

# HOW HEALTHY IS YOUR PARISH?

By Jim Newman

The recent development of a Parish Assessment Tool by the Bishop's Task Force on Parish Viability has raised numerous questions about how to ensure that parishes are spiritually vibrant, outward looking, and financially stable.

The following Parish Health Check List developed by the Diocesan Mission Strategy and Planning Committee identifies numerous characteristics of a healthy parish. This check list is not intended to tabulate specific findings or statistics but rather to prompt meaningful discussion among parish leaders and set short term goals to meet ministry needs. It is suggested that a Diocesan staff member or trained volunteer parish consultant be enlisted to help ensure that the discussion considers all of the issues.

## Parish Health Check List

Carefully review the following list and check all characteristics that describe your parish:

Our parish has:

- A strong sense of community
- Increasing attendance
- Evidence of "parish shoppers" or "seekers"
- A high degree of spirituality
- Spiritually and socially connected children
- Spiritually and socially connected youth
- Engaging and needs-oriented programming
- Active outreach beyond the parish (e.g. Breakfast program)
- The ability to recruit and keep volunteers for various ministries
- Capable and healthy leadership
- The ability to "love, mend, equip, and send" parishioners
- Parishioner awareness of our financial situation
- Giving that is increasing sufficiently to meet needs
- A giving pattern that shows wide distribution among parishioners
- Revenues that regularly exceed expenditures

- An endowment fund established
- An endowment fund that is growing
- Minimal liability owing to the Diocese
- Minimal line of credit with a financial institution
- Year end operating surpluses
- Average household giving above diocesan average (avg. = approx. \$750/yr)
- Core supporters of ministry from all age groups
- Long range planning in place and well defined
- A realistic and detailed budget that reflects expected monthly cash flow
- A widely distributed Narrative Budget
- A year-round stewardship program in place and regularly refreshed
- A Corporation that talks about stewardship passionately and often
- Clergy that talks about stewardship passionately and often
- A congregation that talks about stewardship passionately and often
- A Planned Giving program in place, well promoted, and understood
- An organized and comprehensive hospitality program

Total *missing* check marks \_\_\_\_\_

If your survey finds an average of eight or more missing check marks, your parish may be at risk. It is recommended that the Rector, wardens, parish treasurer and several parishioners complete this checklist at least quarterly.

For further information please contact The Venerable Marion Vincett at the Anglican Diocese of Niagara at 905-527-1316 ext. 340, or email: [marion.vincett@niagara.anglican.ca](mailto:marion.vincett@niagara.anglican.ca)