**Discernment, Mobilization, and Capacity Building**  
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A Cyclical Model for Parish Ministry

Best Practices

**Discernment**

* **Use the 5 Steps of the Ignatian Pedagogical Paradigm**: Context, Experience, Action, Reflection, and Evaluation are a great framing for the process of discernment
* **Communicate**: It is necessary to establish a shared understanding of the communal discernment process and shared support for what comes out of the discernment process
* **Be Concrete:** Set a clear timeline and establish a concrete ask, then communicate both to the community
* **Ensure Support:** To be successful, you need support from your pastor and key leaders – use 1-to-1 meetings and listening sessions to establish this
* **Start with Stories**: Stories, relationships and encounter can be the groundwork for changing the narrative
* **Keep Faith at the Center of the Effort, Not Politics**: As soon as we move away from our faith commitments towards partisanship, we lose the sense of dialogue and spiritual discernment necessary for success

**Capacity Building**

* **Learn Community Organizing and Practice It with Your Team**: This includes one-to-one relationship building and a de-centralized, snowflake model for leadership development
* **Find Your Leaders:** Form and empower leaders as an important part of the process, but also draw on the leaders that already exist
* **Be Personal:** Personal invitations to events and to leadership positions make all the difference; doing email blasts and bulletin announcements are great, but personal invitations yield the highest rate of engagement by a significant margin
* **Offer Different Opportunities:** Give people a variety of ways to participate; not everyone is ready to be a leader, so helping people start small and then inviting them to more involvement helps build capacity
* **Follow the Energy:** People participate and lead the most when they truly care about the work being done, so following that energy and interest is really helpful
* **Go to the Upper Room:** Use programs like JustFaith to keep leadership development tied to faith development

**Mobilization**

* **Plan Implementation and Engagement:** Choose key and diverse issues with appeal to a wide audience; educate yourselves on the issue; assess available resources; identify community partners; and develop a plan of action.
* **Form a Committee:** To delegate tasks, coordinate logistics, research topics, and identify individuals who will represent talking points and asks in meetings with elected officials and others.
* **Get the Word Out:** Via opinion leaders, social media, website, electronic marketing and printed materials.
* **Host an Event:** Host and coordinate an event along with after-event activities to keep the activity ongoing!
* **Be a Conductor, NOT a Passenger:**Keep the issue moving forward by strategizing with key stakeholders; providing data, witnesses, new research; and organizing community support.
* **Build a Base:** Building a base to call upon leads to long-term commitments over one-off volunteering
* **Small Victories Build Power**: Make sure what you are asking is winnable, empowering your base rather than disheartening them