



THRIVING PARISHES PROJECT

DIOCESE OF THE WEST
ORTHODOX CHURCH IN AMERICA

Exploring Your Minimum Factor

Effective Structures

The Church is the living Body of Christ, and like any healthy organism, it requires well-functioning systems that work together to fulfill its intended purpose. Structures within the Church are essential for organization, but sometimes we forget that they serve as a means to an end, rather than an end in themselves. In fact, well-ordered structures might be so effective in *organizing* our efforts that we fail to evaluate whether or not they are still the best way to accomplish the Church's mission.

The primary criterion for assessing church structures is their effectiveness in fulfilling their purpose. Are the structures in place serving the purpose for which they were created? If a structure no longer supports the mission of the Church, it must be adapted or replaced. From leadership responsibilities and relationships to creative thinking, there is opportunity to assess and respond to what you discover.

Some questions to consider are:

- **Clarity of Vision:** How well known is your vision and what have you done in the last year to help your parishioners and leaders connect to this statement?
- **Organizational Chart:** Clarify the ministries that are currently active in your parish. Using an organizational chart, show how these ministries are connected to the whole. Which ministries seem less connected?
- **Creative Thinking:** If a person walked into your parish today after being gone for three years, what changes would they see?
- **Developing Leaders:** Has your parish identified key leaders? If so, how have you equipped these leaders to give effective oversight to those they lead?

In summary, church structures must be purpose-driven, adaptable, and regularly evaluated. By ensuring that every system and process serves the greater mission of the Church, leaders can create an environment that is both functional and spiritually thriving.