

Abstract

“MOVING AHEAD TO SPIRITUAL HEALTH: DIAGNOSTIC TOOLS FOR
TRIAGE, RECOVERY, AND RECONCILIATION
OF DYSFUNCTIONAL CONGREGATIONS”

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Project under the direction of Professor Julia Gatta

This project set out to identify a process of triage, recovery, and reconciliation for congregations that have experienced dysfunctional behavior by either the clerical leadership of a church or members of the congregation, or both. The process was gleaned from tools that helped me as rector of the Church of the Ascension, which had experienced the dysfunctional behavior of sexual impropriety by the previous rector and the church secretary. I also bring to bear evaluation tools that were developed during my time on the Diocese of Central Florida’s Congregational Development Commission during a period from 2007 until 2011.

These tools include the use of family systems theory, an awareness of conflict theory as it pertains to broken trust, and the impact that shame and contempt have on relationships, especially relationships within a faith community. It also includes a congregational development readiness survey that I devised. This survey evaluates topics such as: church finance, worship attendance, fellowship practices, leadership training, children and youth participation, social outreach, and staffing. These tools help reveal a trajectory of decisions and actions that eventually lead to breakdown within the community. This evaluation process begins to paint a picture that shows who in that community was affected and the spiritual and emotional consequences that have occurred. Once this history has been revealed, a pathway toward reconciliation can be

