



PARISH CULTURE SURVEY AND THE WAY FORWARD

CULTURE MATTERS

Church culture matters. It can make or break your church, vision, mission, and strategy plans. The ultimate question leaders must answer is “does the culture of my church currently reflect where we want to go?” If it doesn’t, then the culture needs to change to align more with your vision. If culture isn’t formed by values derived

from our Apostolic Mission and purpose of Evangelisation, then they are simply personal preferences. Our personal preferences, likes or dislikes are much more likely to result in division or become a stumbling block for growth and expansion of our parish church community.



WHAT IS A MISSIONARY CULTURE

*“THE WAY WE DO THINGS
AROUND HERE”*

To be missionary is to be relational, and culture is the most important social reality in our church parish communities.

Though invisible to the untrained eye, the power of culture is undeniable. Culture gives colour and flavour to everything your church is and does. Like a powerful current running through your church, it can move you inland or take you farther out to sea. It can prevent your church’s potential from ever being

realised, or if used by the Holy Spirit, it can draw others in and produce a healthy spiritual life all along the way.”

Creating your church’s culture doesn’t happen by accident. I could walk into your church today and ask, “Why do you do that?” – and get several responses for the reasons for your or your church’s, behaviour including “That’s just the way we do things around here.” This is perhaps the simplest definition of culture, “the way we do things around here”.

Unfortunately, few churches create their own culture on purpose. Instead, they drift into a culture that’s not purposeful in response to our Missionary Mandate. It doesn’t have to be that way.

LEADERS ROLE IN DEVELOPING A HEALTHY CHURCH CULTURE

Leaders that create a healthy church culture, form a powerful and impactful strategy for affecting people’s lives as well as the long-term mission for the body of Christ and for all to be evangelised. As leaders we need to be more intentional about our goal to multiply deeply transformed disciples and leaders for the sake of the world. We need to be more deliberate about taking the chaos of what people bring with them, from diverse backgrounds, social and economic backgrounds, family origins,

different lived experiences and shaping it into a radically Missionary culture that forms the body of Christ - His Church, you, and I, guided by the Holy Spirit.

Your church can have the best programs in the world, but deep-rooted change won’t happen without the right culture. Great ideas will go nowhere if the culture is not receptive. To make any kind of transition as a church, your church’s culture can’t be ignored.

PARISH CULTURE SURVEY WAY FORWARD

The most powerful culture is a generative culture. Here leaders place greater emphasis on accomplishing the Parish Vision, Mission, and Strategy as a collective body, rather than pursuing individual personal gains or applying

sets of rules that are counter intuitive to building up the Body of Christ, Church in response to our Missionary Mandate. The ultimate culture shifter is the Holy Spirit.

CULTURE SURVEY OBSERVATION ACROSS THE ARCHDIOCESE: **THE YOUTH ARE THE CHURCH OF TODAY.**

In the Parish Culture Survey, we observed a trend where greater effort can be applied to nourish the church of today across the Archdiocese. Yes!!! Youth and Young Adults - for they are the Church of today, not tomorrow.

Virtually all churches aim to invest meaningfully in the faith development of the younger generations who have been entrusted into their care.

Some churches have a longstanding track record of faithfulness in living out this commitment. Some lose sight of this priority over time and allow their purpose to fade.

As we internalise the Culture Survey results, we should consider our diverse cultural perspectives on key aspects of what it means for churches to invest intentionally in the faith development of the members of emerging generations. Youth and Young Adults are not the church of tomorrow but rather the Church of today from which we will experience many



Spiritual fruits in support of Church Mission. We should challenge our thinking about the inter-generational dynamics of our churches, the crucial partnership between portfolios, church community, parents and what it means to involve young people meaningfully in the life of the church. We need to ensure we broaden and enrich our thinking about caring for children, youth, and young adults as a vital responsibility shared by the entire parish congregation and every individual Parish Portfolio.



ASSESS YOUR CHURCH CULTURE

With the Parish Alive Culture Survey & Portfolio Areas assessed, review where some portfolios are doing well and where other Portfolio areas may need additional support.

Focus on your values to change and evolve your church culture to be more Missionary. As leaders and teams of parishioners, allow your minds to soak up the Word of God; be guided by the Holy Spirit and it will strongly guide you to see what's not present in your desired church culture. As a leader of the church, do

you embrace and passionately live out a vision of Evangelisation underpinned by missionary values? Remember it must first flow out of you as a church leader before it will convince anyone else. Leaders must search their hearts first before they can shift the culture of their teams, portfolios and ultimately the church parish community. Ultimately you reproduce an experience of what you are and hope to experience in time.



DEFINE WHAT A GOOD CULTURE LOOKS LIKE

List the values that would exemplify the preferred culture and validate that these values are biblical. Are they positive? Enlist buy-in from other leaders in your church as the first adopters of this culture shift. Encourage healthy dialogue and discussion based on the Parish

Culture Survey feedback both positive and constructive feedback as both represent opportunities to create new experiences for parishioners in these Portfolio areas and reveal the Spiritual gifts to unfold in our journey.

LIVE AND TEACH

Pray and be guided by the Holy Spirit when you do ministry placements. Generate new ideas from parishioners we serve based on areas or Portfolios you seek to improve. This ensures the parish community is informed of the effort, the areas to support and ultimately moves them into becoming supporters of the desired results you want to see.

It should be communicated to the parish often, in both written materials and real-life stories. These stories provide a positive experience of what a good culture looks like for a Portfolio or Parish Group. Example, when attending an Alpha event, I always feel welcomed, never judged, or belittled but rather encouraged in my spiritual journey while feeling a greater sense of community in the church.

CELEBRATE AND HONOUR

Who embodies the values? This could be a Portfolio, a group, or a leader in the church. Feature them in the Mass or the weekly Parish Bulletin. Portfolios leaders are encouraged to share their amazing stories with the Parish Alive team so they can in turn be shared with Archdiocese Portfolio Leaders. Now that we have data validating individual assumptions in our Culture Survey highlighting and

grouping areas where we are doing well and further opportunity to grow, we need to let our leaders tell their story through testimonies. People will want to imitate or be part of whatever you show off or sing praises about. Everyday make a move toward your desired Culture destination.

CONCLUSION

Since Culture flows from leaders, the best place to start is with your core leadership teams.

Wherever your next steps take you, our prayer is that God will give you the courage to faithfully live your unique life in Christ, allow your gifts you bring into the church to be guided by the Holy Spirit and that you will discover a whole new way of living out this Missionary Mandate.

May His love invade you as you continue your Parish Alive Journey.



Brandon Abrahams
Parish Alive Leadership Support
Brandon.abrahams@gmail.com
