



ORGANIZING PARISH SOCIAL MINISTRY

Building a successful parish-based social ministry effort of the kind envisioned in *Communities of Salt and Light* requires tapping each and every able Catholic's baptismal call to serve. There is much ministry to do but the good news is that there are plenty of baptized sisters and brothers to invite to participate. One important challenge is to create an effective structure for carrying out this important work.

The vision for parish social ministry outlined in *Communities of Salt and Light* has profound implications for the way we organize and structure social ministry in our parishes. In the past, the group responsible for social ministry, often called the social concerns committee, was frequently made up of the very few people who stuffed the Thanksgiving baskets and volunteered at the homeless shelter. *Communities of Salt and Light* challenges us to completely rethink the role, focus and structure of the parish social concerns committee.

Since *Communities of Salt and Light* was issued by the United States bishops in 1994, many parishes have tried to make this vision a reality. The following description draws on these experiences to provide "models" for a Social Concerns Coordinating Team. These are models not in the sense that they are "ideal," but in that they provide ideas and examples. This description includes all the elements prescribed in *Communities of Salt and Light* but is intended to be adjusted to meet the unique needs of each parish. We realize that no two parish Social Concerns Coordinating Teams will be identical and that most parishes are always in the process of developing and strengthening their social ministry programs.

We use the term "coordinating team" instead of the term "committee" because it more clearly reflects the oversight and coordinating role of this group as described below.

Three Basic Messages

Communities of Salt and Light provides three key messages that have implications for the responsibilities and structures of Social Concerns Coordinating Teams:

- (1) Our social mission should be **integrated throughout parish life**. As the story of the Last Judgment in Matthew's Gospel reminds us, in the end we will all be judged by how we have cared for the least among us. This means that the Catholic social mission is an essential part of the faith life of every able Catholic. It must be woven into education programs so that all Catholics learn about Catholic social teaching. It must be reflected in

the prayer and worship of our faith community. And it must include a wide range of opportunities for members of our parishes to act on the social dimensions of our faith.

- (2) The Social Concerns Coordinating Team, in their leadership capacity, **should organize the work, not do the work.** The primary role of these leaders is to provide opportunities and to invite and recruit members of their faith community to become involved in Catholic social mission. For example, the leaders of the parish’s program to support a local soup kitchen can do their job well only by creating opportunities and inviting other parishioners to volunteer. This is not to suggest that members of Social Concerns Coordinating Teams should absent themselves from being involved in the doing of the work; rather, in the role of leader/organizer/planner, the critical task at hand is to organize, invite, recruit, orchestrate and create opportunities for the parish—and *all* of its members—to become engaged.
- (3) Parish social ministry must include both **efforts to provide direct service or outreach to people in need and efforts to work for justice and peace by shaping the policies, programs and structures of society.** These two dimensions of the Catholic social mission are essential and complementary.

Basic Structure

In *Communities of Salt and Light*, the bishops state, “We need to build local communities of faith where our social teaching is central, not fringe; where social ministry is integral, not optional; where it is the work of every believer, not just the mission of a few committed people and committees.” They suggest “a strategy of integration and collaboration, which keeps social ministry from becoming isolated or neglected.” Their framework of integration for effective parish social ministry includes the following elements:

- Prayer and Worship
- Education and Formation
- Family, Work, Citizenship
- Outreach and Charity
- Legislative Advocacy
- Community Organizing
- Global Solidarity

Parishes that seek to realize this vision will structure and define their Social Concerns Coordinating Team so that these elements are fully integrated into parish life. This means that the Coordinating Team assures that someone or some group/committee is responsible for making sure each element of the framework comes to life in the parish. In other words, this team has the primary accountability for oversight of the integration of these seven elements into parish life and it functions as the umbrella organization for the coordination and integration of these elements.

Optional Models

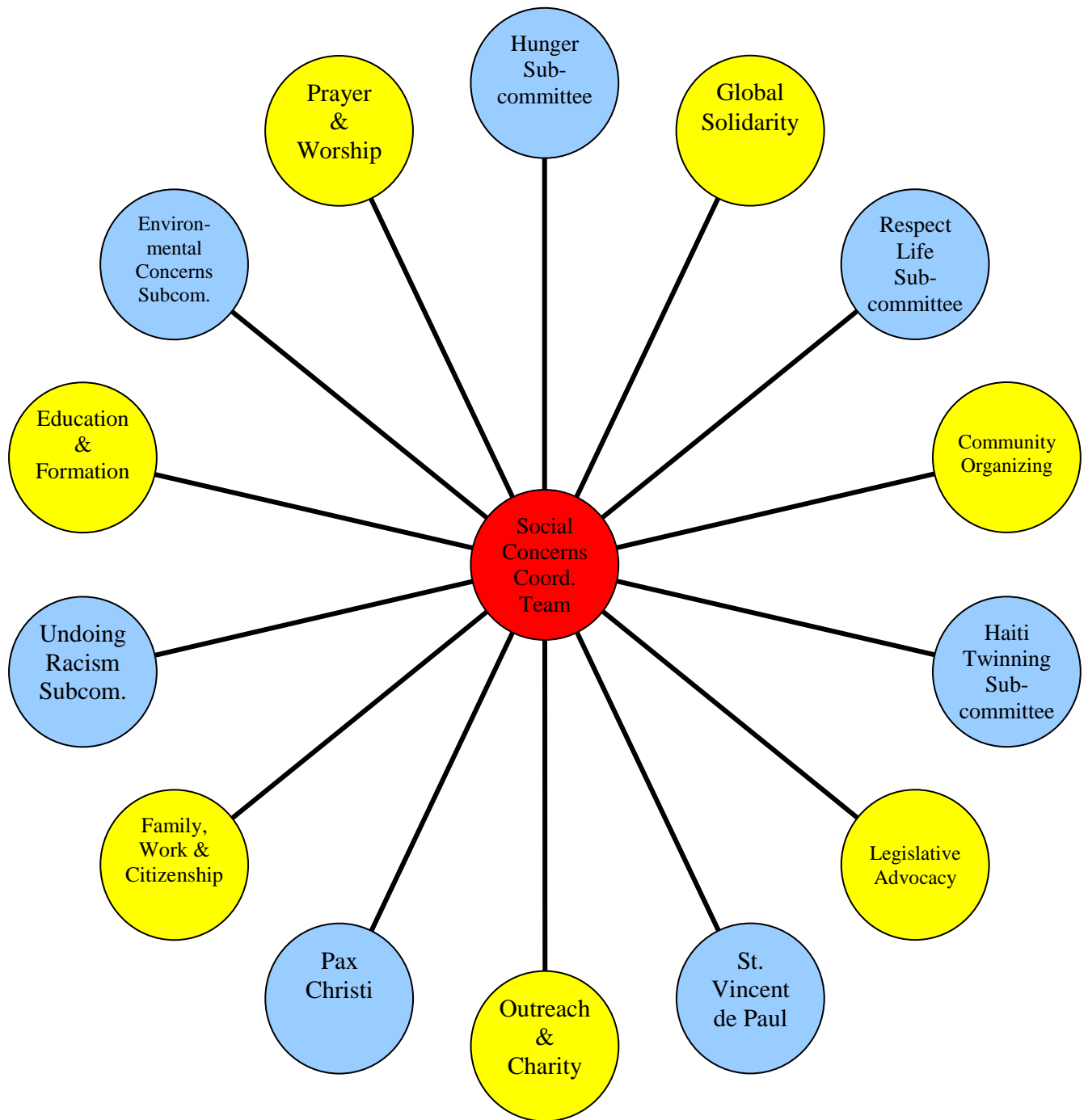
There are different ways to structure the social concerns coordinating team to establish this oversight and assure this integration. The following describes three possible models:

Model One

In this model (see diagram on next page), the Social Concerns Coordinating Team (in red) is made up of representatives from each area of activity. These areas of activity include the seven elements as described above and also the major focus areas for the social ministry efforts at the parish. These areas of activity would typically include:

1. Subcommittees or ministry teams that have a particular interest or mission focus (in blue circles); these might include, for example, hunger issues or environmental concerns or respect life issues. Some of these committees might be focused on the agenda of a particular organization like CCHD, St. Vincent de Paul, Pax Christi or Habitat for Humanity. These focus areas will vary among parishes and those presented here are just examples.

2. In addition, there would also be an individual or a subcommittee whose primary focus is one (or more) of the seven areas of concern from *Communities of Salt and Light* (in yellow circles). In other words, for each element of *Communities of Salt and Light* mentioned above, there would be a corresponding subcommittee or designated person whose responsibility it would be to pay constant attention to that particular element in the planning and execution of the Social Concerns Coordinating Team's work.



Model Two

In this model, again the Social Concerns Coordinating Team is made up of representatives from each subcommittee or ministry team, for example, hunger/poverty issues or environmental concerns or respect life issues (as diagrammed on the previous page). Some of these subcommittees might even be devoted to the agenda of a particular organization like Catholic Charities, CCHD, CRS, St. Vincent de Paul, Pax Christi, or Habitat for Humanity.

However, unlike model one where the elements of *Communities of Salt & Light* are ascribed to a designated individual or committee (designated by yellow circles on the previous page), in model two each ministry team takes on the responsibility of the elements germane to their work. In other words, the monthly meeting agenda of each subcommittee or ministry team includes the elements of *Communities of Salt & Light*. In addition, whenever the Social Concerns Coordinating Team meets, it too includes these elements as a primary part of its regular agenda.

As you will notice in the example below, each of the subcommittees have to consider how their work can and should be integrated with the elements described on the left hand side of the grid.

Integration of Seven Elements into Subcommittee or Ministry Team Work

Elements	<i>Subcommittees (Examples)</i>				
	<i>Hunger/Poverty</i>	<i>Haiti Twinning</i>	<i>Respect Life</i>	<i>Undoing Racism</i>	<i>Environmental Concerns</i>
<i>Prayer and Worship</i>	X	X	X	X	X
<i>Education and Formation</i>	X	X	X	X	X
<i>Family, Work, Citizenship</i>	X	X	X	X	X
<i>Outreach and Charity</i>	X	X	X	<i>If need determined</i>	—
<i>Legislative Advocacy</i>	X	X	X	X	X
<i>Community Organizing</i>	X	—	—	X	<i>If need determined</i>
<i>Global Solidarity</i>	X	X	<i>If need determined</i>	X	X

Model Three

Model Three is essentially an acknowledgement that Model One and Model Two might—and probably will—be mixed together in some kind of hybrid fashion. That is, it might very well be the case that some elements of *Communities of Salt and Light* get translated into a standing subcommittee and some do not. For example, a parish’s Social Concerns Coordinating Team might decide that it would be very helpful to create a Liturgy Subcommittee that would work on opportunities for God’s call to do justice and for the particular projects of the Social Concerns Coordinating Team to be integrated into the parish liturgy planning process. However, it might decide that, given the parish’s energy and interests, it is not necessary to create a subcommittee on charity and outreach, since this area is so well-embraced and integrated in the life of the parish.

Roles and Responsibilities

Parish Social Concerns Coordinating Team

As explained above, the Parish Social Concerns Coordinating Team is usually made up of leaders or representatives from each of the social ministry sub-areas described above. They meet regularly (monthly) to keep each other informed about all social ministry activities. This requires that the coordinating team identify a chairperson or co-chairpersons to convene and run the meetings.

The Social Concerns Coordinating Team meetings serve a number of important purposes including the following.

- They provide a setting for creating and maintaining an **effective system of communication** about parish social ministry activities, making sure that the various leaders and sub-groups are aware of each others activities to avoid “bumping into each other” due to duplication, poor communication, unplanned recruitment or other reasons.
- They ensure that each social ministry leader or team produces some type of **annual plan** so that the efforts are well thought out and the tasks identified can be accomplished.
- They provide opportunities to **identify situations where two or more leaders or teams might work together**. For example, the Global Solidarity leader(s) or ministry team and the Environmental Concerns Subcommittee might work together to help the parish respond to a crisis somewhere in the world.
- They allow the leaders or teams that relate to other ministries in the parish (e.g., prayer/worship and education/formation) to keep abreast of what other social concerns leaders are planning so they can **identify opportunities to make connections among parish ministries**. For example, the Hunger/Poverty Subcommittee leader(s) might learn from the advocacy representative about plans for a rally in the state capital and might work with the DRE to arrange for Confirmation candidates to participate.

- They provide a forum for proposing and discussing major **new social ministry initiatives** in the parish.
- They provide for **accountability**, assuring that each leader or team is following through on their assigned responsibilities.
- They provide for a forum for **ongoing evaluation and assessment** and overall **strategic planning** for parish social ministry.

The social concerns coordinating team has, at its heart, these primary oversight and support functions:

1. Coordinating social ministry activities to ensure a smooth, well-functioning operation.
2. Providing oversight of the integration of the parish social ministry effort into the overall life of the parish.
3. Providing oversight (and coordination) of the planning for the different social ministry activities.
4. Developing an effective and comprehensive system of communication with special emphasis on communication with the pastor and parish council.
5. Identifying emerging parish and community social ministry needs and potential leaders.
6. Providing social ministry skills training opportunities for parishioners.
7. Maintaining communication with diocesan offices that can deliver professional skills training and support for social ministry leaders.
8. Emphasizing the seven elements described in *Communities of Salt & Light*.

Subcommittees, Taskforces or Ministry Teams

These groups, identified in the Model One and Two diagrams (e.g. Hunger Subcommittee or St. Vincent de Paul, etc.) are typically groups who have a commitment to a particular need, cause or organization. They often reflect the needs of the local area or the charism of some parishioners. These groups reflect the uniqueness of parish social ministries and that of their constituents. Each of these groups sends a representative to the Social Concerns Coordinating Team so that their work can be orchestrated with the rest of the committee's work. By having each subcommittee linked together, healthy cross-pollination of ideas and the nurture of respect for other ministries is encouraged and celebrated.

In addition, these ministries are encouraged to craft their work with attention to the values and concerns sounded by *Communities of Salt and Light*. This means, for example, a group like the Hunger Subcommittee will be encouraged to consider how its work can/should address those appropriate areas of concern represented by leaders and teams attentive to the vision of *Communities of Salt and Light*.

Implementing the Seven Elements

The following descriptions include examples for illustration purposes. In each of the areas described, it is essential for social concerns leaders to respect the expertise of those parish staff members and volunteer leaders who are responsible for, or involved in, related ministries or programs.

1. Prayer and Worship

The Prayer and Worship leader (or subcommittee or function of the Social Concerns Coordinating Team) is not the same as the parish Liturgy Committee. This function involves working with those who plan parish liturgies, pointing out opportunities to connect Sunday liturgies to Catholic social teaching/mission and organizing prayer services focused on charity, justice and peace. Activities might include:

- When a legislative advocacy day is planned by the advocacy team and/or the Hunger Subcommittee, the Social Concerns Coordinating Team's prayer and worship leader(s) might plan a prayer service and work with parish liturgy planners to include prayers for the success of the event in the general intercessions on the preceding Sunday.
- When a collection of goods for homeless people is planned, the Social Concerns Coordinating Team prayer and worship leader(s) might work with the parish liturgy planners to include some of these goods as part of the presentation of the gifts.
- The Social Concerns Coordinating Team prayer and worship leader(s) might also organize a "prayer network" to pray about issues of human life, justice and peace, or might organize special prayer services to mark feast days and other events that highlight the social mission of the church.

It is essential that these activities be carried out in a way that is respectful of the expertise and areas of responsibility of those whose job is to plan liturgies.

2. Education and Formation

The focus here is to work with the parish Director of Religious Education and the School Principal, if applicable, to ensure that the Catholic social teaching/mission is incorporated into all parish educational programs. This might include:

- Organizing an in-service session on the Catholic social teaching/mission for catechists or the school faculty, or providing them with a list of educational resources on Catholic social teaching.
- Letting education staff or leaders know what is being planned by the Social Concerns Coordinating Team and developing a plan for involving students in some of these outreach and advocacy activities.
- Organizing a session on the Catholic social teaching/mission for sacramental preparation programs or the RCIA process.

In some parishes, the DRE is happy to turn over to this person or group the responsibility of organizing one or more annual adult education sessions on Catholic social teaching. It is essential that Social Concerns Coordinating Team and/or the Education and Formation Leader(s) work with the DRE and school principal to develop a plan for the year that not only ensures that the Catholic social mission is explicitly taught, but also respects the expertise and areas of responsibility of the parish's education leaders.

3. Family, Work, Citizenship

It is important that the Social Concerns Coordinating Team take responsibility for finding ways to help parishioners live their faith in everything they do—at home, at work, and in their communities. This might include:

- Organizing a workshop on socially responsible investing
- Providing family-focused social ministry activities when all age levels can participate together
- Regularly including in the bulletin information about church teaching on “faithful citizenship.”

4. Charity and Outreach

This function focuses on direct service activities to people in need. Possible activities include:

- Organizing parishioners to serve once a month at a soup kitchen
- Organizing parishioners to fold clothes every week at a clothing distribution center
- Organize a collection of blankets for homeless people or a collection of food for Thanksgiving baskets
- Organizing parishioners to work on local Catholic Charities projects

The key to this work is to understand that what is important is to provide opportunities for other parishioners to get involved. Recruitment of volunteers is the critical task. In some parishes, where there has been a long and extensive history of a variety of outreach activities, this team may be made up of leaders who organize various ongoing outreach projects (e.g., St. Vincent de Paul, clothes closet, Thanksgiving baskets, etc.). Where outreach programs have been active for a long time, it is important to connect them to the larger social ministry effort in ways that respect the knowledge and experience of those who have been working hard on parish outreach—sometimes for many years.

5. Legislative Advocacy

The focus of this function is to create opportunities for parishioners to be involved in working on public policies related to justice and peace. This might mean:

- Organizing a parish chapter of a diocesan legislative network
- Coordinating parish participation in a lobby day organized by the state Catholic Conference
- Providing information to parishioners about other local advocacy groups
- Inviting local elected officials to meet with parishioners about important local issues
- Inviting speakers to discuss church teaching on public policy issues.

Again, it is essential that this person or team sees their role as providing opportunities for many parishioners to be involved in shaping a world that protects human life and dignity and promotes justice and peace.

6. Community Organizing

The Catholic Church in the United States has a long history of supporting community organizing projects that empower people in low-income communities to improve their neighborhoods and their lives. One of the key ways we do this is through the Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD), a collection taken in parishes nationwide each year through which grants

are given to local community organizations. The role of the Community Organizing leader or team has two key components:

- Providing information to parishioners about the CCHD collection so that they see it not as a burden, but as a valuable opportunity to support self-help efforts in low-income communities
- Enabling and encouraging parishioners to become involved in community organizing projects that are active in the local community.

7. Global Solidarity

It is always easier for parishioners to find ways to respond to local needs than to identify ways they can make a real difference for people half a world away. Therefore, the emphasis with global solidarity is to organize opportunities for parishioners to respond to the needs of our sisters and brothers around the world. This could mean:

- Establishing a sister parish relationship with a parish in another land
- Organizing a mission trip to another country or organizing Catholic Relief Service's Operation Rice Bowl in the parish
- Bringing in speakers who have recently returned from overseas or sharing information about the American Bishops' Overseas Appeal, an opportunity for Catholics to contribute to our faith community's programs for global relief and development, refugee assistance and advocacy

Organizers and Doers

To understand the role of social ministry leaders, it is essential to understand the difference between "organizers" and "doers." These two activities are very different and require different characteristics. Please consider... *organizers* tend to do the following activities:

- Planning
- Being strategic
- Recruiting leaders and participants
- Bringing people together
- Organizing training sessions on Catholic social teaching and social ministry skills
- Facilitating problem solving discussions and meetings
- Visioning
- Listening and communicating

Doers of social ministry are busy with:

- Putting the solutions into action
- Being energetic and dedicated to completing tasks
- Learning ministry skills
- Deepening their baptismal call to serve through participation in on-going formation
- Providing input, ideas and data that shape the planning process

As distinguished from the leaders of social ministry who are the "organizers," "doers" of social ministry make sure specific tasks get done. The "doers" are the people who make the home

visits to the elderly, who collect/distribute the food, who write the letters to the legislators, who attend the rally sponsored by the community organization, who make a trip with fellow parishioners to the sister parish in Haiti. They do not organize the effort, they perform the service. Of course, organizers can be doers and vice versa. However, the critical thing is to know the difference and to make sure the parish has a structure or system that includes leaders, or organizers, who make sure many parishioners have opportunities to become “doers.”

Closing

There are many structures that a parish can create to make sure that “organizing” and “doing” social ministry happens, to ensure that our social mission is woven throughout parish life, and to ensure that social ministry includes a variety of opportunities for parishioners to act through service and through advocacy or working for justice and peace. Structural experimentation is encouraged because the structure must meet the unique qualities of and challenges faced by each parish. The important point is to make sure that a core group of people are specifically responsible for helping the parish act on each of the elements of effective parish social ministry outlined in *Communities of Salt and Light*.

Acknowledgment: This segment was developed with the assistance of Joan Rosenhauer formerly with the USCCB Office of Justice, Peace and Human Development and now with Catholic Relief Services and Tom Ulrich from Catholic Relief Services.

Development Plan for Integrating Social Ministry into the Parish

Parish Social Ministry: Structure and Composition

This is the second of two documents on the structure and composition of parish social ministry. (See Session Five for the first document.) This second document offers a framework for developing a parish social ministry structure that consists of five phases. It is not intended to suggest that this is the only way to approach such a project or even the best way to approach this task; rather, it is meant to communicate the possibilities. It is included in the JustSkills program and process as a way of describing the possible scope of what social ministry evolution and maturation might look like.

For the purposes of communicating how this five-phase plan might be mapped out on a calendar, consider the possibility of thinking of it as five-year plan. That is to say, this is not a small task that can be begun and finished in short order. Nor is it really appropriate to think of it as a literal five-year plan because some things will be accomplished more slowly or quickly, depending upon parish resources, goals, interest, etc. Moreover, it is likely that some parishes will find that they are doing parts of many of the phases; hence, adaptation is the operative word.

This five-phase plan is only important to the extent that it prompts and encourages your own work in your own parish. So, again, let this material serve your imagination and local reality. Finally, this document is meant for you, the JustSkills participant; it is written with certain assumptions and aims and is not intended for distribution outside of this process, though you may share it within your parish.

Phase One (Year One) – Getting Started

Phase One presumes that a parish is just getting started with some kind of intentionality about social ministry. Furthermore, in what follows, it is assumed that a small group of parishioners—instead of, for example, the pastor or a staff person—is the instrument for first introducing a social ministry focus to the parish. Adapt these steps to your own situation as appropriate. Also, please realize that the items described in this phase are not meant, in any way, to be an exhaustive description of what should happen during this phase, but they do provide some important steps.

Step One: Pre-Planning

Let us imagine that there are five or six parishioners who have had some occasion to recognize their common interest in developing a social ministry in their local parish. The prompt might be some kind of gathering where they meet and share common backgrounds and interests, or it might be a JustFaith experience, or a Journey to Justice retreat. In any event, they all attend the same parish and it is a parish that does not have a structured or developed approach to the work of social ministry. To be succinct, there is not a standing committee which focuses on social ministry and there is little evidence of social mission activity.

Of course, the first step is simply to gather and discuss possible next steps. We will call this group the Exploratory Group. At that very first meeting it is recommended that these people share prayer and tell their stories, including how they came to be interested in social ministry. In addition, consider one or all of the following options before proceeding to the next step (Step 2 below). It is important to do at least the first option and as many of the other options as are available. Meet once a month for several months, if necessary. Do not rush these steps.

A. Obtain copies of *Communities of Salt and Light*; read and discuss this document together informally. This is an important step, as it will provide a framework for the work that lies ahead. It will also serve to define, for those beginning this work together, that this cannot be a single-focus, single issue effort involving pet projects. Many social ministry efforts suffer from the very outset from difficult conversations such as deciding what is “the most important” issue.

B. Contact diocesan staff who are involved in working with parishes on social ministry and ask for advice about how to proceed with the task of beginning to integrate social ministry into the parish. The staff might be found in a diocesan office entitled Peace and Justice, Parish Social Ministry, Social Concerns, Catholic Charities, etc.

C. Connect with social ministry committees of other parishes, if possible, that have a reputation of *active* social ministry work. Again, ask to meet with them and discuss best ways to approach the task of getting started.

Step Two: Consult with the Pastor

Parishes are run by priests and a pastor’s support of these efforts is critical. When the group of interested parishioners has completed the tasks outlined above in Step 1, they should ask the pastor for an opportunity to meet with him concerning the possibility of beginning the process of integrating social ministry into the parish. To this end, it would be helpful to provide for him a copy of *Communities of Salt and Light* prior to the meeting. You might also want to provide him with a copy of the Social Ministry Coordinating Team diagram used throughout the JustSkills program.

When you meet with the pastor include the following in the discussion:

- Explain that you are primarily interested in beginning the process of integrating social ministry into the parish
- Thoroughly explain the steps you have taken thus far in preparation for your meeting with him
- Allow an opportunity for each person present at the meeting to share their own faith experience leading to the conviction of the importance of social mission
- Ask your pastor to share any experiences he has had
- Share the integration plan as described in the *Communities of Salt and Light* model
- Suggest that these efforts could be overseen by a Social Ministry Coordinating Team
- Suggest what the next steps could be.
- Ask your pastor what he needs from you before he could approve any of the next steps
- Ask how ongoing communication will occur

- Ask if there can be some kind of accountability to or representation on the parish council from the Social Ministry Coordinating Team, if applicable.

It is likely that your pastor is overworked; hence, it is important to explain that you are not asking him to be engaged more than he would choose to be. Be clear that you want his ongoing advice and involvement to the degree he is able and that you are committed to regular communication with him, should he approve of the group proceeding.

Step Three: Create a Social Ministry Coordinating Team

After approval from the pastor, it is recommended that the Exploratory Group establish the Social Ministry Coordinating Team (SMCT). Here is one proven strategy: recruit for a team of ten to twelve people.

- Consider how many of the Exploratory Group will become part of the Social Ministry Coordinating Team and then determine how many more people need to be invited in order to have a total of ten to twelve people on the SMCT.
- Establish ahead of time when the SMCT will have its monthly meetings (for example, the second Tuesday evening of the month).
- Obtain a copy of the parish directory and make a list of those parishioners who seem to have both interest and skills to be on such a team. If there are other people in the parish who are involved in some aspect of social ministry, give them strong consideration. That list should be then prioritized and people contacted personally and offered an invitation to serve on the SMCT.
- Starting at the top of the list, call potential candidates until the target number of ten to twelve people agree to make at least a one year commitment to be on the SMCT and to attend monthly meetings on a specified day.

Note: it is important to gather ten or more people from the very start. Having ten to twelve people at a meeting gives critical energy and content. It is often the case that church committees will put a note in the parish bulletin asking for volunteers and proceed with whatever number respond, even when the response is too small. **This is not the way to go! Recruit ten or twelve, then get started.** There is also some wisdom in attempting to keep an even ratio of men and women.

Step Four: Hold Initial Meetings

Once people have committed, someone in the Exploratory Group should presume to organize and chair the very first meeting. This includes preparing an agenda and assigning responsibilities for refreshments, prayer, and taking minutes. At this very first meeting, allow ample time for prayer and plenty of time for people to introduce themselves. Remember, this is not a committee or primarily a business meeting. It is a community of faith committed to God's call for justice and love. At this first meeting, a Coordinating Team chairperson (or, preferably, co-chairpersons) should be elected or appointed.

The meeting might continue with a brief summary of the work of the Exploratory Group. This could be followed by an overview of the *Communities of Salt and Light* document (have enough copies to give to all members and ask all members to read carefully before next month's meeting).

At one of the next two or three meetings, goals should be established for the coming year. Reviewing the JustSkills document, “*Organizing Parish Social Ministry*” (from Session Five) could be helpful.

Assignments should then be distributed based on the goals for the work of the SMCT. In making the assignments, each of the seven elements of the *Communities of Salt and Light* document should be attended to by at least one of the members of the newly formed Social Ministry Coordinating Team. That would mean, for example, a person particularly interested in liturgy would become the SMCT’s point person for this area, looking for opportunities to link the work of the committee with the liturgical life of the parish. Other elements of *Communities of Salt and Light* would be similarly represented and attended to by one or more of the SMCT members.

Each monthly meeting of the Social Ministry Coordinating Team should include the following items: prayer, an educational component (speaker, video, or discussion of article), a consideration of the seven elements of *Communities of Salt and Light*, old business, new projects/proposals for the SMCT to consider, a brainstorming session for new ideas, and some time for socializing and refreshments.

Within the first six months of the SMCT’s forming, there should be an opportunity for the SMCT members to participate in a weekend retreat to connect with the spirituality of this work, build relationships, share life stories and consider their work together. Such experiences go a long way in building team member cohesion, understanding of one another, and the faith life of the group.

Step Five: Start Subcommittee(s)

Later in the first year, the Social Ministry Coordinating Team may want to begin to establish subcommittees. These are working groups of people who are committed to some focused dimension of the work of social concerns. These groups could be expansions of a focus on one of the seven elements of *Communities of Salt and Light* or could be inspired by a particular area of interest, say environmental concerns or hunger, or they could be prompted by an organizational commitment to Pax Christi, St. Vincent de Paul, or CCHD, to name a few examples. Reviewing the models suggested in the *Organizing Parish Social Ministry* document and the Parish Social Ministry diagram will be helpful at this time.

Subcommittees should be initiated in response to notable interest among parishioners. That is, build on where there is most interest, at least during this first phase of the process. Remember that the focus of the SMCT and the subcommittees is to organize the work and engage the parish.

In this first phase of a five-phase process, it is probably prudent not to attempt to initiate more than one or two subcommittees. The process of starting subcommittees reiterates the process of starting the Social Ministry Coordinating Team itself; this includes a recruitment of at least ten people who commit to meeting monthly for at least a year.

All subcommittees should meet monthly (on a day different than the Social Ministry Coordinating Team) and all subcommittees are to be represented by one person from the Social

Ministry Coordinating Team. Subcommittees should establish some goals and identify some doable tasks at one of their first meetings.

Step Six: Maintain Contact with the Diocesan Office

The diocesan office could serve as a great resource in this early developmental phase. The diocesan staff often will have ideas for guest speakers, education segments, retreat ideas, prayer options, opportunities for parishioner engagement, as well as general wisdom and advice.

Step Seven: Plan for Year Two

It is important for any parish group to think strategically and intentionally about what it hopes to accomplish in the coming year. It is a very helpful exercise to engage the team and each subcommittee in a process that looks ahead to define next year's goals. Realize that a strategic plan is not meant to be an impediment to spontaneity or a rigid definition of what the SMCT or subcommittee can or can't do. Rather, the process of planning prompts creativity, defines hopes, recommends practical steps, and defines how real action is to happen.

An important part of planning is evaluation. The *Communities of Salt and Light* document and the established goals for the Coordinating Team and the sub-committees should be evaluated. Measure accomplishments for the year against the seven elements and the objectives of the committee. Evaluate the SMCT's strengths and weaknesses in light of these. This evaluation will provide input into the planning process.

This kind of evaluation and planning should happen each and every year. It is also important to integrate this planning with the parish planning and budgeting process. It would be appropriate to communicate with the Pastor and the Parish Council about the possibility of establishing some kind of budget for social ministry.

Many dioceses have staff members who are skilled in strategic planning and can assist groups with this step.

Phase Two represents some of the possible results of a strategic planning process in Phase One.

Phase Two (Year Two) – Continuation of Early Development

It should be noted that many of the suggestions in Phase One can and should be repeated in later phases (See the table below). For example, every year there should be an evaluation and the development of an annual plan woven into the work of the teams.

Note: Starting with Phase Two, the steps listed within each phase are listed in no particular order.

Step One: Initiate (or Continue) JustFaith

It is very important that more and more parishioners become engaged in the work of the social mission of the parish. It is not unusual however, that parishioners need to be "awakened" to this dimension of their faith. The historical record speaks for itself: JustFaith is a tried and proven method to do just that. JustFaith helps to build a constituency for social ministry at your parish.

The Social Ministry Coordinating Team will want to be very deliberate about supporting the start up and continuation of this process. This may include being directly involved in the promotion of the program, recruiting participants and selecting co-facilitators for the process. Contact the JustFaith Ministries office for more information on this process.

In this regard, one important agenda item for the SMCT to take very seriously is the integration of JustFaith graduates into the work of social concerns in the parish.

Step Two: Start Two More Subcommittees

It is important that the development of the social mission of the parish be accomplished by engaging more and more parishioners in an ever-broadening range of social ministry opportunities. Expanding the number of subcommittees which are focused on the elements of *Communities of Salt and Light* or an area of interest (like racism or hunger) or an organization (like St. Vincent de Paul or Habitat for Humanity) gives structure, substance and focus to a particular dimension of the work of social mission.

In addition, the creation and definition of a subcommittee, for example, a Direct Service and Outreach Subcommittee (to draw from *Communities of Salt and Light*) allows for important relationships with local organizations. This means that someone in the parish who becomes quite active with St. Vincent de Paul or the local Catholic Charities agency might serve on the Direct Service and Outreach Subcommittee as a liaison between the subcommittee and the organization. Thus, critical opportunities can be recognized, communicated and extended through the subcommittee to the larger parish.

Again, remember that every subcommittee must establish its goals and send a representative to the monthly meetings of the Social Ministry Coordinating Team. In fact, such representatives become part of the defined composition of the Team. That is to say, as social ministry matures and evolves, the SMCT becomes a body of representatives of the various subcommittees as they come to be formed.

Finally, as subcommittees mature, it is appropriate to ask members to make a two-year commitment instead of a one-year commitment. This allows for the development of some expertise and assures more continuity.

Step Three: Offer a Social Justice Retreat

It is important to engage the parish in opportunities to understand the richness of the tradition and the profoundly intimate relationship between spirituality and action. Offering retreats is a good way to accomplish this. The SMCT may want to initiate a yearly retreat during a specified month that allows 25-75 people to spend a weekend exploring the spiritual dimensions of social ministry. It is an oft-neglected area that partly accounts for social ministry's underdevelopment in this country. Seek highly recommended retreat directors who have an expertise in this area.

Step Four: Plan Regular Educational Opportunities for the Parish

The Social Ministry Coordinating Team or an appropriate subcommittee, for example Formation and Education, will want to coordinate a regular opportunity (weekly, bi-weekly or monthly) for

the larger parish to be introduced to some component of social ministry. This could be a session on an organization and its mission, relevant scripture and theology, Catholic social teaching, a current issue, etc. When feasible and appropriate, such sessions can and should be integrated into the larger formation schedule of the parish and the SMCT should seek to have a very good working relationship with the parish Director of Education.

On the other hand, it is also appropriate to schedule such opportunities at special times or even create a regular time that such opportunities occur. Some parishes have a formation opportunity between liturgies on Sundays. Others have established a formation night one evening each month where parishioners come together. There are also several short series and workshops that would be helpful for parishioners. You already have been exposed to justice education options during JustSkills and can connect with the JustFaith office for other suggestions and resources.

Step Five: Make Connections with Local and National Organizations

As the Team and its work develop and mature, it will want to be linked with as many good social ministry organizations as is reasonable. These include the local diocesan office, Catholic Campaign for Human Development, Catholic Charities USA, and the local Catholic Charities agency, the state Catholic Conference, Catholic Relief Services, Bread for the World, Pax Christi, St. Vincent de Paul, Network, the USCCB Office of Justice, Peace and Human Development, Center of Concern, and many more. It is important that the SMCT discern, given the needs of the parish and the local community, which organizational links are most critical to the growth of social ministry at this moment in time and pay particular attention to those. That is, the Coordinating Team needs to focus on some, but not all of these.

Phase Three (Year Three) – Expanding Horizons

It should be noted that many of the suggestions in Phase Two can and should be repeated in later phases (See Table below). For example, there could/should be a social justice retreat planned every year and there should be regular social concerns learning opportunities planned in the parish for, well, the rest of creation.

Step One: Continue JustFaith

Although it takes some planning and energy to continue to offer JustFaith in the parish year after year, the testimonies of parishes that make such a commitment attest to the significant benefits of doing so. To be able to anticipate that each year eight to fifteen new JustFaith graduates will be ready to make significant commitments to the work of social ministry is almost like having a social ministry Catechumenate. In any event, it is very appropriate to create a JustFaith Subcommittee or Taskforce that is dedicated to supporting JustFaith by promoting, recruiting, assisting co-facilitators and mentoring participants.

Step Two: Start Two More Subcommittees

(See Step 2 in Phase Two for the logic of expanding the number of subcommittees.) The selection about what subcommittees to start can be a product of many different kinds of influences, including parishioner interest, local needs, some kind of crisis, or a factor of what kinds of projects or emphases the SMCT takes on. So, as mentioned above, the Team may opt to

start a JustFaith Subcommittee or Taskforce, if it feels this is necessary or helpful to sustain the process. Or, the SMCT may opt to start an Advocacy Subcommittee to support and sustain a new legislative advocacy push or focus in the parish (see below). Again, the choices about what kinds of subcommittees to start and how many to start will vary significantly from parish to parish even within the same city or diocese. What is important is that the Social Ministry Coordinating Team makes it a priority to see an expansion in the number of subcommittees.

Step Three: Begin Sister Parish Relationship(s)

One of the most potent ways to engage parishioners in the work of social mission is to provide opportunities for them to link in relationship with brothers and sisters in other places, especially those communities experiencing some kind of crisis. (Session Nine of JustSkills addressed this important element.) Sister parish or twinning relationships afford an occasion for parishioners to encounter the human face of oppression or hunger or violence or deprivation or poverty. These kinds of relationships can be formed locally, nationally, or internationally. For example, a middle class or wealthy parish might offer to twin with the nearest rural parish that is serving a newly settled population of migrant families. Such twinning allows for potlucks and prayer together, storytelling and, ultimately, the opportunity to care for and about each other.

In addition, twinning relationships with parishes in poor countries can have a powerful effect; however, the cost of travel and the time involved typically prohibits many parishioners from participating. One solution is to start two twinning relationships – one local and one international. Again, a Twinning Subcommittee might be created to oversee these activities.

Step Four: Encourage Legislative Advocacy

Now is the time for the Coordinating Team to expand work in this area. It is important to engage parishioners in the political side of a faith-based justice ministry. This is often widely avoided and misunderstood. The Social Ministry Coordinating Team will want to spend some energy concentrating its attention on this very important dimension of social ministry work, a dimension also addressed in *Communities of Salt and Light* and in the JustSkills program.

This would include presentations and homilies on the link between civic responsibility and the vision of our faith tradition, speakers from the local Catholic Conference or Bread for the World, workshops on how to write effective letters and approach legislators in their offices, field trips to lobby at the state capital, etc. This is work that generates enthusiasm especially as it is done with large numbers. It is exciting and effective to have hundreds of parishioners take fifteen minutes after liturgy to write letters and drink coffee together.

Step Five: Conduct Quarterly Potluck Celebrations

As the work of social ministry diversifies and expands, it is very important to remember that this work is still largely counter-cultural, that it meets with much resistance from many places, and engages people of faith into an open-sightedness that gives view to an enormous amount of human suffering. This is difficult work. The inspiration of God's Spirit is that it brings people of faith together – the Church. It is only by doing this work together that we can even do it at all.

To this end, it is important to provide an opportunity for all those who are involved in social ministry and anyone else who would like to attend to gather periodically (quarterly or every

other month) in a large group. Everyone involved in any dimension of social ministry work is encouraged to come to an evening potluck dinner that includes a thoughtfully planned prayer service, opportunities for people to share stories of their work and perhaps listen to a supportive presentation on the Good News of God's call to compassion.

These kinds of gatherings are important because they are celebrations of a common call and a common mission. They are almost always pleasant, happy and fun. By gathering everyone together, it bolsters commitment by allowing everyone to see the breadth of commitment in the parish. Plan these kinds of gatherings regularly.

Phase Four (Year Four) – Advanced Work

Step One: Host JustFaith and JustSkills

JustFaith will continue to empower new leaders and participants in the work of social ministry. Happily, in parishes where there are many opportunities for parishioners to become involved in some social ministry activity, introduction to some element of social ministry often awakens an appetite for a formational experience like JustFaith. Be on the watch as new faces show up for social ministry events and projects.

JustSkills also provides an opportunity for people who desire to develop their social ministry skills to do exactly that. JustSkills can be particularly effective both in parishes that are alive with social ministry opportunities and commitments and with those where leadership development is critical to ongoing development of the social ministry of the parish.

Step Two: Linking with CCHD-funded project

If your parish is located in an area where there is a CCHD-funded project or organization, working side by side with low-income and poor people can be an ennobling and successful strategy of social change. Most CCHD-funded projects invite participation with and collaboration by parishes that are not poor. Engaging your parish in this work is very important and potentially transformative for the parish at large. If there is an active community organizing group in the community, one option is to become an official sponsoring parish of this organization and its work.

Step Three: Starting Two More Subcommittees

As stated repeatedly before, expanding subcommittee work is critical. Perhaps a subcommittee focused on CCHD or Community Organizing would be most appropriate in light of #2 above.

Step Four: Organizing a Tithing Process for the Parish

The tradition of tithing suggests that a portion (a tenth) of what we are blessed with should be rerouted to those in greatest need as an expression of our commitment to God. This is true for each one of us AND it is true for churches of middle-income and upper-income households. There are many examples of parishes across the country that give a full 10% of the parish collection to local, national and international causes that address the needs of our most desperate sisters and brothers.

The Social Ministry Coordinating Team may want to discuss with the pastor the possibility of presenting such a proposal to the parish council and the larger parish as an item to be discerned, discussed and considered.

While there will almost certainly be resistance to this idea initially, it engages the larger parish in a discussion about the proper use of income and wealth and resources. And such a commitment to share, should it be approved, only brings added energy and wealth of many kinds to the parish.

A special tithing subcommittee can be given responsibility for communicating the availability of such money and for making decisions about the distribution of such funds based upon pastor-approved criteria.

Step Five: Explore Parish Social Ministry Staff Position

As the work of social ministry continues to expand, it will become clear that the parish would benefit from a full-time staff position to orchestrate and attend to this ministry. There is much that needs to be done in this area – the work of social ministry is, in effect, every parish’s mission, to “bring glad tidings to the poor.”

A staff position in social ministry is the evidence of the parish’s full commitment to this work. A parish budget, much like a federal budget, is a kind of autobiography of the organization’s values. To invest resources into a position that serves the parish’s commitment to the poor, vulnerable and wounded is a sign of a parish’s determination to serve God, to serve the poor, to involve itself in the invitation and mission of Jesus.

Phase Five (Year Five) – Uncharted Creativity

Step One: Inaugurate Multi-year Mission Trips

As parishes take themselves seriously as communities of compassion and justice, they may well choose to consider and adapt the great witness of the communities of women and men religious who have committed themselves to full-time commitment to the poor. In this regard, parishes may begin to make connections with places in this country or other countries in which there is great need and which would benefit from some kind of full-time service. The parish, in effect, becomes a place that inspires and prepares missionaries of care and solidarity. Such commitments could be one or more years in duration.

The parish may choose, for example, to support the work of Maryknoll Lay Missioners or the expanding options of Catholic Relief Services or come up with options via its relationship with Sister Parishes at home or abroad. The Social Ministry Coordinating Team would then become a promoter and recruiter of those people who might be interested to make a one to three year commitment to serve in a place of need.

Some may think such options are beyond the reach of parishioner commitment but, remember, all those who joined Maryknoll or the Franciscans or the Jesuits as sisters, brothers or priests started as parishioners.

The goal here is to provide options to parishioners who are ready to make a big commitment to an adventure of faith. A parish that allows for the possibility that some of its members will be interested in these kinds of invitations is a parish that honors the Spirit of God to inspire and empower. Parishes need to take seriously that their mission is to form saints, prophets and even martyrs.

Step Two: Start a Catholic Worker Community

Akin to #1 above because it offers a rather challenging option, urban or suburban parishes may want to consider how to start a Catholic Worker Community in the inner city, providing hospitality to the homeless. Historically, the witness of the Catholic Worker has been understood to be outside of the usual parameters of parish life, but that need not be. A parish or a cluster of parishes could commit themselves to the start-up and maintenance of a Catholic Worker House and provide opportunities for people to join an intentional community that would be linked to a parish of remarkable social ministry commitment. This would be an utterly new model of support and collaboration for such work. This allows for an extraordinary kind of solidarity between the parish and the poor.

Moreover, like #1 above, it would build a bridge between a heroic Catholic witness of faith and the local parish.

Step Three: Open a Local Fair Trade Gift Shop

Part of the tradition of Catholic social teaching tries to engage the economic life of a community with the needs of the poor. That can be expressed in many, many ways. One way includes the opening of stores that market the goods of peoples in poverty-stricken places who need opportunities to sell their goods for fair and just compensation. Parishes may want to consider engaging themselves in the start-up and oversight of a store that only markets fair trade items. (Catholic Relief Services has good resource information.)

Such a store would not only provide a wonderful alternative in the marketplace, but it could become a place of justice education about economic alternatives. Moreover, it could provide jobs for parishioners or people in need of employment in the area.

Step Four: Developing Emergency Assistance Teams

Hurricanes, floods, tornadoes, earthquakes and other disasters happen. While organizations like the Red Cross and Catholic Charities can provide tremendous care and assets, it is also true that what is also needed is a human presence and a willingness to help. Parishes may want to invite and train a team of parishioners who are interested to serve in emergencies and with little notice. These might be people who not only have a desire to help in a time of crisis but also have some flexibility with their jobs and families. Preparing a team for such a situation allows for a quick and helpful response.

Step Five: Annual Social Concerns Award and Celebration

As parish social ministry grows and matures and becomes more fully integrated into all parish life, it is important to highlight and celebrate this work. One way to do this is to recognize and

honor members of the parish who have made significant contributions to the work and whose lives are an inspiration to the parish.

Hosting a yearly Social Concerns Award Banquet honoring one or two members of the community provides again an occasion for those committed to justice to gather, celebrate and reflect on their mission together. Honoring one of their own is a beautiful way to affirm the work, recognize faithful response, and to highlight to the larger parish that this is what all are called to become.

Summary

You can see from the table that follows that there are many threads that begin in the first phase and are carried through every year thereafter. There are also other components that begin in subsequent phases and then continue into the future. It is obvious that each phase represents a deeper integration of social ministry into the parish and would involve more and more parishioners.

Please note that these phases are often fluid and overlap based on the needs, interests, and resources of the parish. It is critical to remember however that more complex and involved aspects of integrating social ministry are initiated only when an adequate base of support and parishioner involvement has been established.

Development Phases and Components Social Ministry Coordinating Team

Component	Phase 1	Phase <u>2</u>	Phase 3	Phase 4	Phase 5
Pre-planning	x				
Initial discussions with pastor	x				
Create Social Ministry Coordinating Team	x				
Conduct monthly meetings of the SCC Team	x	x	x	x	x
Create one or two sub-committees	x	x	x	x	x
Connect with diocesan Social Ministry staff	x	x	x	x	x
Integrate all 7 elements into work of SCCT	x	x	x	x	x
Complete an evaluation of the year	x	x	x	x	x
Develop an annual plan	x	x	x	x	x
Work with and communication with pastor	x	x	x	x	x
Work with and communicate with parish staff	x	x	x	x	x
Work with and communicate with parish council	x	x	x	x	x
Offer JustFaith	x	x	x	x	x
Offer a Social Ministry retreat		x	x	x	x
Offer regular education programs		x	x	x	x
Make connections with local organizations		x	x	x	x
Make connections with national organizations		x	x	x	x
Begin sister parish relationships			x	x	x
Encourage legislative advocacy			x	x	x

Conduct quarterly celebrations			x	x	x
Offer JustFaith II				x	x
Link with CCHD funded group				x	x
Organize a parish tithing effort				x	x
Explore possibility of SM parish staff position				x	x
Offer multi-year mission trips					x
Start a Catholic Worker community					x
Start a fair trade store					x
Develop emergency assistance teams					x
Establish a SM award and parish celebration					x

It is important to remember that the seven elements described in *Communities of Salt and Light* serve as a touchstone and foundation for the integration plan, evaluation and growth. This will assure that the social ministry work becomes the work of the whole parish.

The vision is that the call to act justly is witnessed throughout all aspects of parish life, and every parishioner is engaged in the work to bring forth a more peaceful and just world.