

Role Clarity Resource Section

Purpose

To help participants understand the role expectations, both formal and informal, placed on them by their congregation and to assess the impact of the congregation's culture and history on these expectations.

Theological Understanding

An individual's ministry relates to the role(s) assumed in a congregation. Throughout Scripture people face role expectations of others that may or may not be aligned with their expectations of themselves. Moses argued with God that he was not the one to lead the Israelites out of Egypt. Esther initially refused Mordecai's plea to intercede with Xerxes. Even Jesus checks out other's expectations when he asks "Who do people say that I am?" Most Biblical scholars would assert that Jesus was a disappointment to many of his followers because he failed to be the traditional notion of "messiah" they wanted him to be. Yet Jesus was crucified by the Roman authorities in large measure because this messianic "role" had been attributed to him and as such, he was a threat. Jesus assumed many other "roles": Son of Man, Good Shepherd, forgiver of sins, rabbi/teacher, Lamb of God, healer. For some roles he was praised and beloved; for others, he was faulted and despised. Congregational leaders are similarly praised and criticized for the roles they play and the roles they fail to play. Understanding one's role in a community is essential for effective leadership and ministry.

Special Instructions

The session outline for this module contains alternative approaches to delivering this module depending upon whether you have a **clergy-only** group or a **mixed clergy-lay** group. The primary differences are in how the initial exercise around identifying roles is conducted and in the composition of the small groups for discussion. The outline assumes that lay leaders come with their clergyperson and has parish/congregational teams engage in role clarification. A variation on this module to be used in a congregational setting can be found in the two versions of "**Fresh Start** in Your Congregation: A Resource."

The Ministry Role Exercise uses a set of cards. The cards can be printed on standard 2" x 3.5" business card stock by downloading the Word document template from the **Fresh Start** website (www.episcopalfreshstart.org – log into the Facilitator section and look under the "Role Clarity" module in the list). You may want to let participants take their decks of cards with them as they are a good way to jump-start conversations about roles.

The definitions for the informal roles listed on Slide 8 are as follows (they are also listed on the second page of Handout 3):

- Cheerleader: being voice of optimism and hope in congregation
- Prophet: speaker for social justice
- Ambassador: representative of congregation in the broader community
- Blessed Presence: being there in times of tragedy or crisis in community or even just at important events such as high school graduations
- Midwife: instructing and accompanying congregational members through major life passages
- Ritual Maker: beyond being a sacramentalist, developing rituals marking personal or community activities (e.g., commemorative events)
- Role Model: serving as a model of restraint, wisdom, and compassion at all times
- Activities Director: organizer of activities to engage the congregation
- Curator of Tradition: preserve the catholic and apostolic tradition in worship, be experts on Anglicanism and the Episcopal Church
- Keeper of the Story: keeper of the divine story, but also of the personal stories of members, and of the congregation's own story
- CEO: person ultimately responsible for the entire operation of the congregation
- One of Us: being part of the everyday world and life of the congregation's members
- Corporate Therapist: identifying and equipping congregation to deal with unhealthy aspects of congregational life.¹

Related Modules:

Church Size & Its Implications
Habits, Norms and Expectations
History-Sharing and Understanding
Power, Authority and Influence
Renegotiating Roles and Expectations

¹Informal role titles and definitions adapted from "Expectations of Pastoral Ministry" by James Kasperson, in Pastor and People: Making Mutual Ministry Work, Minneapolis, MN, Augsburg Fortress, © 2003 (pp. 30-40), and used by permission of the publisher. All rights reserved.

Bibliography

Augsburg Fortress. Pastor and People: Making Mutual Ministry Work. Minneapolis, Augsburg Fortress, 2003 – part of a Congregational Leader Series published by the Lutheran Church, this volume contains essays by several individuals; pp. 30-43 contain valuable discussions about expectations of ministry roles; also contains an alternate way to look at ministry specialties (see pp. 114-115).

Oswald, Roy M. New Beginnings: A Pastorate Start Up Workbook. Herndon, VA; The Alban Institute, 1989 – see especially pp. 40-42 around gaining role clarity.

General Outline of Session

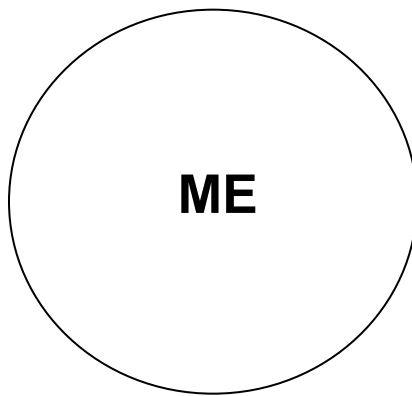
Note Prior to Session: *Be sure you have prepared a deck of Ministry Role Cards for each participant, including providing each with a set of both the “Importance” and “Priority” header cards.*

1. Opening prayer and meditation (suggested reading Esther 4 or Matthew 16:13-15)
2. Check-in
3. Overview of concept of “role” (PowerPoint 1-5; Talking Points)
4. Role list exercise (PowerPoint 6; Talking Points; Handout 1)
 - a. For clergy-only groups, have individual participants complete the handout
 - b. For mixed clergy-lay groups **DO NOT USE THE HANDOUT**, have clergy as a group (or in small groups, if there are too many of them) brainstorm the roles they expect lay leaders to play and lay leaders as a group (or in small groups, if there are too many of them) brainstorm the roles they expect clergy to play. Each group comes up with a consolidated list.
5. Share the lists
 - a. For clergy-only groups have them discuss in small groups or pairs; follow up with a large group discussion
 - b. For mixed clergy-lay groups, have the two groups share their role expectations of each other and facilitate the dialogue
6. Introduction of Ministry Roles (PowerPoint 7; Talking Points)
7. Ministry Role Exercise (done by individuals; Handout 2)
8. Small group or pairs discussion of the results of exercise
 - a. For clergy-only groups, have them discuss in small groups or pairs
 - b. For mixed clergy-lay groups, have them discuss in parish teams
9. Large group discussion of observations from exercise
10. Informal roles (PowerPoint 8; Talking Points)

11. Impact of congregational culture on role expectations (PowerPoint 9; Talking Points)
12. Assessing congregational culture (done by individuals; Handout 3)
13. Small group or pairs discussion of the assessment
 - a. For clergy-only groups, have them discuss in small groups or pairs
 - b. For mixed clergy-lay groups, have them discuss in parish teams
14. Large group discussion of observations prompted by exercise
15. Overview of conflict and need for prevention (PowerPoint 10-11; Talking Points)
16. Wrap up and closing prayer

Clarifying Roles – Handout 1

1. Within our congregation we are asked (or expected) to fulfill many roles. Draw a line extending from the circle below for each role you have.



2. Once you have put all your roles radiating out from the circle, share your list with others in your group. Are theirs similar or different? How many roles are you asked to play? How easy is it for you to fulfill these roles? Do some get short shrift?

Instructions for Ministry Role Exercise Handout 2

1. Look at the deck of Ministry Role cards. Do they capture all the roles you are asked to play? If not, take some of the blanks and write new cards before continuing.
2. Lay out the following three header cards:

Most Important

Important

Nice to Do

Thinking about the roles the clergyperson is asked to fill, sort the cards under the three categories. You may put **no more** than 5 cards under “Most Important,” and no more than 7 cards under “Important.” All cards that contain a role the clergyperson is expected to play **must** be distributed. Once the cards are sorted, write down the lists under each heading.

Pick up the cards and thinking about the roles lay leaders are asked to play, resort the cards under the three headings. You may put **no more** than 5 cards under “Most Important,” and no more than 7 cards under “Important.” All cards that contain a role lay leaders are expected to play **must** be distributed. Once the cards are sorted, write down the lists for lay leaders under each heading.

Put the “Importance” header cards to one side.

3. Now lay out the following three header cards:

Top Priority

Secondary Priority

If I Have Time

Thinking about *yourself* and the roles you are expected to play in your congregation, where do you spend your time? Again sort the cards, placing **no more** than 5 cards under “Top Priority,” and no more than 7 cards under “Secondary Priority.” All cards that contain a role you are expected to play **must** be distributed. Once the cards are sorted, write down the lists under each heading.

4. a. For clergy-only groups: Pair up with a couple of your colleagues and share your lists: first, the list of importance for the roles you are expected to play and then the list of roles given priority and time. How closely aligned are your lists of importance and priority? What is given low priority or importance? Do these things need to be done? Are there others who are fulfilling these roles in your congregation? When you look at the list of roles for lay leaders, do you think they would agree with the order of importance? How might you find out?

- b. For mixed clergy-lay groups: In your parish team, share your lists: first, the list of importance for the roles you are expected to play and then the list of roles given priority and time. How closely aligned are your lists of importance and priority? What is given low priority or importance? Does the clergyperson agree with the order of importance lay leaders have given their roles? Do the lay leaders agree with the order of importance the clergyperson assigned to his/her roles? How about how each spends his/her time?

Administrator	Director of Christian Formation/Education	Church Developer
Counselor	Crisis Responder	Ecumenical Leader
Evangelist	Liturgist	Musician
Facilities Manager	Outreach Worker	Pastor
Preacher	Community/Civic Leader	Spiritual Director
Fund Raiser	Teacher	Theologian
Change Agent	Visitor to Sick and Shut-ins	Youth Worker

Communicator	Developer of Leadership	Multi-cultural Specialist
Advocate for Social Justice		

MOST IMPORTANT	IMPORTANT	NICE TO DO
MOST IMPORTANT	IMPORTANT	NICE TO DO
MOST IMPORTANT	IMPORTANT	NICE TO DO
MOST IMPORTANT	IMPORTANT	NICE TO DO
MOST IMPORTANT	IMPORTANT	NICE TO DO
MOST IMPORTANT	IMPORTANT	NICE TO DO
MOST IMPORTANT	IMPORTANT	NICE TO DO

TOP PRIORITY	SECONDARY PRIORITY	IF I HAVE TIME
TOP PRIORITY	SECONDARY PRIORITY	IF I HAVE TIME
TOP PRIORITY	SECONDARY PRIORITY	IF I HAVE TIME
TOP PRIORITY	SECONDARY PRIORITY	IF I HAVE TIME
TOP PRIORITY	SECONDARY PRIORITY	IF I HAVE TIME
TOP PRIORITY	SECONDARY PRIORITY	IF I HAVE TIME
TOP PRIORITY	SECONDARY PRIORITY	IF I HAVE TIME
TOP PRIORITY	SECONDARY PRIORITY	IF I HAVE TIME

Role Clarity Handout 3

What informal roles did the previous rector/assistant play (see examples on back)?

Which of these were viewed as important?

Is the expectation that the new rector/assistant would play these roles? How has this been communicated?

Are there cultural, ethnic or economic subgroups in your congregation that have different expectations of the role of the clergy? What are these different expectations?

What has surprised you about your own, the congregation's and the new rector/assistant's role expectations?

Sample Informal Roles

- **Cheerleader:** being voice of optimism and hope in congregation.
- **Prophet:** speaker for social justice.
- **Ambassador:** representative of congregation in the broader community.
- **Blessed Presence:** being there in times of tragedy or crisis in community or even just at important events such as high school graduations.
- **Midwife:** instructing and accompanying congregational members through major life passages.
- **Ritual Maker:** beyond being a sacramentalist, developing rituals marking personal or community activities (e.g., commemorative events).
- **Role Model:** serving as a model of restraint, wisdom, and compassion at all times.
- **Activities Director:** organizer of activities to engage the congregation.
- **Curator of Tradition:** preserve the catholic and apostolic tradition in worship, be experts on Anglicanism and the Episcopal Church.
- **Keeper of the Story:** keeper of the divine story, but also of the personal stories of members, and of the congregation's own story.
- **CEO:** person ultimately responsible for the entire operation of the congregation.
- **One of Us:** being part of the everyday world and life of the congregation's members.
- **Corporate Therapist:** identifying and equipping congregation to deal with unhealthy aspects of congregational life.¹

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