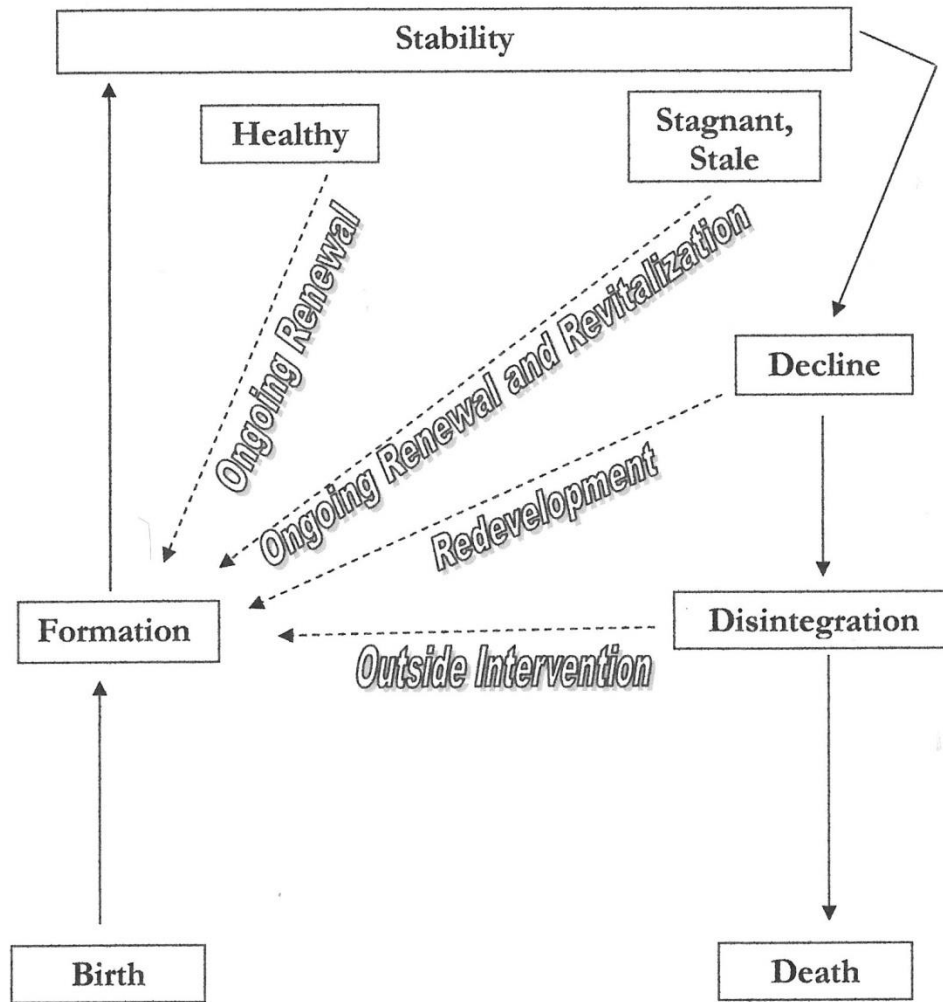


Model 5  
Life Cycle of Organizations



**Birth:** A founder or founders, an idea, a dream

**Formation:** Identity, Who are we (at the faith level)? What are we here for? Who is our neighbor and how are we related to our neighbor?

**Stability:** Fruitful and sustainable ministry, institutionally and spiritually. A time when the elements of organizational life fit together (money, vision for ministry, property, people), This can be a **place of health** or can tip into feeling **stagnant or stale**, with growth stalling and new opportunities being ignored. Sometimes experienced as a membership plateau followed by declining numbers.

**Decline:** Numbers fall off, energy declines, fear and blame in the system, confusion, focus on small things rather than central issues.

**Disintegration:** Conflict, hopelessness, feeling stuck, internal leaders unable to affect change

*Adapted from Alice Mann's Can Our Church Live: Redeveloping Congregations in Decline*

## Model 5 Life Cycle of Organizations

*The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies it remains a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. (John 12:23-24)*

### **Congregational Renewal and Redevelopment**

#### **Healthy Stability and Ongoing Renewal**

Healthy stable congregations stay healthy either through leadership that instinctively raises and acts on formation-related questions in the overall congregation or through processes that continue to renew the entire congregation or important parts of the congregation that need attention. Some leaders organically recognize and act on areas in a congregation that need improvement; some leaders/congregations have in place processes that scan the life of the congregation, listen for and act on areas that need improvement.

#### **Stale, Stagnant Stability and Renewal/Revitalization**

When stability becomes stale and stagnant, a congregation and its leadership will need in a more focused way to take a look at formation questions: Who are we? (identity) What are we here for? (purpose) Who is our neighbor? (context). These are typically system-wide interventions that when done skillfully also introduce and teach the congregation language and models or frameworks that help to focus the discussion. Sometimes the self-study before the calling of a new vicar/rector can be the context within at least some of this work is done.

#### **Decline and Redevelopment**

The further down the path a congregation goes in declining numbers, finances, energy and flexibility, the more costly it becomes for a congregation to engage the formation questions that have the potential to activate what it will take to return to . Redevelopment is a possibility when serious declines have occurred in a congregation, but significant effort will be needed to increase the likelihood that redevelopment efforts will bear fruit. Often third-party help or a dramatic change in leadership is needed to face the situation, to let go of old patterns of doing things and to face into what will be needed to turn things around.

#### **Disintegration and Outside Intervention**

When disintegration begins and things begin to fall apart, conflict or paralysis can set in. At this point a diocese will often intervene, taking charge of the decisions in that there is no internal capacity to do what may be needed.