

# PARALLEL DEVELOPMENT

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A PATHWAY FOR  
EXPLORING CHANGE  
AND A NEW FUTURE IN  
CONGREGATIONAL LIFE

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Arlin J. Rothauge, PhD

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## SETTING OUT ON A JOURNEY

As a pathway for exploring the future of the church, the strategy of “parallel development” makes it possible to start up new directions and new initiatives alongside the older and more established forms of our life and mission. The new and old exist side by side.

We begin our exploration of “parallel development” by defining the problems and challenges that the strategy must confront and solve. Our society reflects significant trends that trouble us and will probably only be magnified in the future. At the top of this list of trends would be transitions in the communities that surround our church buildings.

Over the years, the original host population of any church is likely to change, usually more than once, and sometimes very dramatically. Our traditional way of housing congregations, usually every congregation in its own designated church building, often leaves us with permanent structures that have very high maintenance costs and very strong memories for the congregations as shrines for births, weddings, baptisms, deaths, and high moments in congregational life. The expectations of growth do not take into account that the local constituency is bound to change. When new residents come into an area, the established congregation often looks for more of its own kind, i.e. members that fill most of their requirements for continuity. Incompatibility between members and the community often causes the declining congregation to withdraw the church’s local outreach and evangelism. A congregation caught up in these dynamics of change sometimes decides to survive as a remnant, or to remain alive by relocating, following exiting members to a new neighborhood. Due to the lack of vision, the congregation may well overlook the option of reaching out to the community’s new residents.

At the very foundation of this problem is the social stratification of the denominational model in the United States. We assume that a congregation should be relatively homogenous. That is to say, it is most appropriate for people to worship with their own kind and, in fact, we can affirm easily that anyone would be more comfortable in any social situation with "their own kind." The commonality of cultural and historical experiences forms a core story that gives a community its memory and "heart." Is it not reasonable, then, to ask people to cross as few cultural barriers as possible in coming to church? Our analysis of the problem does not demand a judgment on congregations that seem to be closed to new types of people. The original reluctant members are not faithless and sinful, but trapped by the logic of their old patterns and past relationships. We must devise a new orientation that will honor cultural identity and offer us, also, a way to value cross-cultural experience in the church.

The values of the gospel press us to welcome congregational experiences that are cross-cultural with regard to ethnic origin, and to overcome the boundaries of divergent life styles and transcend the discrepancies of socio-economic background. The strategy of parallel development meets the gospel standards and supersedes the limitations of the homogeneous principle at the heart of denominational exclusivity.

The need for adapting to ethnicity and plurality in our society pressures us from the outward parameters of the congregation. There are equally strong forces coming from within the congregation. For example, consider the increasing range of spiritual pilgrimages that the Episcopal tradition attempts to embrace. We have always seen ourselves as a bridge church between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism, which opens us up to conservative evangelism, charismatic enthusiasm, and the pronounced role of the laity on the one hand, while affirming ritual, the centrality of eucharist in worship, prominence of a clergy class, and

emphasis on orthodoxy and ancient traditions, on the other hand. As social and political movements and various renewal movements influence the life of the church, yet another range of options emerges. It seems at times that we are torn apart in every possible direction. The strategy of parallel development attempts to outline a way of putting these forces into perspective in the local congregation.

Another inward force arises from the dynamics of development itself. *In Sizing Up a Congregation For New Member Ministry* [Vol. 1, Congregational Vitality Series],<sup>1</sup> the stages in the progression of size are outlined in order to explain how numerical changes in the membership will determine the organizational and relational style of congregational life. As a group moves from one church size to another, the patterns of the former and the newer size will exist side by side for years. This perplexing situation is another example of parallel development which is rooted in either growing or declining trends.

Finally, the most inward expression of parallel development occurs in us, in our deepest feelings, beliefs, perceptions, and patterns of behavior. In situations of change, we are not one person but at least two persons, the older self and the emerging of our future self, the self we will become. This phenomenon appears repeatedly in the literature of spiritual direction and in psychological analysis.

The strategy of parallel development is formulated around the possibility of recycling a congregation. *The Life Cycle in Congregations* [Vol. 2, Congregational Vitality Series],<sup>2</sup> introduces the life cycle as a key construct for analyzing and understanding congregational development. The cyclic nature of congregational life forms the foundation of the development of a congregation. We could image the life cycle in different ways. Consider a bell and a circle.

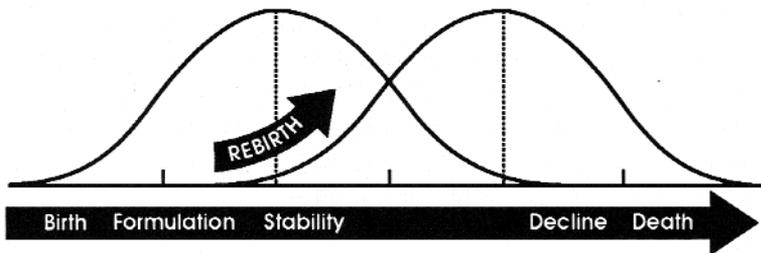


Figure 1. The Life Cycle

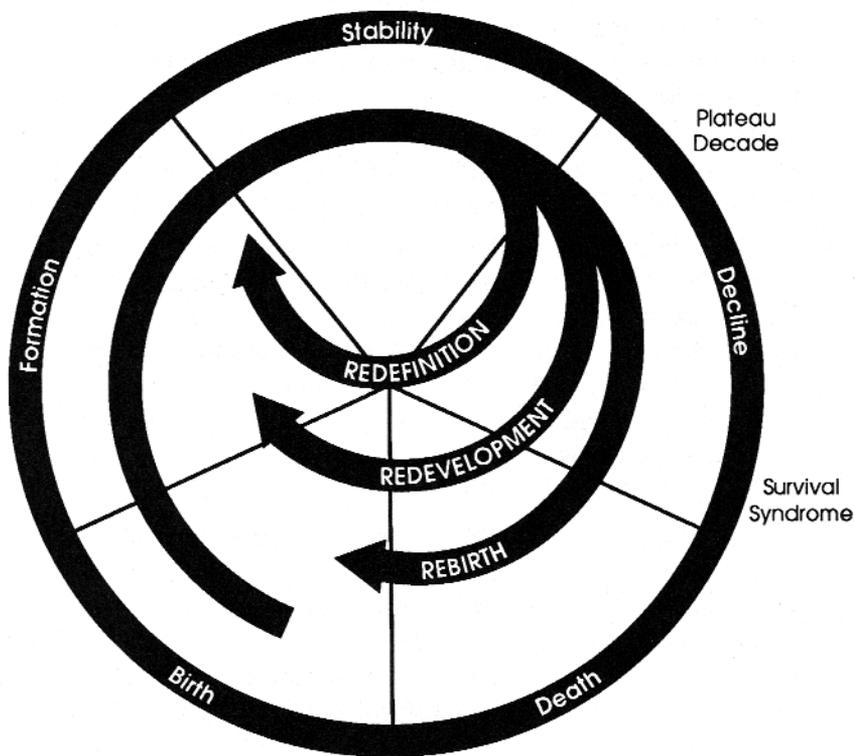


Figure 2. The Life Cycle and Reshaping Options for a Congregation

We could place two bell curves beside each other, with the two lower sides in the middle overlapping each other. (See Figure 1) This symbolizes the experience of movement from birth, to formation, to maturation (at the top of the bell), to decline and death on the down side of the bell, where the next cycle begins concurrently with another birth and new formation. The circle can give a similar message by dividing the pie into five pieces naming them **birth, formation, stability, decline, and death.** (See Figure 2) Then we draw an arrow from birth around the circle, through each stage, and back again to birth. One image offers a more linear view, the other a cyclic motion. The strategy of parallel development starts by returning to birth and by the overlapping of death and birth. This aspect of the drawing represents a great mystery and a important gift from our Creator, the gift of rebirth.

It would appear from every form of life around us that God has made the whole creation in the life cycle. The flow of the life cycle seems inescapable and inevitable - but not tragic, according to the Christian faith. We do not affirm reincarnation, which believers in some other world religions deduce from the cycle. Christians celebrate instead the gift of regeneration, redemption, and resurrection. We believe that new life rightfully springs from death, a mystery that propels the life cycle and always gives hope to our future. We believe that the gift is guaranteed by God and shared with all nature and all humanity. However, it must be emphasized that in the case of human activity and organization, the cycle is not completely automatic. Effective participation in the grace and hope of rebirth requires our choice and cooperation. The following brief look at the stages of the life cycle in a congregation will serve as a reminder of the distinct responsibilities and opportunities that cycle offers. This measure of understanding will be an essential foundation for appreciating the strategy of parallel development.

**Birth.** The incipency, or birth stage, will always be characterized by compelling visions and high energy. The leadership will be catalytic and entrepreneurial, demonstrating much resilience and imagination.

**Formation.** The formation that follows in the second stage requires continuing creativity and growth. The leaders and the emerging group set precedents and establish traditions in almost every move they make. Organization arises from necessity and takes on greater complexity as the aggregate increases in population and influence.

**Stability.** During the period of stability we witness in the movement, organization, or congregation a stretching for the peak of growth and an increasing concern for maintaining its strengths. The management walks a fine line between conservation and innovation, between honoring the past and securing a sound future. There is serious question as to whether or not the magic moment of stability ever really occurs in the life of a group. Perhaps stability comes only when finally laid to rest in the graveyard of past history.

**Decline.** In congregational life, the years of decline are often experienced as being “cast out of the Garden of Eden” or walking on “the road to Jerusalem” for the final time. We prepare to “bear our crosses” to death if necessary. This common attitude exhibits a great mistake and misinterpretation of the dynamics and opportunities of the life cycle. Decline is better viewed as God’s call to freedom. It is a time to recognize redundancy and lighten the load. We can claim the freedom to cast out “sacred cows” that are getting in the way of our mission. This work leaves us with more open space for considering the needs of redevelopment and reshaping our directions. It is the perfect environment for the reformer, but requires also the role of healer, perhaps even “lover,” in the specialized sense of assuring the people who are frightened that they will always be loved, appreciated, and cared for.

Many of the painful dynamics of decline might be captured in the categories identified by Elisabeth Kübler-Ross that describe our response to death or to a great loss. We get angry, try to blame someone, try to deny the problem, deprecate ourselves, and finally we might simply resign ourselves to fate. As an example, here are two unfortunate responses to decline in a congregation: you might think of these reactions as the **renaissance effort** and the **survival syndrome**. It is often a type of denial of the real problem to look back and seek after the “Golden Age” of the past, which is usually made up of very selective memories of a peak period. It is also a disaster to focus all our attention and resources on the survival of older forms that may really have value only because of their familiarity and antiquity. Congregations in this posture are frequently willing to have others pay the price for their refusal to change and take responsibility for their life. “You can’t let us die,” they protest; “our blood and your guilt will be on you and your children.” When does our love and concern become the grounds for blackmail? God’s best gift in many situations is the freedom to let go and turn around to other futures.

**Death.** The last stage, death, might be interpreted as God’s unrelenting demand that we “let go” of our past and our inadequacies. If we will not terminate, God will do it for us. The opportunity of the death stage clears the way for starting over, for rebirth. The leader falls into a complex range of roles, beginning with revolutionary, including “museum curator,” and extending even to “parent.” A congregation needs a “parent” leader, for instance, when the group wants to walk but has not yet learned how, wants to talk but does not have the words, wants to venture out into new, life-giving experience, but needs confidence and help in finding the way forward.

We have now outlined the theoretical background for parallel development; the next step is to imagine three typical situations in which we would need to apply the strategy. I will refer to the sample parishes cited simply as **St. A**, **St. B**, and **St. C**.

**St. A parish** is located in an urban area where, in more recent times, a large number of Hispanics and Asians have settled. For two decades the parish has had diminishing membership, which parishioners blame on the “foreign people” who have been taking over their side of town.

The **St. B mission** enjoys a quiet rural setting; that is, it was quiet until new housing developments started. The area is within driving distance of an urban center due to recently improved, highways for which the community fought hard. Now residents can get to town in good time, but so can all the new residents who work mainly in the urban area. The new houses entail considerably more expense than the long time residents would accept, but the salaries of the new residents seem high enough to manage the mortgages without difficulty. It is rumored that new school tax levies will be forthcoming. That prospect makes the older residents nervous.

**St. C parish** has grown weary with the transitions in the area they serve on the outer rim of a medium-sized town. The population has prospered with the arrival of new service industries, large office complexes, and some clean manufacturing related to communications and computer science. At present, **St. C** has had a reasonable growth and that growth has made its facilities very crowded. The newcomers committee reports that recently-arrived young families with children are now visiting their church. One member of the committee referred to these newcomers as the first wave of the “boomers” who have children ready for school and church. The demand for new and better educational space at church would present an even bigger building problem. Another member of the committee pointed

out that their demographic study of trends in the area shows that this “boomer” group is the fastest-growing element in the neighborhoods served by the parish.

All three congregations seem to require some gray hair for entry into the ranks of leadership. They have prayed for evangelism and growth but, of course, everyone assumed that God would send them other gray-haired, upper middle-class, educated Episcopalians like themselves. They have thought a little about how to welcome newcomers. At a recent diocesan conference, congregational leaders were given some pointers on offering hospitality to newcomers.

The members in the sample congregations are typical of the findings in a Gallup Poll on the Episcopal Church that reveals 72% of the members invite others to attend their church sometimes, seldom, or not at all.<sup>3</sup> However, on the positive side, 77% in the same survey said that they did favor seeking unchurched persons for membership in their congregation. Only 10% opposed this activity altogether. Another 13% just didn’t know what to say.<sup>4</sup>

Members in these three congregations would agree that they have bills to pay, a building in need of repair or expansion, and committee jobs that can’t be filled. They sincerely want the facilities preserved in all their present refinement for future generations. They love their church and its traditions. They are ready to instruct, guide, screen, and accept the visitors who will understand and appreciate their church and its traditions. The priests-in-charge depend on this established and committed core in each congregation for their support and continuity. They are the long-term members who have always been there, and always deserve to have the “final say” in decisions. Although changes are not welcomed, they are not impossible. For example, after a struggle (and not all parishioners are happy about it), all three congregations use the “new Prayer Book,” as the official 1979 Book of Common Prayer is still called by most members.

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## FACING A FORK IN THE ROAD

To move forward in time in the life of these three congregations, there seems to be some indication of conflict ahead.

In **St. A parish**, located in a downtown area that is becoming Hispanic and Asian, a group of seven Hispanic families have asked to use the church and have asked the diocese to provide a priest to hold services in Spanish. A Korean group with some Protestant roots, chiefly Korean Presbyterian, has been meeting in a number of homes. They have rented the church building for an 11:30 AM gathering of their congregation, which has grown larger than the host Episcopal congregation. The Korean group is petitioning the bishop for standing in the diocese as a full parish with seats in the local convention.

The vestry of **St. A** is upset and is beginning to wonder who is in charge. The church janitor finds that he can't keep up with the building care anymore, and the Korean group would like the facility cleaned better before their service. And now the new Asian congregation also wants to use the church school classrooms. The treasurer likes the income claiming that the new tenants balance the budget, while the parish secretary complains that she does more phone reception work for the guest congregations than for her own. The altar guild finds the way the Hispanic and Korean children run around the church an outrage. There are stories told about how the children get into the sacristy and supply closets. The altar guild is demanding new locks on more doors.

In **St. B mission**, things have not gotten so far along, but the once quiet little white-framed country church is far from serene on Sunday morning. The community's new residents do have children and, according to the old-timers, the children cause a horrible racket during the worship service. Worst of all, many children insist on

taking communion with their parents. This practice was

previously unheard of at **St. B**, and is thought to be very questionable by the most respected farm families and the owner of the local general store. These faithful and powerful patriarchs of the church family are demanding that the priest put a stop to the practice of young children receiving communion until they can get a judgment from the bishop.

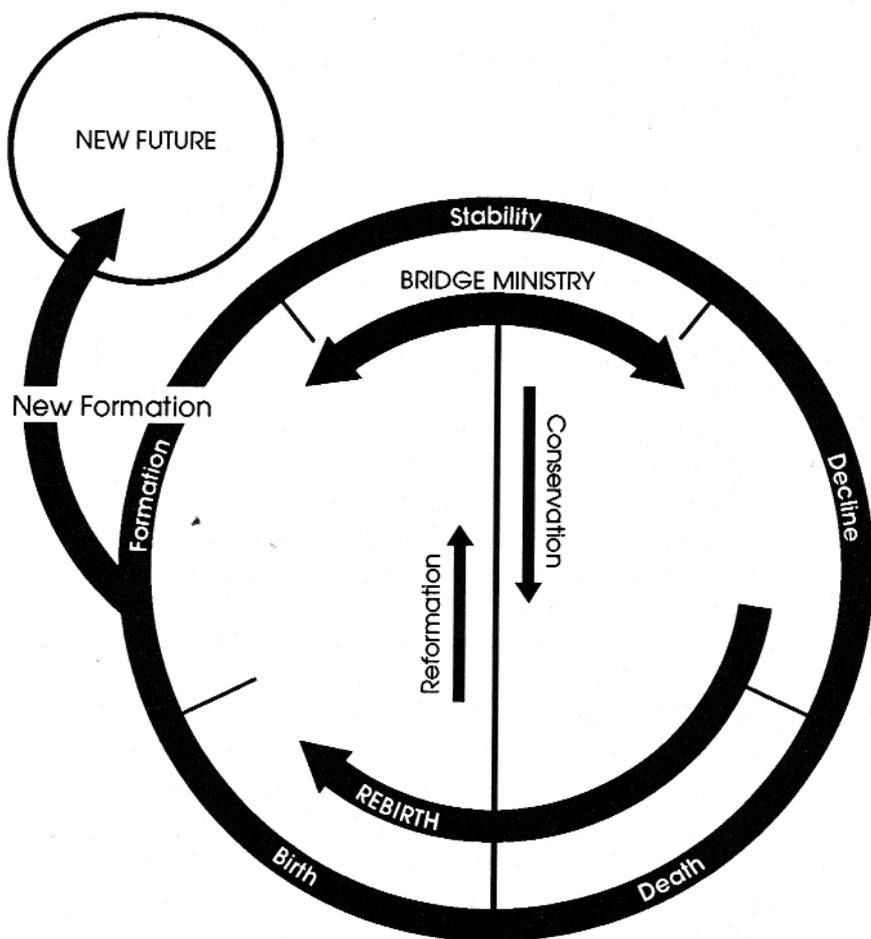
The new residents have also asked the Bishop's Committee for permission to redesign and redecorate **St. B's** rather old fashioned sanctuary. However, their request never seems to appear on that committee's agenda. Although attendance is rising at St. B's for the first time in decades, the priest admits that she is fearful about appearing at church some Sunday mornings.

**St. C**, the suburban parish in the new prosperity of a middle-sized city, is delighted to have new couples, the "boomers from IBM," as some new members call themselves. However, the congregation is split over whether or not to expand their facilities at a cost of 1.2 million dollars, and they are also split over the "renewal people" who have become more vocal and influential in the parish. To say the least, there is energy abounding at **St. C's**. The question is where to go and what to do with it? The congregation can't decide.

What kind of strategy would you advise for these situations? One popular approach might be to quiet the troublemakers, even remove the source if necessary, and resolve the conflict quickly. Some people do believe that conflict is not appropriate in churches. Parallel development, as an alternative strategy, honors in these stories the fact that people want to reach out beyond their barriers. In this process, the conflict can actually generate a new future for a congregation. In parallel development, church leaders would value the trouble and work for progress.

The strategy of parallel development can be pictured by placing a dividing line down the middle of the circle that

represents the flow of the life cycle (See Figure 3). The sectors of birth and formation fall on one side of the line while decline and death fall on the other.



*Figure 3. Parallel Development*

In managing this strategy, we must ask ourselves several key questions:

1. Do we have reason to believe that one group falls on one side of the life cycle that is bringing new experience and new kinds of members into the congregation?

2. Do we have evidence that suggests that another group represents a status quo, or a conservation of the past experiences and directions of the congregation?
3. Has the history of the congregation demonstrated that the past values and previous methods have contributed to a decline in the vitality and membership of the congregation? [Note: this is not a question of good and evil, only of effectiveness and ineffectiveness.]
4. Is it possible that the new element, and the new participants in our situation, are striving for an open, more flexible future that would introduce more new possibilities for the congregation? [Note: this is not a question of comfort or discomfort, only of narrowing horizons or widening horizons.]
5. Is it possible that someone is going to get hurt? Who and why? Giving up an established pattern may be painful for those who have cared for it and promoted it for years. If their cause is failing, declining, and threatened, the loss will only intensify the resistance. It is also important to assess who might be hurt if a new dream, a new initiative, a new birth of energy and activity is destroyed or cast away.
6. Finally, how deep is the conflict? Who is in conflict and at what level are they operating?

In parallel development, we neither put the two sides against each other in a win/lose battle, nor elevate one side to divine favor. In this strategy, we manage and maintain both sides of the dividing line concurrently. The leader supports both groups, or both sides of the situation, allowing both movements to continue their natural emergence and find their natural consequences. The side in decline, and possible demise, must be assured of love and sympathy. In the most dreaded hour, the leader promises to be with them to console and listen to their grief. In equal measure, the leader stands behind the side that is exhibiting adventure, vision, and high energy in experimenting with a new pattern and new future.

This rather schizophrenic posture for the leader creates great stress, and the heart of the leader may not be equally on both sides. Above all else, the leader must know where he or she actually does stand. As the key leaders in a changing situation, we must know ourselves and be able to declare clearly the nature of our position and vision. This self-definition and “self differentiation,” to borrow Ed Friedman’s term, undergirds our own integrity and sanity. This does not mean that the leader “takes sides,” but rather he or she guides both sides with clear self-awareness.

By initiating the strategy of parallel development, we assume that one side will move to the background and the other toward the front - and the future. Consequently, we assure conflict but we will want to control the levels of that conflict. In achieving this goal, the most important person, or group of people, in the situation will be those saints who can offer “the bridge ministry.” (See Figure 3)

“The bridge people” in the struggle are valuable participants who have the background, skills, credibility, and grace to live on both sides of the line. They are trusted by both sides, and can understand and communicate with both sides. Over their bridge, the congregation will be able to pass messages, join together in common experiences, find some healing of wounds that may well occur in the struggle. It is even possible that some members of the congregation will pass over the bridge to the new dawning future that they had previously resisted.

When we are working our way through the experiences of parallel development, we will learn to highly value and praise the ministry of the “bridge people.” It is always the strength of the bridge that controls the level of conflict and prevents total “blow up.”

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## WALKING TOGETHER IN DIFFERENT DIRECTIONS

Our last topic in rounding out our discussion of parallel development deals with levels of conflict. We assume in this analysis that conflict is not bad in itself, although the levels of conflict can sink to destructive levels. It is the destructive element in conflict that we want to prevent.

According to the analysis of Speed Leas, there are five levels of conflict: problem to solve, disagreement, contest, fight/flight, and intractable.<sup>5</sup>

### *Level One: Problem to Solve*

It must be emphasized that there is no sin in having honest problems in our church life, especially when we have conflicting goals, values, needs, life-styles, methods, loyalties, age gaps, cultural differences, etc. The difficulties will lead to a deeper, richer fellowship if we can maintain an open sharing of information and feelings that focus objectively on the problem. Put in another way, we confront the problem in the situation and in the system as opposed to attacking the other person as if they are the problem. This posture allows the parties involved to stand together and work on problems collaboratively. The final resolution will move toward unanimous agreement, as often as possible, allowing both sides some measure of gain and satisfaction. The leader and the participants will work toward trust, rapport, clarity, a thorough knowledge of the other side, and the options available for a solution. Good skills in listening, empathy, and negotiation will be required. It is always best to pray and reflect on the Scripture together in order to have a spiritual frame of reference for our test in building community through difficulties. The solution should be everyone's "win."

## *Level Two: Disagreement*

At the level of conflict called “disagreement,” the relationship between the parties will show more strain and estrangement. Again, we must anticipate real disagreement as a natural occurrence in vital communities that have diversity and freedom of thought. We have reason, however, to become nervous when the disagreement begins to cause distrust and sustained anger. The parties become less willing to associate and to listen to each other. Consequently, the problem is not clear - causing personalities and issues to become confused. The “other side” is now placed at a distance rather than the problem. “Those people” and the infamous “they” are identified as the cause of the problem, and even may be named as the problem.

Our first strategy is to move the conflict back up to the first level by working for more objectivity, better information, more negotiation, and more active mediation. For example, we might need more education and support on working out our conflicts at a weekend retreat, or several evening dinners that include the parties around one common table. The “bridge people” must become central players in the drama.

## *Level Three: Contest*

This level - “contest” - must be called “bad news.” In this situation, the dynamics of win/lose are introduced which cause the sides to see each other as opponents, or enemies, to be overcome. Helpful, sane communication gives way to distorting information, assigning diabolical motives to the opposite side, and escalating personal attacks and insults that are embellished by “you always...,” or “we never...” The objective of the struggle shifts far away from finding a mutually agreeable solution, or even self-protection, to the simple determination to win over the other side. If winning seems unlikely, the participants may threaten to leave the congregation. The favored solutions take the form of withdrawal or final confrontation, such as, “Let’s vote on

it to have the issue decided once and for all,” or “there is not room for both of us in this church.”

It is clear that we will want to move the parties up to the levels of one or two if possible. The contest will produce little for the future but division and disappointment. It is true that in some congregational struggles we might finally conclude that a separation of the ways would be advisable for the two parties in conflict. However, such a decision should be made in the spirit of solving a problem that gives everyone the best future, not as the end of a bloody battle. When we lead communities that are falling into contests (or outright combat) it would be wise to assess our limitations and seek outside support in working through the mess. In many cases, group leaders and experienced group members will have proven methods of handling conflict as part of their expertise or skills. Helpful books and self-assessment instruments are also readily available.<sup>6</sup>

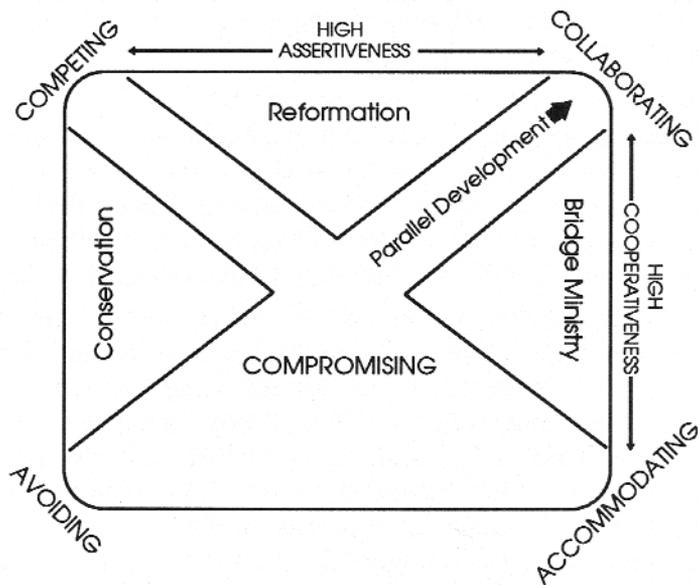
#### *Level Four. Fight/Flight*

At this level of conflict, outraged parties seldom conduct themselves in the spirit of Christ and according to the commandment of love for our neighbors and enemies. When sinking into this level, the sides want simply to get rid of each other. Factions are solidified. Communication stops. Language shifts to ideology. Everyone is hurt and serious splits are likely. In response to such battles, it is best to acknowledge that at best an intervention will help everyone “pick up the pieces” and negotiate a settlement; you cannot assume the issue in contention will be easily resolved in this way. It would be wise to consult church canons and seek the local bishop’s advice at this juncture, because the matter will probably have gone beyond a local conflict. The reputation of the church at large could be compromised by a negative outcome.

### *Level Five: Intractable*

This level is ugly in every respect. Cold self-righteousness sets in alongside self-destructive behavior. The other side is thought about only as “the devil’s work” that should be eliminated for the sake of society and the good of all. The conflict is now unmanageable. We might apply all the skills and techniques from the above levels; however the margin of success is very small once matters have reached this level. Perhaps, our goal could be to minimize the damage of the conflict and enable the person/institution/group to function again in some normal capacity.

There is no one simple formula for remaining at levels one and two, utilizing conflict, and arriving at a productive conclusion. The complexity in dealing with conflict arises not only from the different levels of conflict but also from the variety of our possible responses to it. For example, the reformer and conservator will be responding differently, perhaps even in an opposite manner. The reformer is willing to take action and take risks to her/himself and to the institution. The reformer enters the contest to win a new day and a new way forward. The conservator would rather avoid these painful consequences, and enters the conflict with the hope of avoiding change and avoiding trouble. The valuable “bridge ministers” enter the struggle with a commitment to collaboration, and might accept a compromise or accommodation in some situations. (See Figure 4)



*Figure 4. Correlation of parallel development and Thomas-Kilmann conflict modes*

In order to reflect further on our own style of behavior, we might review the definitions of the five modes as presented by Thomas and Kilmann:<sup>7</sup>

*Competing* is assertive and uncooperative - an individual pursues his own concerns at the other person's expense. This is a power-oriented mode, in which one uses whatever power seems appropriate to win one's own position - one's ability to argue, one's rank, economic sanctions. Competing might mean "standing up for your rights," defending a position which you believe is correct, or simply trying to win.

*Accommodating* is unassertive and cooperative - the opposite of competing. When accommodating, an individual neglects his own concerns to satisfy the concerns of the other person; there is an element of self-sacrifice in this mode. Accommodating might take the form of selfless generosity, of charity - obeying

another person's order when one would prefer not to, or yielding to another's point of view.

*Avoiding* is unassertive and uncooperative - the individual does not immediately pursue his own concerns or those of the other person. He does not address the conflict. Avoiding might take the form of diplomatically sidestepping an issue, postponing an issue until a better time, or simply withdrawing from a threatening situation.

*Collaborating* is both assertive and cooperative - the opposite of avoiding. Collaborating involves an attempt to work with the other person to find some solution which fully satisfies the concerns of both persons. It means digging into an issue to identify the underlying concerns of the two individuals and to find an alternative which meets both sets of concerns. Collaborating between two persons might take the form of exploring a disagreement to learn from each other's insights, concluding to resolve some condition which would otherwise have them competing for resources, or confronting and trying to find a creative solution to an interpersonal problem.

*Compromising* is intermediate in both assertiveness and cooperativeness. The objective is to find some expedient, mutually acceptable solution which partially satisfies both parties. It falls on a middle ground between competing and accommodating. Compromising gives up more than competing but less than accommodating. Likewise, it addresses an issue more directly than avoidance, but doesn't explore it in as much depth as collaborating. Compromising might mean splitting the difference, exchanging concessions, or seeking a quick middle-ground position.

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## CONCLUSION

We return from this exploration of the levels and modes of conflict by reminding ourselves why we took the journey. Parallel development offers wonderful results that are not possible by the methods of forced harmony and homogeneity, and a perpetual homeostasis. The strategy allows us a way to receive new constituencies, new movements, and new initiatives that represent a daring and creative response to the emerging needs and conditions in our society. The strategy of parallel development can function, so to speak, as an incubator of alternative patterns and new futures in the church.

One of the by-products of the strategy will be conflict between differing sides, the one working towards the future out of a rebirth, and the other struggling to defend and conserve the heritage of the past, unto death if necessary. In the struggle, we must maintain levels one and two in the degree of conflict. We keep the other levels in mind as a dark hole that we want to avoid. Conflict is inevitable in parallel development, but not all conflict will further the positive outcomes of the strategy. We want to train our members and lead our congregations into a “problem to solve” approach to disagreement. At the healthy levels of conflict, we can be energized by mutual problem-solving, and our own vision can be refined and tested by the wider concerns of the congregation. Such results are very desirable, if not absolutely necessary, in forming new directions.

Finally, honest candor requires us to acknowledge that not all candidates for the status of a new future will achieve that distinction. New is not necessarily better. It falls to the proponents of a new candidate to test the possibility in the church and expose it to challenges that will prove its worth. Remember always that wrestling with new patterns takes courage; and the risks are many - and, sometimes, great.

Pastoral care, a word of love and consolation when things go poorly, will be needed for the leaders and members of our congregations who live for us on the experimental and prophetic edge of our life. Our future is an asset as valuable as our past. God gives us both as gifts for our stewardship.

We revisit our three congregations after they have used parallel development to work through their challenges.

The people of **St. A parish** found themselves facing invasion on two fronts, from the Hispanics and the Koreans. The priest resigned, and with considerable wisdom the congregation called a new priest who wanted to learn Spanish and who appreciated Hispanic culture. His choice for a senior warden was an Hispanic academic and business consultant. A few women in the altar guild are sponsoring and training three Hispanic women. The same women may resign from the altar guild because they say, “We are having so much fun in the church school working with the Hispanic and Korean children.” Both the Korean and Hispanic services have doubled, nearly tripled the original attendance. The Anglo membership may, or may not, grow in the years ahead.

**St. B mission** will be admitted to the next convention as a parish. A second service at 10:00 is being held in the new school gymnasium where most of the new families with children now congregate. They use the classrooms for church school. Their attendance average is about 245. The new non-stipendiary assistant holds services in the little white church at 8:00 for the original members who are relieved to have their quiet service back.

**St. C parish** goes up and down in attendance, depending on the latest management and employment policies at IBM. Facilities are still well beyond the recommended 80% capacity rule. A building fund has been established. A mid-week

“Prayer and Praise” service has been accepted in the parish for the members who are sharing in the renewal movement. The rector is not totally at ease with the excitement of this evening event, but always shares in the singing, and celebrates. Of course, not all the problems at **St. C’s** are solved, but in a vital, growing congregation, they never are.

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## NOTES

1. Arlin J. Rothauge, *Sizing Up a Congregation for New Member Ministry* [Vol. 1, Congregational Vitality Series], (New York: The Episcopal Church Center, 1983).
2. Arlin J. Rothauge, *The Life Cycle in Congregations* [Vol. 2, Congregational Vitality Series], (New York: The Episcopal Church Center, 1985).
3. George Gallup, "The Spiritual Influence of the Episcopal Church," poll completed 1989, Question 3.
4. *ibid.*, Question 6.
5. Speed Leas, *Moving Your Church Through Conflict*, (Washington, DC: Alban Institute, 1985).
6. Kenneth Thomas and Ralph Killman, *Thomas-Killman Conflict Mode Instrument* (available from Xicom, (800) 759-4735); *Myers-Briggs Type Indicator* (Consulting Psychologists Press, 577 College Avenue, Palo Alto, CA 94306); Roger Fisher and William Ury, *Getting to Yes* (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1981); for consultants, contact your diocesan office, or Alban Institute, (202) 244-7320.
7. Kenneth Thomas and Ralph Killman, *op.cit.*, p.10.

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