a positive spiritual direction?
- Are the followers following?
- Quantitative or qualitative decline?
- Cultural mismatch?
- Has "survivalism" set in?
- Is there evidence of negativity?
- Is there a defined concept of the church's future? Is it God-centered?

Evaluation and Analysis

Survey the parish:

- Natural Church Development
- 12 Keys to an Effective Church
- Coaching and consulting

Why?

➔ To know, quantitatively and qualitatively, where the parish is *Right Now*.

2nd Step: Where Are We Going?

Vision – a godly picture of a desire future

- Based on corporate parish values
- Based on the future, not the past
- Comes from God
- Motivates the faithful
- → Priest is primary vision caster

3rd Step: How We Gonna Get There?

Mission describes:

- Who is your ministry target group
- What needs you're seeking to meet
- How you're going to reach them (i.e., strategies, plans, programs, activities.) This describes a particular model of ministry you will use to reach – and keep – them.

Mission Follows Vision

*“A vision without the ability
to execute (i.e., mission) is
probably an hallucination.”*

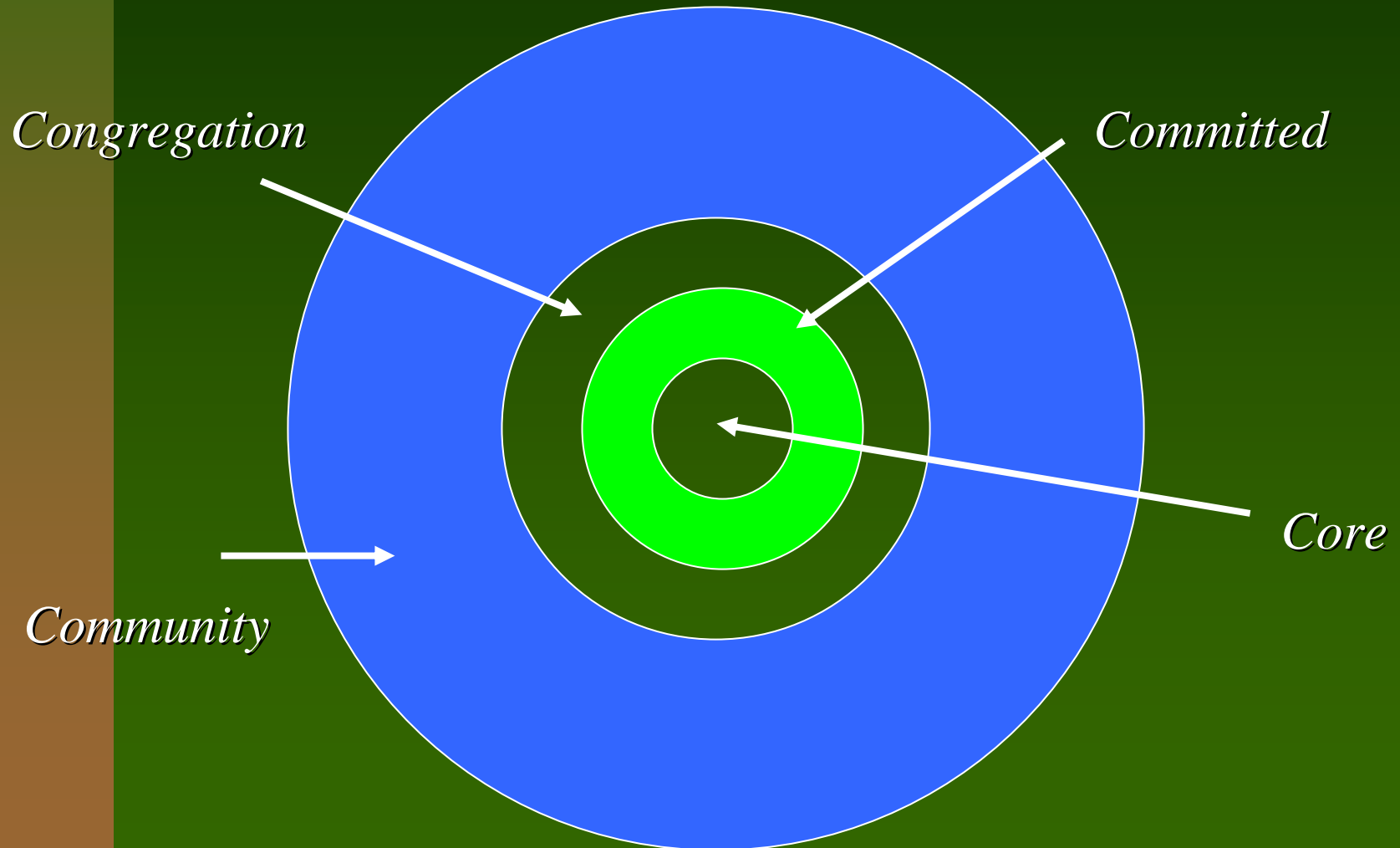
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4th Step: Who Are We Trying to Reach?

Reaching out...to who?

- You will not – and cannot – reach everyone
- Focus on those you can reach (you will best reach those whom you are most like)
- ***Need-oriented evangelism*** – preaching the gospel, using words if necessary

Who are We Ministering To?



5th Step: Equipping the Saints

To glorify God, to build up the Body of Christ

- This will cost time and money!
- ***Gift-oriented ministry***
- ***Empowered leadership***
- ***Functional structures***

6th Step: Connecting & Assimilating

What are you going to do with them once you have them?

- Intentional and deliberate
- *Holistic small groups*
- *Loving relationships*
- *Orthodox spirituality*
- *Inspiring worship*

7th Step – Remember to Celebrate!

- Celebrate victories!
 - ❖ New members
 - ❖ Goals achieved
 - ❖ Successful events
- Engender an environment and a culture of joy, hope, promise, and a bright future of better things to come

The Revitalized Parish Life Cycle



God Desires to Bless His People!

*“For I know the plans that I have for you,”
says the Lord,
“plans for good and not for evil,
to give you a **future** and a **hope**.”*

- Jeremiah 29:11

A Parting Thought

“Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.”

- Joshua 1:9



Questions & Discussion