

MEMORANDUM

To: Steve Kraus, Executive Director, The Alliance for Continuing Rabbinic Education (ACRE)

From: The Rosov Consulting Team

Re: Strategies to Advance the Assessment of the Outcomes of Continuing Rabbinic Education/Phase III- An Experiment to Create Compelling Examples

Date: August 29th, 2014

I. Background

In Phase I of our work, concluding in May 2014, we engaged four ACRE member organizations in a coaching process whereby we supported their capacity to develop and refine evaluation instruments which would measure participant outcomes. In Phase II, we extended our focus beyond the rabbi-participant and conducted focus groups with CRE providers, rabbis and 'Jews in the pews' (end-users) to see if we could discern common themes related to *shared* end-user outcomes. We discussed our findings in a memo dated June 13, 2014. Additionally, we engaged in a conversation with select ACRE board members later that month. In this final phase of the project, we collaborated with two CRE providers, Institute for Jewish Spirituality (IJS) and Rabbis Without Borders (RWB) to conduct a modest experiment, in actually assessing shared end-user outcomes. In this memo, we describe our approach, the challenges we encountered and those which may be inherent to the endeavor as well as some lessons learned and possible directions for future focus.

II. Methodology

Approach and Challenges

In order to attempt to trace end-user outcomes back to the CRE programs in which their Rabbi participated, our starting point was the CRE program providers. The two CRE programs (IJS and RWB) with which we partnered during this phase, serve a wide range of rabbi participants. Their alumni are not exclusively or even typically congregational rabbis. This means that typically, for these alumni, "end-user" is a broad and diffuse concept and could be anyone the rabbi encounters. Therefore, to more readily reach end-users, we decided to narrow our focus and assess outcomes for members of synagogues where their rabbi was an alumna(e) of one of the programs.

The Survey

From the start, the notion of tracing the impact of a CRE program on the end-user has been a ‘stretch-goal’. Taking on this challenge, the Rosov team drafted a survey instrument that attempted to assess outcomes in some of the shared areas of impact identified by our work in Phase II. These areas included how inspired congregants felt, how engaged or how much more actively involved they may have become in various facets of synagogue life as well as how connected they felt to their community and to their rabbi.

Our Phase II work revealed that congregants also cared about the restorative impact of CRE on their rabbi. We asked about this as well even though it is not a direct outcome for the end-user. Additionally, we incorporated into the survey particular (in contrast to ‘shared’) outcomes identified with each of these two CRE providers. In most cases, these were what we characterized as ‘external goals’ in our Phase II memo, for example, starting a blog, innovating a new ritual or leading a meditation session. We hypothesized that including these outcomes might help us to draw a more direct line between the CRE program and end-user impact. Finally, our focus groups in Phase II alerted us to a ‘quantitative’ change that might be productively measured as a result of CRE participation. Thus we asked end-users if their participation ‘increased’ or if they engaged in any new or ‘additional’ Jewish activities.

Using “display logic,” a tool often employed in online survey research, our team was able to “branch” the survey in one of two directions, based on whether or not respondents indicated they were aware of their rabbi participating in a specific CRE program. This branching technique would allow us to explore the correlation between a congregant’s awareness of CRE participation and potential outcomes for the congregant.

If respondents were aware of a specific CRE program in which their rabbi participated, questions were phrased with the stem, “Since your rabbi returned from his/her CRE program...” If they were not aware, questions were phrased “In the past 12 months...” Other than the different question stems, the survey language was exactly the same in each branch (i.e., the same outcome was measured).

Finally, we shared the survey draft with both IJS and RWB and incorporated their feedback. We estimated that it would take most respondents 10-15 minutes to complete the survey.

The Survey Sample

In a planning conversation with IJS and RWB, it was decided that each CRE would invite two alumni from their program, who were congregational rabbis, to participate in the experiment. Rather than asking RWB and IJS to make random choices, we encouraged them to scan their lists and make a few focused calls to alumni who would more likely respond affirmatively to the request to survey their congregants. In our Phase II memo, we suggested that perhaps only those most closely connected to the rabbi would a) know about the rabbi’s participation in a CRE and b) be able to link changes in the rabbi or the congregation to that participation. We debated the efficacy of asking rabbis to send the survey to their entire congregation. In the end, we encouraged each rabbi to target approximately 30 of their most engaged board members and congregants, and to send it to more beyond that “core group,” if possible. We also shared drafts with each rabbi who participated, though none of the rabbis chose to offer feedback (likely because of their own time constraints). In the end, our respondents came from 3 synagogues; one rabbi was an alumnus of RWB and one was from IJS. A third was an alumnus of both programs and additionally serves on the faculty of IJS.

The three participating synagogues represent a diverse mixture of geographic location and denominational affiliation. Our sample included one Reconstructionist synagogue in the Pacific Northwest, one Reform congregation in the Midwest, and one Conservative congregation in New England.

Challenges

Our survey was fielded between July 13 and August 8, 2014. The summer months proved to be a time in which both rabbis and congregants were traveling and thus capturing their attention was complicated. The most significant, yet anticipated, challenge of this experiment was in obtaining a large enough sample of respondents from which to analyze the data. As noted above, we worked with three congregational rabbis for a total of 58 end-user respondents. While we encouraged rabbis to send the survey to a minimum of 30 of their most engaged congregants, in only one case are we certain that the rabbi followed through. One synagogue had 28 responses, one had 21 and a third had 9.

Moreover, we faced certain methodological challenges in drawing a “direct line” between end user impact and rabbis’ involvement in CRE programs. Our instrument was “retrospective,” in that it asked respondents to think about experiences and outcomes *after the fact*. This meant that even if our survey was to uncover areas in which end users felt they had been impacted, there was no way to discern what, precisely, was the main factor in causing that change. The most our team would be able to account for was a *correlation* between a rabbi’s participation in CRE and observed change for the end-user. As social scientists often say, “correlation does not imply causation.” That is, our methodology did not allow us to point to CRE programs as the definitive cause for change among end users.

III. What We Learned

Disclaimer

We begin this section with a disclaimer about “generalizability.” The results represent what we learned from 58 congregants in 3 synagogues. The results may tell us more about the impact of these three rabbis on several of their most involved congregants than they do about the potential impact of CRE programs on end-users in general. We discuss our findings and the questions they raise below.

An Active Sample

The respondents in our sample were, by design, active as board members and volunteers. 65% had served as a board member, 75% as search committee members, 93% had been volunteers in the synagogue and 84% either see or speak to their rabbi frequently.

The respondents also claim to have had meaningful Jewish experiences recently (93%), were connecting with other Jews (78%) and had recently participated in a mindful/spiritual prayer service (76%). These behavioral “benchmarks” further paint a picture of end users who are actively involved in their synagogues. Below, we offer some quotations that illustrate end users’ connections and satisfaction with their rabbis:

- *“I like how our rabbi tries to better our involvement in social issues.”*
- *“The rabbi is tremendous in the wisdom he imparts. Going to shul is a very special experience that I treasure.”*
- *“My rabbi continually introduces new and different approaches to Jewish education, services and communal life. It is something I appreciate very much.”*

End User Outcomes

On the whole, many of the common end user outcomes that we identified and measured seem to have been experienced by those surveyed. Again, while we cannot make the case for a direct link between CRE, rabbi, end user, and positive outcomes, we did observe a positive correlation between these variables. One important metric, identified in Phase II, was how energized/rejuvenated the rabbi has been recently. On a

scale from 1-5, 86% of respondents indicated a 4 or a 5. Relatedly, 75% of respondents said that their rabbi had innovated a new program/initiative.

While only 26% of end users said that their connection to their rabbi/synagogue life increased recently, this is likely due to the fact that our sample was already highly involved with their synagogues. We were unlikely to observe any change in this area as a result of the CRE's intervention.

Awareness of CRE

As mentioned above, our team hypothesized that end users' awareness of their rabbi's participation in a CRE program would be an important factor, correlated with outcomes observed. Awareness of CRE programs perhaps indicates a closer relationship with the rabbi, and perhaps even more familiarity with the rabbinic and end user outcomes for which a particular CRE strives. Our team suspected that there would be a positive correlation—that is, the more an end user was aware of his/her rabbi's CRE program, the greater the observed change (albeit self-reported).

It appears that the vast majority (97%) of respondents knew, in theory, that their rabbi participated in a continuing education program. However, when asked if they could identify the specific CRE program in which their rabbi participated, only 54% of were able to do so. Moreover, when the group that said they were aware of their Rabbi's CRE was asked to name the specific program in an "open ended" question, 67% were unable to do so. Additionally, some respondents confused the name of programs, writing names such as "Rabbis without Walls," and "Rabbis without Partners." Only a minority mentioned IJS and RWB specifically, as well as a few other CRE programs.

Contrary to what our team anticipated, in comparing the two populations, that is, those who were aware of their rabbi's participation in a CRE and those who were not, there does not appear to be any distinct difference in perceived outcomes. Below we offer a few key examples:

- When asked to rate how energized/rejuvenated their rabbi had been recently on a five-point scale, 88% of those who were aware of their rabbi's participation in a CRE program selected 4 or 5. This compared with 82% for those who were not aware of their rabbi's participation in CRE.
- When asked if their rabbi had initiated a new class or learning series, 74% of those who were aware of their rabbi's CRE said yes, as compared to 78% of those who were not aware.
- When asked how connected to their rabbi and/or synagogue end user's felt recently, 68% of those who were aware of a CRE program said "Very" or "Highly", as compared with 72% of those who were not aware.

Interestingly, there was one case where there was a notable difference between those who were aware and those not aware of their rabbi's CRE program. When asked if they had recently participated with their rabbi in a meditation session (a specific IJS end user outcome), 47% of those who were aware of their rabbi's CRE said yes, while 16% of those who were not aware said no. This may suggest that the realization of outcomes tied to specific CRE programs (such as meditation for IJS) is correlated with awareness of the CRE program on the part of the end user.

Although it is tempting to discredit the value of these responses in shedding light on the impact of CRE attendance on end-users, it may be possible that knowing about a rabbi's CRE attendance does not **interfere** with the responses. That is, we might have expected that once asked if they were aware of their rabbi's participation in CRE, respondents would be inclined to attribute changes in the rabbi and changes

in themselves to this participation. The fact that there is no discernible difference in outcomes might further validate the responses and engender somewhat more trust in the positive outcomes described.

Impact of CRE Programs

Can we use these findings to determine the impact of specific CRE programs on end-users? Admittedly, the data does not enable us to separate out other potential factors that may have contributed to outcomes identified: the impact of a rabbi's formal training and experience, the particular strengths and skills s/he innately brings to bear and other influences external to the rabbi and synagogue (a new relationship, attendance at an unrelated Jewish event, etc.). Moreover, it may also be true that congregants are not sufficiently knowledgeable about the contours of any given CRE that they can observe excellence or productive change in their rabbi, or themselves, and attribute it to the impact of participation in said CRE.

We would like to suggest that this uncertainty might be positive. If an end-user were to see a noticeable improvement in an area and attribute it to attendance at a CRE, this might imply that the CRE is a "remedial" intervention for a struggling rabbi. However, CRE participation may in fact be more akin to a "maintenance" medium for the rabbi's energies and skills. A simplified analogy might be useful here:

As life coaching has gained in popularity, both psychologists and coaches have had to explain the difference between the two approaches. Most psychologists are trained to diagnose pathology. That is, they are primed to identify what is NOT working and fix it. Coaching, in contrast, is an approach designed to take high functioning individuals and support them to perform even better.

What we are suggesting here is that CRE programs, at least in this data sample, may be functioning much as coaches serve their client. And, this might dampen the transformative effect of attending a CRE as those attending are already "high functioning."

Finally, the penultimate question in the survey offered respondents an open ended opportunity to comment on the impact the rabbi has had on them personally. Several of those who were aware of their rabbi's participation in CRE used this opportunity to indicate that this participation was **not**, in fact, related to impact:

- *"I have been an active participant. I can't say that my rabbis participation in CRE has influenced my participation."*
- *"The rabbis involvement in programs has not changed my involvement either way."*
- *"I really do not believe my rabbi's participation in CRE has anything to do with my connection to the community. I can see that it might if it had an immediate effect on his actions, but it doesn't."*

And several indicated that the impact was indeed palpable:

- *"She shares her experiences well, informs us when she will be gone and returns rejuvenated."*
- *"The... course is especially important because it is giving the congregation a chance to study prayer and but to go deeper and build relationships..."*
- *"The rabbi returns energized and puts into action new possibilities for participation."*

IV. Possible Future Directions

As we noted in our memo of June 27, 2013 there were at least three reasons to develop metrics to assess the impact of CRE programs beyond the rabbis—1) To help in the design and refinement of CRE programs; 2) To develop good practices for the field of CRE; and 3) To attempt to bolster fund solicitations for CRE programs with data about broad impact beyond the participating rabbi. At this juncture it is our sense that the first two goals remain viable and can further enhance the work of CRE's. The third goal remains elusive.

This project has attempted to identify and measure shared outcomes among end-users. Based on the experiment of Phase III, our team is of the opinion that it may not be productive to measure 'shared' outcomes as this requires a watering down of impact-descriptors that may be too far removed from the actual elements of the CRE experience to make any connections whatsoever. However we offer two possible avenues for further development that may more directly influence the design, delivery and viability of CRE programs:

1. *Introducing comparative dimensions in to the study of CRE:*

A more refined attempt to distill CRE impact on end-users would include a study with different points of comparison. First, groups of congregations might be surveyed before and after their rabbis' participation in a CRE program. This design would not depend on whether congregants could perceive change over time; it would instead explore whether congregants' responses have in fact changed.

Alternatively, it might be possible to identify a comparison/control group of congregations in which the rabbi has NOT attended a particular CRE program and compare and contrast changes over time in these different samples.

There are significant methodological challenges with both of these approaches, but these models would offer a more rigorous methodology than the current experiment did.

2. *"Boot camp" for CRE providers on outcomes evaluation:*

For many CRE providers, thinking about desired outcomes for their rabbi participants in measurable terms is a new approach to program evaluation. As we discovered in Phase I of our work there were significant benefits to CRE programs in re-considering how to assess their impact. A 'boot camp' for CRE providers would seek to develop greater conceptual understanding and practical facility in the areas of logic modeling, and program and outcomes evaluation. Organizational leaders better serve their stakeholders and funders when their program design, planning and implementation are informed by certain habits of practice. Ideally, funders, grantees and evaluators would share a common language and approaches rooted in best practice to support their partnership. Rosov Consulting is uniquely positioned with content expertise and contextual knowledge to deliver such a program.

V. Appendix

(i). Letter from CRE to Rabbi, requesting participation in an end user survey

Dear Rabbi,

We hope this finds you well.

As an alumnus/a of [INSERT PROGRAM], we are always very eager to hear from you about your work and how it may have been influenced by your participation in continuing rabbinic education with us.

Of particular interest to us is how your congregants may have been ultimately affected by the training you received. Our goal is not only to train rabbis, but also to make a broader impact on those that rabbis serve. We call these people the "end users" of continuing rabbinic education.

ACRE (The Alliance for Continuing Rabbinic Education) has engaged Rosov Consulting, a professional services firm specializing in Jewish foundation and non profit evaluation work, to assess the outcomes that [INSERT PROGRAM NAME] has had on end users. Part of these efforts involves distributing a survey to congregants of alumni of our program.

We're hoping that you may be able to assist us in this aspect of the project. Essentially, we are asking you to send a survey that will take no more than 5-10 minutes to a group of congregants that are very involved in your synagogue.

At no point will any survey respondent be asked to name a specific rabbi or congregation; the survey will remain entirely anonymous. The work is not about evaluating rabbis, but rather evaluating the programs that train rabbis.

If you are able to help, please email Eitan Cooper at Ecooper@rosovconsulting.com for more details.

Please feel free to let us know if you have any questions.

(ii). Letter from Rabbi to Congregants, requesting responses to an end user survey

Dear Congregants,

As Rabbis, we often participate in continuing education programs. These programs vary in focus and approach but they offer opportunities for developing new skills and deepening our knowledge in ways that will ultimately serve to enrich congregants' lives.

Of particular interest to providers of continuing rabbinic education is how you, the congregant, may have been ultimately affected by the training we receive.

In order to learn more about the impact of these programs, ACRE (The Alliance for Continuing Rabbinic Education) has hired Rosov Consulting to distribute a brief questionnaire to congregants across the country.

I'm hoping you may be able to take 5-10 minutes to offer your thoughts and insights. This survey is an important step in improving the field of rabbinic education, and ultimately, enriching the Jewish experiences of congregants across the country.

At no point will any survey respondent be asked to name a specific rabbi or congregation; the survey will remain entirely anonymous.

If you have any questions or technical difficulties, please email Eitan Cooper at Ecooper@rosovconsulting.com for more details.

(iii). ACRE End User Outcomes Survey Instrument

You are receiving this survey because your rabbi has volunteered to assist in an initiative to improve the field of Continuing Rabbinic Education. The questions below will ask about your thoughts and feelings on a number of different issues relating to your synagogue and your rabbi. Your honest feedback is very important to us and will help to improve the field of rabbinic education.

Rest assured, nothing that you say will be reported to anyone in your name. Your responses are entirely anonymous.

If you have any questions feel free to reach out to Eitan Cooper at Ecooper@rosovconsulting.com. Or, you can call 510-848-2502 ext. 162.

About You

1. How long have you been a member of your synagogue?

- Less than 1 year
- Between 1 and 3 years
- Between 3-5 years
- 5-10 years
- 10+ years

2. Have you served in any of the following roles in your synagogue:

| | Yes | No |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Board member | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Volunteer | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Search committee member | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Leading services | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

3. Which of the following best characterizes your relationship with your rabbi?

- We are close and speak often
- We see each other frequently, but we do not speak very often
- We do not see each other frequently, but still speak often
- We do not see each other frequently and do not speak often

4. Rabbis often participate in continuing rabbinic education (CRE) sessions or programs. These experiences are designed to provide rabbis with the tools they need to continue to be successful.

How often does your rabbi attend such a conference, program, or retreat?

- Rarely
- Sometimes
- Frequently
- I know my rabbi has participated in such a program, I just don't know the frequency
- I don't know

5. Are you aware of a SPECIFIC continuing rabbinic education program that your rabbi has attended in the past 12 months?

- Yes
- No

If answer to #5 is "yes":

5a. Please list the SPECIFIC program(s) in which your rabbi has participated:

If answer to #5 above is “Yes,” and respondent is aware of a specific CRE program in which his/her rabbi participated:

6. In the time since your rabbi has returned from his/her continuing rabbinic education (CRE) program, has he/she seemed more energized and/or rejuvenated? Please drag the pin on the scale from 1-5 below, where 1=not energized or rejuvenated, and 5=very energized and rejuvenated.

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

7. In the time since your rabbi has returned from his/her continuing rabbinic education (CRE) program, has he/she...?

| | Yes | No |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Innovated a new program/initiative | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Innovated new rituals or approaches to tradition | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Introduced new spiritual practices | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Posted to a blog | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Led a meditation session | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Initiated a new class or learning series | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

8. In the time since your rabbi has returned from his/her continuing rabbinic education (CRE) program, how inspired to participate in Jewish life at your synagogue have you been?

- Not at all
- Very little
- Somewhat
- A lot
- Very much

9. We want to know more about your involvement in synagogue life. In the time since your rabbi returned from his/her continuing rabbinic education (CRE) program:

| | Hasn't increased at all | Increased very little | Somewhat increased | Increased a lot | Increased very much |
|---|-------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Has your interest in synagogue involvement increased? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Has your actual synagogue involvement increased? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

10. In the time since your rabbi has returned from his/her continuing rabbinic education (CRE) program, how connected to your rabbi and/or the synagogue have you felt?

- Not connected at all
- A little connected
- Somewhat connected
- Very connected
- Highly connected

11. In the time since your rabbi returned from a continuing rabbinic education (CRE) program, have you...?

| | Yes | No |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Participated in a committee | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Led a prayer service | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Organized a program at the synagogue | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Attended a class taught by your rabbi | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Participated in a prayer service that was spiritual/mindful | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Had a meaningful Jewish experience | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Made a social connection in a Jewish setting | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Participated in Jewish meditation | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Read Torah | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

12. Is there anything else you'd like to tell us about how your rabbi's participation in a continuing rabbinic education (CRE) program has influenced you and/or your participation in synagogue life, if at all?

13. In the past 12 months, have there been any significant occurrences in the life of your congregation and/or community? For example, the renovation of a building, merging with another congregation, a significant event in your area of the country, etc...

If answer to #5 above is “No,” and respondent is **not** aware of a specific CRE program in which his/her rabbi participated. Note that the following questions are exactly the same as those above, with the exception of substituting “since your rabbi returned from his/her CRE program” with “in the past 12 months”

6. Has your rabbi seemed more energized and/or rejuvenated in the past 12 months? Please drag the pin on the scale from 1-5 below, where 1=not energized or rejuvenated, and 5=very energized and rejuvenated.

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

7. In the past 12 months, has your rabbi...?

| | Yes | No |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Innovated a new program/initiative | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Innovated new rituals or approaches to tradition | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Posted to a blog | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Introduced new spiritual practices | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Led a meditation session | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Initiated a new class or learning series | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

8. Over the past 12 months, how inspired to participate in Jewish life at your synagogue have you been?

- Not at all
- Very little
- Somewhat
- A lot
- Very much

9. We want to know more about your involvement in synagogue life. Over the past 12 months:

| | Hasn't increased at all | Increased very little | Somewhat increased | Increased a lot | Increased very much |
|---|-------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Has your interest in synagogue involvement increased? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Has your actual synagogue involvement increased? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

10. In the past 12 months, how connected to your rabbi and/or the synagogue have you felt?

- Not connected at all
- A little connected
- Somewhat connected
- Very connected
- Highly connected

11. In the past 12 months, have you...?

| | Yes | No |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Participated in a committee | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Led a service | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Organized a program at the synagogue | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Attended a class taught by your rabbi | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Participated in a prayer service that was spiritual/mindful | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Had a meaningful Jewish experience | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Made a social connection in a Jewish setting | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Participated in Jewish meditation | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Read Torah | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

12. Is there anything else you'd like to tell us about how you have been influenced by your rabbi/synagogue life in the past 12 months?

13. In the past 12 months, have there been any significant occurrences in the life of your congregation and/or community? For example, the renovation of a building, merging with another congregation, a significant event in your area of the country, etc...