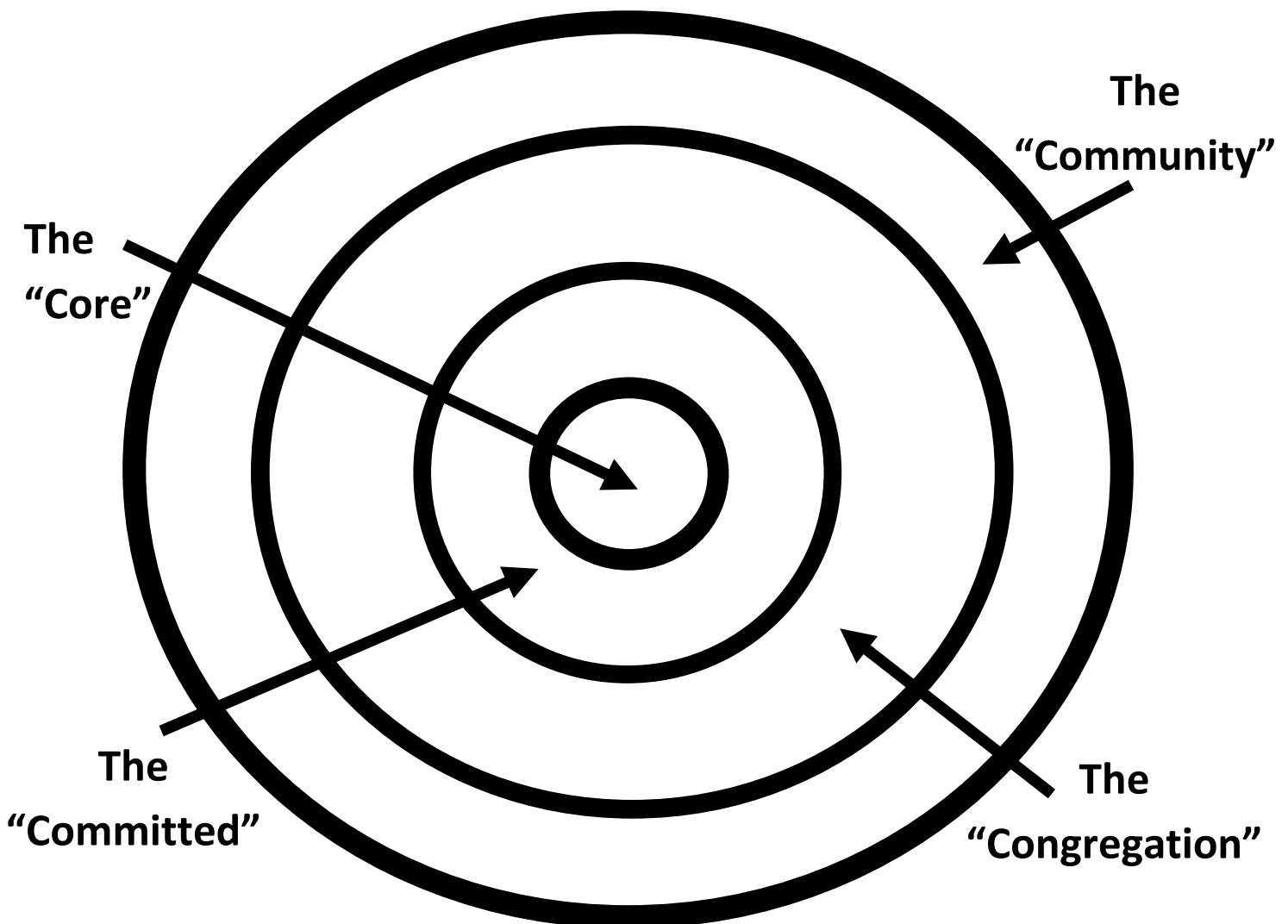


Motivating and Moving Members to Greater Degrees of Parish Life Involvement

The “80/20” Rule. Most people have heard of it, and most people think they know what it means: 20% of the people in any organization do 80% of the work. If that happens to be an accurate reflection of life in a particular parish, then the clergy and lay leaders have to prayerfully reflect together on how people are engaged and why they are engaged where they are – so that we can understand how to bring them to deeper levels of parish life and involvement. One way to describe, quantify, and qualify these differing levels of involvement can be illustrated below.

Let’s start with the “**Core**” – this is, for all intents and purposes, the center of parishioner involvement. Simply put, these are the people who can usually be described by all of the following characteristics:

1. They attend all or most services
2. They freely volunteer for at least one parish ministry
3. They are generous and faithful in their financial support and stewardship of the parish



Next comes the “**Committed**” – a group very much like the Core that only varies by degrees:

1. They come to **most** services
2. They **may** be involved in some ministries (especially when specifically asked)
3. They **usually** give, and certainly will, again, give when specifically asked (especially if it’s for what they agree is a good cause).

Following the Committed is the “**Congregation**” – those:

1. Who identify as Orthodox Christians and who usually attend for (at least) Pascha
2. Who may have been baptized or chrismated into the Church, but have fallen away from regular participation in liturgical, sacramental, and relational parish life.

Finally, we come to the “**Community.**” These are the people who fall into two categories:

1. Those who know and are known by those members of the parish who are in the inner three groups
2. Those who live in the immediate surrounding geographic area of the parish

As you can see, as we move from the inner to the outer rings, we find “membership” and “involvement” decreasing. Further, the boundaries of each ring are not as solid and clear as shown: they are fluid and overlapping. A person might be “Committed” then transition into the “Congregation” because of health, family, or job pressures – or a crisis of faith.

It is helpful to be able to understand these differing levels and explanations of “membership” and “involvement”, because they profoundly affect and are affected by parish character and ethos, priestly and lay leadership, parish health and growth, outreach, and many other factors. Building up the quality of parish life and health (and therefore prospects for growth) is going to depend in great part on moving people from the outer rings to the inner rings: Community to Congregation to Committed to Core, in ever-increasing degrees of spiritual maturity and giving of one’s life to Christ and His holy Church.

But in order to do that, we need to also understand what appeals to these different groups, what motivates and encourages them, as well as what discourages and drives them away:

1. What needs, desires, hopes, and dreams in the parish’s vision are understood by the Core, that are not shared by the Committed and the Congregation? Why? And, looking from the outer ring in: what needs, desires, hopes, and dreams do the Congregation value, that are not considered, or appreciated, by the Committed and the Core?
2. What are the parish’s core values that may not clearly be understood by the entire parish? How about vision and mission (admittedly controversial terms)?
3. What features of parish life do the parish’s less engaged, or even “lapsed” members value, that the parish could provide now, which it may not have been able to provide in years past? Can these features of parish life be revived and publicized?

We will explore responses to these questions in the next issue.