The Political Frame
David A. Roozen

Pastor Bate's heart began to pound when he walked into the council room after worship and saw Sue Barker slouched in her chair, tears rolling down her cheeks. June Street and Bob Downs were huddled around talking to her. Paul Whiting and three other council members sat with puzzled looks--observing, their lips drawn tight, with some obvious irritation and even anger. Other members were filing in, taking their seats around the circle. When they were seated Pastor Bates asked Sue if she would share with the group what was happening with her.

Sue hesitated, sniffled and then blurted out, "Its the horrible sexist language in this group. Every meeting is drenched with it. The leaders show no sensitivity to the language of the liturgy, the hymns or the scripture. It is one hundred percent male."

Pastor Bates caught a glimpse of Paul, who had led the service, shifting in his chair, his face growing red with anger. Bates' own anxiety was increasing as he thought how he had worked to get Paul and some other more conservative members on the council. Criticism of the pastor and "his liberal allies" in the church had been increasing. Bringing the divergent factions together on the council where their differences might be aired more directly, Bates hoped, would stem the rising tide of innuendo and behind-the-scenes maneuvering.

Paul jumped to his feet, glaring at the pastor. "I don't like to get angry, "he said, "especially in the church. But obviously some people on this council are more interested in social issues than they are about the gospel. That's what's wrong with this parish. It has deserted the faith for the frivolous." With that he stalked out of the room, casting an inviting glance at his three cohorts.

Pastor Bates, his anxiety now at an all-time high, felt immobilized. He wanted to run after Paul and convince him to come back. He was angry at Sue for her continual pressing of the feminist issue. He was mentally kicking himself for urging liberal and conservative representation on the church council. Jesus' words from the text earlier in the evening kept ringing in his head.' "Love your enemies." But who were his enemies? How could there be enemies when everyone was trying to be faithful? (Lewis, <u>Resolving Church Conflicts,</u> 1981: 21-22)

I. Introduction

Like Pastor Bates, many of us in the church are perplexed by conflict. It's typically contentious collision of differences seems to run counter to many of our most cherished Christian values -- e.g., peace, harmony, unity, love, cooperation and tolerance. A quick review of recent religious news headlines, however, makes it clear that Pastor Bates' council meeting is not an isolated incident. It merely mirrors at the congregational level the all too frequent things that we read about our denominational structures: bitter conflicts over homosexuality, the role of women in the church, the sanctity of human life, etc; machiavellian liberal/conservative maneuvering for control of denominational decision making; painfully confrontative organizational "downsizing" driven by severe budget shortfalls.

Unintelligible through the lenses of shared values, goal driven task attainment or the mutuality of

affirming relationships, the visibility and intensity of church conflict in today's fragmented religious marketplace is, nevertheless, readily understandable through the political frame's image of the arena in which self-interested groups compete for attention and resources, the most important of which is power. Indeed, the frame baldly predicts that politics will dominate the scene under conditions of diversity and scarcity, and when power is diffuse. But even more challenging for religious leaders who are hesitant about the nature of politics is the frame's contention that more than occasionally present, *politics is always present in organizations,* including the church. As Gustarson *(Treasurer in Earthen Vessels,* 1961) noted over a quarter century ago, whatever else the church is as an earthen vessel, it is also a political community.

Bolman and Deal *(Reframing Organizations,* 1991:186) helpfully summarize the political perspective in terms of the following five propositions:

- Organizations are coalitions composed of varied individuals and interest groups;
- There are enduring differences among individuals and groups in their values, preferences, beliefs, information and perceptions of reality;
- Some differences are irreconcilable and limited resources precludes the resolution of others;
- The combination of enduring differences and scarce resources makes conflict central to organizational dynamics, and power the most important resource;
- Organizational goals and decisions emerge from bargaining, negotiating and jockeying for position among individuals and groups, i.e., from the competition of the political process.

It is important to note that the political frame does not attribute politics to individual selfishness or incompetence. Rather, it attributes it to the fundamental organizational properties of interdependence, enduring differences and scarcity. Politics, most fundamentally, involves the mediation, coordination and ordering of difference and therefore will be present in any and every organization regardless of the individuals involved. It is also important to note that the political frame does not view either politics or power as "bad," although both can be used for exploitation and dominance. Nevertheless, both can also be a means of creating vision and collective goals, and channeling human action in cooperative and socially valuable directions.

Self and Group Interests

One of the mixed blessings of the political perspective is that it was fundamental to the work of Karl Marx, who tended to narrowly define "interests" in terms of material and economic advantage. Without denying that this is an important and basic kind of "interest," we follow the practice of most organizational analysts in defining "interests" in terms of the complex set of predispositions embracing goals, values, desires, expectations and other orientations and inclinations that lead a person or group to seek action in one direction rather than another. Indeed, in the religious sector the collision of interests most frequently involves theological, value and cultural differences.

FIGURE 1
How Generations Approach Living

Strivers (Born: Prior to 1940)	Challengers (Born: 1941-1954)	Calculators (Born: Since 1954)
Stability is normal	Change is normal	Erosion is normal
Defend our way of life	Alter and expand our way of life	Choose and conserve what matters most
Alternatives	Options	Consequences
Oughts: begin with obligations	Wants: begin with interests	Possibilities: begin with constraints

How Generations Approach Believing and the Church

God is taken for granted and seen as essential	God is defined personally and is optional	God is defined and seen as essential by believers only
Church is central, a stabilizing force	Church is marginal, a social advocate	Churches play a variety of roles
Morality predominates	Ethics predominates	Piety predominates
Expect to support church and be cared for; to be loyal to church; to belong	Expect church to support my needs and causes; to find meaning from church; to act	Believers expect church to nurture and support them; to gain resources from church; to strive

It is common to think of theological differences in either denominational terms or, like Pastor Bates in terms of "liberal/conservative;" and to think of cultural differences in terms of race and ethnicity. Douglas Walrath, however, is one of many persons writing for religious leaders who remind us that any social grouping can develop a distinctive culture, including distinctive attitudes toward the church which are for more nuanced than typical liberal/conservative characterizations *(Frameworks: Patterns for Living and Believing Today,* 1977). After a highly insightful discussion of the segmentation of modem life-worlds, Walrath illustrates this differentiation by focusing on three generational groups. A summary of what he finds is presented in Figure 1.

Most of us in the church have experienced the frustration of trying to work through an explicit conflict of theological or cultural differences, and it seems of small consolation that in such situations one at least knows what's being contested. More frustrating still are those situations when the fundamental issues remain hidden. A critical contribution of the political frame, therefore, is to alert us to the fact that both for individuals and groups, values and cultural predispositions are so taken-for-granted that they typically work at the pre-conscious level, and that it consequently takes effort and sensitivity both to recognize when a conflict does in fact exist, and to consciously articulate the differences being contested. To further frustrate the matter, particularly when groups are involved, different persons may share the same predispositions but not yet have developed a

group consciousness. Indeed, for better or for worse, one of the frequent results of organizational conflict is that it helps "like-minded" persons and sub-groups discover themselves, i.e., conflicts tend to foster group consciousness. When confronting a group conflict, therefore, it is important to be aware of not only how large a group is, but also how strongly its "members" share an awareness of being a group.

A Myriad of Potential Group Differences

How many of you can remember when one's choice of television programs was limited to that of the three national networks? For those of us with such memories the 65 or more stations available on cable is a wonder of modem technology and entrepreneurialism. But equally wondrous and indicative of our time is that there are thousands if not millions of people watching each of these stations at any given time. Business analysts refer to this as a fragmented or niche oriented marketplace, that is, a marketplace oriented to, and reciprocally fostering, highly specific "interests," rather than more homogeneous, "mass" markets.

The niche orientation of today's marketplace is both cause and consequence of a broader cultural trend toward increased social differentiation--a differentiation in which there are not only more lines of group demarcation, but relatedly a much greater number of groups that have developed a self-consciousness about their distinctiveness, their right to be different, and their right to have their difference acknowledged and affirmed by others (cf., Schlesinger, *The Disuniting of America,* 1991; and Wuthnow, *The Restructuring of American Religion,* 1988).

An awareness of the major contemporary categories of social differentiation, and their potential implications for the church is, therefore, an important tool for political sensitivity. Any attempt of an inclusive listing of such categories is, unfortunately, beyond the scope of this book. Nevertheless, in addition to theology and generation, four other lines of social/cultural differentiation are especially likely to be a source of tension in the church today. Along with a beginning reference to how each manifests itself in church life, these include:

· Race/ethnicity;
· Social class (cf., Sample, *U.S. Lifestyles and Mainline Churches);*
· Gender (cf., The Mud Flower Collective, *God's Fierce Whimsy: Christian Feminism and Theological Education);*
· Psychological type (cf., Oswald and Kroeger, *Personality Type and Religious Leadership).*

Anderson and Jones *(The Management of Ministry,* 1978, p 66) distinguish between task groups and sentient groups. The latter, also referred to as primary groups, are those whose cohesion is primarily derivative of emotional attachments and identification. Sentient groups tend to include most groups formed on the basis of the kinds of social/cultural differentiation noted above, and tend to be informal and/or have a low sense of group cohesion unless the group's identity has been threatened.

Task groups are those organized to do work or a particular job. Ironically, the potential clash of task groups is intrinsic to the ways most organizations structure their work. By allocating different goals and activities to different sub-units such as boards and committees, for example, the interests of a church's members are fragmented. Further, because the complexity of a congregation's functional subdivisions increases with membership size (cf. Rothauge, *Sizing Up A Congregation),* so does the fragmentation of interests and therefore the potential for conflict (cf. Anderson and Jones, *The Management of Ministry, p 61).*

Even when such groups recognize the importance of working together, the nature of the specific tasks they are assigned creates different and sometimes contradictory wants and needs. A church's trustees concern for a balanced budget, for example, may impinge negatively on the mission committee's desire to expand financial support of social ministry. Or, the education committee's interest in having more class room time with children on Sunday morning may clash with the deaconate's desire for children to experience worship with their parents. How successful a committee's advocacy might be is, from the perspective of the political frame, largely a function of the power the committee can muster.

Power

Power is, in the political frame, the medium through which conflicts of interests are ultimately resolved. In its most neutral sense, power is the ability to affect others. It is therefore a relational resource. Beyond this, characterizations vary depending upon the affect being sought. Jinkins and Jinkins *(Power and Change In Parish Ministry)* suggest that these differences can be summarized as *"power over"* and *"power to." "Power over"* seeks control or domination over others for the enhancement of one's own interests. From the perspective of the human relations frame, its methods are typically coercive and therefore typically counterproductive. *"Power to,"* in contrast, seeks the "empowerment" of others toward the mutual benefit of all. From the structural and political frames, empowerment's glowingly positive evaluation of human nature and emphasis on "win-wins" is naive. For present purposes it is sufficient to note that both point to power as involving the ability to get or help another person or group to do something that he/she/it would not otherwise have done; and to note that both approaches to power recognize that power has multiple sources.

It is relatively rare to find the word "power" in the ecclesiological literature, or even most texts on church leadership or management. The preferred concept appears to be "authority." But what is authority? According to Carroll *(As One With Authority: Reflective Leadership in Ministry,* 1991, 14):

> Authority is the right to exercise leadership... To exercise authority involves influencing, directing, coordinating or otherwise guiding the through and behavior of persons and groups in ways that they consider legitimate.

Carroll's hesitancy to use the word "power" notwithstanding, what he is describing is what most organizational theorists would call "legitimate power," and which Morgan *(Images of Organizations,* 1986: 159) notes is the "first and most obvious source of power in an organization." The key idea is that the source of power in authority is the respect, acknowledgment and social approval that one or more individuals or groups grant to another. That is, the source of authority's power resides in those over whom power is being exercised.

A second source of power, common in the church literature, resides in an organization's formal structure, rules and regulations. In church circles this is typically discussed under the rubric of "polity" or "govemance." Among other things all politics describe who, from the organization's perspective, should exercise what kinds of power. From the organization's perspective, therefore, polity defines authority--i.e., defines the legitimate power of different positions. As we will note momentarily, however, formal polity is not the only basis upon which one may grant authority to another.

Two additional sources of power, frequently elaborated in discussions of ordained church leadership, are charisma and expertise. In its most general sense "charisma" refers to special, personal qualities--sanctity, heroism, authenticity and other types of exemplary skills and

behavior-of an individual that inspire others. It represents a form of authority whose source is personal rather than formal-structural. Power also flows to those with the know how and information to solve (or manipulate) important and vexing problems. Indeed, in the form of professionalization, many recent commentators (e.g., Carroll, *As One With Authority)* argue that expertise has become one of the three major sources of authority for church leaders, along with a ieader's ability to embody the spirit of God (a form of charisma), and the leader's position power as defined by church polity.

Still other sources of power include, for example: tradition; control of rewards and sanctions; alliances and allies; access to and control of agendas; and the control of meaning and symbols. Given the ideological content of all religions, the latter is of special note here. As Bolman and Deal describe it, it is the "ability to define and even impose the meanings and myths by which a group or an organization defines who they are, what they believe in, and what they value" (p 197); and it is a mixed potential, having the ability both to liberate and to captivate [e.g., William Bean Kennedy, "The Ideological Captivity of the Non-Poor," in Evans, Evans and Kennedy (eds.), *Pedagogies For the Non-Poor,* 1987].

An individual's or group's sources of power are typically mixed. We have already noted for example that authority can be granted on the basis of structural position, charisma and/or expertise. Alliances can enhance one's expertise or control over rewards or sanctions; and the church leader whose position puts him or her in the pulpit has a decided advantage in controlling a congregation's meanings and myths. It is also the case that while most religious organizations have formal definitions of power and authority, much of the actual exercise of power is informal. This tends to happen for one or more of four primary reasons: (1) perhaps most frequently, because people don't know what the formal procedures dictate or they are unaware that their actions exceed the formal boundaries; (2) because most formal policies cannot be expected to cover all specific situations--e.g., most formal politics are relatively specific about who is to make decisions, but relatively vague or silent concerning how others may attempt to influence the decision makers; (3) people feel disadvantaged by the formal system; or (4) people disagree over the formal rules. A recent study of conflicts in congregations for example found that over half involved the appropriate locus of decision making (Becker, et al., "Straining at the Tie that Binds: Congregational Conflict in the 1980s," *Review of Religious Research* 34-3; 193-209, 1993).

Conflict

Echoing the grounding assumptions of the political frame Lewis *(Resolving Church Conflicts,* p 12) states:

> To be human means you will have conflict. You will experience it within yourself, between yourself and others, and between yourself and organizations... The only option we have is not *whether,* but *how* to deal with conflict.

A typical image of conflict is that of two things trying to occupy the same space at the same time, and Leas and Kittlaus *(Church Fights: Managing Conflict in the Local Church,* 1973: 28-29) helpfully apply this analogy to conflicting goals among church groups:

> Conflicting goals are two purposes or objectives that cannot occupy the same organization at the same time. Or, as Ross Stagner says, conflict is "a situation in which two or more human beings desire goals which they perceive as being attainable by one or the other but not by both." Still another way to look at conflict is to see it as behavior that produces a barrier to another person's attempt to meet his needs.

Most of us, like Pastor Bates in this chapter's opening story, are all to familiar with the negatives of conflict: it can be personally painful and organizationally disruptive. But that's only half the picture. Conflict can also be beneficial. It can, for example: (1) serve to surface problems that have previously been ignored; (2) motivate people on all sides of an issue to know and understand each other's position's more fully, and know and understand one's own identity and boundaries more fully; (3) encourage the consideration of new ideas and approaches, thus facilitating innovation; (4) enhance group loyalty and unity; (5) energize a lethargic group and enhance organizational commitment; and (6) provide a release that makes the intolerable more bearable.

For better and for worse, conflict takes a variety of shapes and forms. It can be, for example, internal-i.e., a struggle which a person or a group has within his/her/its self, or between or among persons, groups or organizations. Leas and Kittlaus also note that conflict can be interpersonal or substantive. By the former they mean conflict in which one person strikes out against another primarily over their incompatibility as persons. "This conflict is not generated by what a person does or what he thinks about an issue, but how he feels about the other person *(Church Fights,* p 30-31). Substantive conflict, in contrast, is over facts, means, ends or values. Using a slightly different categorization of substantive conflicts, Becker, et al, found the following distribution of conflicts in their study of congregations in the 1980s:

FIGURE 2
Percentage Distribution of Congregational Conflicts

	Domain of Conflict	
Theology	Resources	Authority
35%	**12%**	**53%**

		Substance of Conflict		
Gender	Sexuality	Social Action	Liturgy	Other Issues
18%	6%		29%	35%

23%

Becker, et al, p 199

The first step in dealing with conflict is the identification of the issue and of the potential and active persons or groups who have an interest in the issue. Beyond this recommended approaches vary among theorists and practitioners depending on both the orientation of the theorist and the specifics of the situation being addressed. *Church Fights* (Leas and Kittlaus, 1973), for example, is directed to practitioners facing crisis situations that demand the intervention of an external consultant. In contrast, *Resolving Church Conflicts* (Lewis, 1981) is written for congregational leaders who desire to create a general organizational climate in which conflict is seen as positive and in which the skills and attitudes needed to creatively manage conflict are pervasive. From a broader perspective yet, *Getting to Yes* (Fisher and Ury, 1981), presents a generalized approach to "principle based" negotiating. And as a helpful way of summarizing the breadth of literature on dealing with conflict, *Images of Organization* (Morgan, 1986: 191-193), correlates different approaches to conflict management with those situations in which each is most appropriate.

Organizations as Political Arenas and Political Actors

Our focus thus far has been on organizations as political arenas and accordingly on the interplay of interests and power among different individuals and groups within the organization. But it is important to note that organizations also exist in relationship to other organizations and to the larger social/cultural context; and that all the factors that generate and all the dynamics that channel politics within an organization also operate in an organization's relationships with its broader environment. That is, organizations are also political actors that have their own interests that can (1) compete with the interests of others to "occupy the same space" or (2) overlap with the interests of others who therefore are potential allies in competing with still others to "occupy the same space." Congregations of one denomination, for example, may compete with congregations from other denominations for members, but work cooperatively with congregations of their own denomination in a regional evangelism program. Most local governments have zoning and tax regulations that are favorable to the presence of congregations; but these very same governments may also have policies that collide with a congregation's sense of economic or racial justice. Congregations might cooperate with a coalition of social agencies in social or legislative advocacy, but compete with its coalition partners for philanthropic dollars to run.

The list of possibilities is almost endless, and that is one of the key differences between an organization as a political arena and as a political actor. The generative factors and the channeling dynamics are generally the same, but the scope (or size of the arena and number of players) is vastly different. A second major difference is that when you are competing within your own congregation or organization the vast majority of significant players have some existing connection with and conscious value commitment to the organization. When you become an actor in the broader social/political arena, neither can be assumed. The former tends to escalate the intensity of personal/emotion dynamics; the latter tends to escalate the saliency of instrumental concerns and attachments.

II. What to Look for in the Case

For almost two decades Ridge Lutheran Church had been working with notable success to create a comfortable and spiritually nurturing place for the deaf within a hearing-majority congregation. The HANDS case describes the first three years of Ridge's effort to build on this experience to create a legally-independent organization that would serve and advocate for the needs of the deaf and hearing-impaired beyond the church. As is always the case, phenomena related to each of our four frames are present. As gesture replaces words, and silence often replaces music those of us who are hearing realize how much we take for granted the auditory nature of our dominant cultural symbolization. In the goal setting, planning and attempts to develop a task oriented committee structure for HANDS we are drawn to the illumination of the structural frame. And in Ridge's efforts toward mutuality, and the associate-turned-senior pastor's pastoral support of those struggling to make HANDS work we see the importance of the relational.

Nevertheless, Ridge's foundational decision to create HANDS as a cooperative enterprise between the hearing and hearing-impaired brings the political frame to the fore, and the case unfolds in a progressive and sometimes contentious/sometimes subtle shift of power--both "power to" and "power over"--from the hearing to non-hearing. HANDS' emphasis on advocacy in its social ministry further enhances the prominence of the political frame in the case, providing some balance between HANDS as a political arena and HANDS as a political actor.

The political frame is grounded in the collision and mediation of differences. Taking a cue from the principles of conflict management, a helpful entry point for any political analysis is the identification of those differences that have collided or may potentially collide. It will be no surprise that differences between the hearing and hearing impaired are prominent in the case but they are not the only ones and they are of varying kinds. In regard to the latter, therefore, it may again be helpful to draw on the work of conflict theory and practice to categorize these differences.

Not all differences are openly conflictual all of the time, nevertheless one of the purposes of the political frame is to sensitize us to the potential for conflict and competition whenever differences exist. In viewing the case, therefore, one should be alert for differences that have not (yet) collided, as well as those that have; and in regard to the latter one should pay attention to the timeline of the collision's unfolding. When did the differences first appear? When did they first collide? When did various groups or individuals become consciously aware of the collision? When was the collision mutually acknowledged as an issue that needed resolution?

Differences in real life don't exist in the abstract but rather are embodied in individuals and groups. Coincidently with the identification of differences, therefore, one should be identifying the groups and individuals who are the carriers of the differences. It is often helpful to go so far as to graphically map out the various stakeholders or competitors (which can include individuals, formal groups, constituencies and organizations) in a contested issue (cf. Leas and Kittlaus, p 100-101), showing not only their respective "interests" in the issue, but also their actual and potential relationships and points of overlap and the strength of their investment in the issue.

Power is, within the political arena, the ultimate mediator of difference. Once the issues and stakeholders have been identified, therefore, it is critical to look for the various stakeholders' sources of power, which as we have noted are typically multiple. If one has developed a stakeholder map, as suggested above, the various players' sources of power can be added to it. It is important to distinguish, at this point, those sources of power which an individual or group has at his/her/its disposal, and those sources which one is actively bringing to bear on a situation. Most competitors, particularly in church settings, tend to underestimate their own power and overestimate that of others; but regardless, it is always helpful to develop a realistic understanding of the various stakeholders' powerbase. What source or sources of power an individual or group brings to a contested issue becomes their tactical choice of how to approach resolving a difference.

Three quick and final alerts. First, interpersonal and group relationships are often complex and messy to the point that it is sometimes difficult to tell exactly what or whose arena one is in. Such ambiguity is inevitable, but one needs to at least be alert to the fact that one may have misconstrued the primary arena or that the primary arena changes over time. Second, conflict can be positive or negative either for the organization as a whole or the contesting parties, and this evaluation may change over time. Look for the winners and losers, recognizing that typically one's win or loss will be at most partial. Also look for the extent to which the consequences of a conflict were correctly anticipated or opened up either new opportunities or spiraling conflicts. Third, the political frame, like all of our frames is both a description of a set of organizational realities that are present regardless of our conscious awareness of them and a predisposition or style that some individuals bring to their interaction with others. Most of our discussion has focused on the former. But be alert in your reading of the case for individuals whose typical pattern of engaging others is political, or for those instances in which individuals or groups are being self-consciously political.

III. CASE STUDY

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THE LANGUAGE OF HANDS:
A Tale of Two Cultures at Ridge Lutheran Church

By Ardith S. Hayes

I. <u>Background</u>

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A visitor to worship would notice the attractiveness of the large, traditional church building set in a well-kept middle class neighborhood, across the street from a large park. Upon entering, additional impressions would immediately register. In a comer of the narthex a small group is talking animatedly but without sound. If the visitor is not too shy to observe more closely, it is apparent that sign language is the medium of discourse. Around this group is the usual bustle of a multi-generational congregation arriving for church: kids are darting in and out around adults who are greeting one another; a stream of people comes upstairs from the coffee hour preceding the eleven o'clock worship; a little church business gets taken care of around the edges or in the adjacent library. The "signers" in the comer are greeted by some hearing folk as they pass by. There is familiarity, yet also strangeness.

Moving into the sanctuary, one is struck by its light, rather unusual, contemporary design. All that remains from an originally traditional arrangement is the choir loft. There is now a large chancel platform describing a semicircle below. Three aisles lead diagonally to the chancel, creating three sections of pews. Visual access to the pulpit and communion table is excellent from anywhere in the sanctuary. The woman who will interpret the service in sign language places a music stand holding papers in front of the section of pews which line one side wall of the sanctuary. As the worshipers gradually enter and settle into their places for the service it becomes apparent that this section is occupied primarily by deaf members and their families.

Signs of Love

Many hearing worshipers who join this visitor in the pew are wearing buttons with hands signing the word "love." As the service gets underway the pastor signs as well as speaks parts of the liturgy. A woman in her forties and a recent graduate of the Lutheran seminary in Chicago, Sandra Loman came to Ridge as associate pastor. When the senior pastor of eight years moved to another parish, the congregation called her to succeed him. A condition of her call was that she be willing to learn sign language. She has been an eager learner.

A visitor may well be moved by the communication of much loved parts of the liturgy (the Lord's Prayer, for instance) to persons who otherwise would never experience them. On the other hand, music is a major part of this service too, and the visitor wonders how hymns, anthems, and sung responses can be experienced as silence. Music is important to the hearing members--yet they tell of their experience of a "silent service," complete with a choir of the deaf communicating the anthem with signs, large gestures and movement.

Above the choir, a stained glass window serves as a constant reminder of Christ's commission to the disciples to go and be witnesses. The congregation takes pride in its focus on witnessing. The sermon on this Sunday (Epiphany) is on the theme of being a light in the world. The pastor speaks

of the staying power required to keep one's witness alive, of the mundane and sometimes difficult tasks that underlie a worthwhile endeavor, and of the conflicts that often characterize the struggle.

After the service, the visitor speaks with two older women who introduce themselves. The visitor compliments them on the lovely and interesting worship space, and they respond with mixed pride and pain. They are pleased with the inviting design, and they emphasize how important the change was for the inclusion of the deaf group within the congregation. Yet they also made it clear that the cost had been high, both in money and in the church's energies.

Roots in Ridge Church

Ridge Lutheran Church was organized as a mission congregation in 1946 in what was then a rapidly growing area on the Southwest Side of Chicago. Although the larger community has seen demographic changes over the years, this neighborhood has retained a quiet, middle- to upper-middle class character. Some call it a "village in the city." Ridge Lutheran has remained strong, but its membership is aging, with a median age of fifty-five. Most of the members now live in suburbs further to the west, yet their loyalty to the vision of the congregation remains strong and alive.

That vision sees Ridge as a witnessing and caring church. Helping others as a way to express God's love in the world comes up frequently in conversations with members about their involvement in church programs. Since 1978 the church has belonged to the community Protestant Cluster of Churches, and its members enthusiastically volunteer in several community ministries. They speak proudly of Ridge members who have been honored for their volunteer work.

Ministry- with the Deaf

For nearly half its life, however, the congregation's concern for witnessing and caring has been most explicitly expressed in ministry with the deaf. Outreach to the deaf has a long history of American Lutheranism, and took on a human face at Ridge two decades ago in the person of a council member's wife who worked as an interpreter in the public schools. At her instigation the church began the signing of services on every other Sunday. American Sign Language classes open to all followed shortly thereafter.

The ministry to the deaf had been underway for several years when Phil Weaver was called to Ridge as senior pastor. He came with a prior interest in the deaf and continued to study sign language with the support of the Parish Council. Phil was an energetic leader who had, according to one member, "eight projects going at once." One of these was the sanctuary remodeling, which was heavily influenced by the needs of the deaf congregation even as it drained the resources of the larger group. Other recent initiatives involved a new youth program and changes in the organization of the church.

Phil shepherded the work with the hearing impaired through several stages of development, marked by significant changes in the program name that reflected the intention of moving from "ministry to" to "ministry with" the deaf. The "Program for the Hearing Impaired" became the "Congregation of the Deaf," and finally the "Board of Deaf Ministry," the latter having its own budget.

At the same time, an awareness of deaf culture was growing in the larger congregation, as expressed in comments like: "It's becoming a personal thing to our members...it's like a family."

"People bring in articles and stories" to share with the group. "When the deaf ministry leads the adult forum, attendance doubles." "If we came to church and there was no signer, it wouldn't feel like Ridge Church."

II. The Planning Year: The Right People at the Right Time

Phil Weaver played a directive, some would say dominating, role in the design and early stages of HANDS. He is described variously as strong-willed, an idea man, passionate about his beliefs, and a very committed person who, in the words of one member, "helped a lot--and I miss him." An executive of Ridge's synod extended him the invitation to develop a social ministry program with the help of a Church and Community seed money grant. With his deep commitment to deaf ministry, he was ready to respond, and he immediately began mustering the resources of the church behind the project.

In June of the planning year Phil notified the Church and Community Project that the Parish Planning Council had approved the congregation's participation in the initial phase of study and project development. A Core Committee had been appointed, consisting of the pastors, Phil and Sandra; Tom VanderVeen, an active layman Phil had selected to chair the committee; and two other members, who would serve in the roles of historian and reporter.

There was little debate over the focus of the new project. One member of the Core Committee said, "If we had wanted other things, we could have considered them." But Ridge's proposal was written to show throughout that an advocacy project for the deaf fit perfectly the church's biblical and theological mission base, as well as the history, of the congregation. "We commit ourselves as deaf and hearing Christians to minister side by side as the Lord directs us," they wrote.

The proposal also reflected a growing awareness on the part of Ridge members who had been involved with their own deaf ministry that a paucity of services exist for deaf members of our society. In employment, social services, educational opportunities, and health care, the deaf were often a "silent minority." Even elemental life-saving communications frequently are not possible due to a lack of equipment and interpreters. The committee found that in the Chicago metropolitan area, such services as did exist were located primarily on the North Side. Ridge, located on the South Side, hoped through its project to address the needs of the South Side deaf community particularly. But its goals also embraced the larger issues of the deaf and hearing impaired throughout society, and national advocacy groups for the deaf were viewed as potential partners in the task.

Early Organizational Tensions

Ridge's planning year goals included education and discussion directed toward congregational ownership of the project; community research to discover needs and resources relative to the deaf community; searching out potential partner groups; further training for both pastors in American Sign Language; and the establishment of a project board of directors that would be accountable to the Parish Planning Council, and which would have equal representation of the deaf and the hearing.

The Church and Community Project had guidelines for organizational tasks, but the Ridge committee insisted at many points that those guidelines were inappropriate for them. They felt, for example, that the recommended outline for studying the community context was not helpful because HANDS' geographic area of service and outreach was not confined to the local community, and its goals were local, regional, and national in scope. Most of all, however, they felt that because of the cross-cultural realities with which they had to deal, and the consequent slowness of their communications and meetings, the Church and Community timetable was unrealistic for them. On these and other issues the core committee and the Church and Community staff negotiated a path

for Ridge, trying to balance their unique circumstances with Project-wide needs for accountability and evaluation.

There is a revealing, though perhaps apocryphal, story that the church's participation began when Phil called Tom VanderVeen and asked, "Are you interested in $60,000?" There appears to be no question that the offer of the seed money was one of the attractions for the Ridge leaders. Yet Tom's response was not one of adventurism, but rather of commitment: he agreed to chair the committee only if the parish council would commit the church to carry out the project whether or not they received the funding.

Tom, a retired labor organizer, brought to the project an action-oriented energy, a forthright communication style, strong leadership, and a knowledge of the importance and tactics of advocacy. The emphasis on advocacy in the inception and implementation of HANDS was partly credited to Tom's influence.

With two strong leaders on the Core Committee, Phil and Tom, it might have been surprising if there had not been some friction. The Church and Community guidelines insisted that a lay person chair the core committee; yet Tom later claimed to have been "chair in name only" during this developmental stage. His feeling that Phil had run things to an unwelcome degree was expressed in his edgy observation that Phil had written all the materials that were submitted to the Church and Community Project office.

III. The First Implementation Year of the Project: Building Trust

HANDS was formed as a membership association for the purpose of carrying out advocacy and referrals for the deaf and hearing impaired. The organization was launched with a celebratory banquet and business meeting: it's first annual meeting. The turnout of only one hundred people was a disappointment to project leaders and did not begin to fill the ballroom rented for the occasion; but in other respects the event was counted a success--and most certainly a learning experience for the hearing. The story is told that one of the deaf members worked the crowd selling memberships as the business meeting got underway, so people could vote in the meeting. To the hearing this appeared "out of order"; to the deaf it seemed like a practical way to sign up members and get them involved immediately.

The board of directors, newly elected at that first annual meeting, continued the role of the original Core Committee as the focus of energy, activity, and struggle in HANDS. Phil left Ridge soon after the banquet; and Tom, who was elected the first chair of the board, experienced the full brunt of the difficulties around the project start-up. As the increased work and responsibility fell to him, his relationship with the board began showing stress. For his part, Tom was frustrated by what he felt was a lack of trust from the deaf community. On their part, the deaf say, "He thought he knew what we wanted, but he didn't." Yet they give Tom credit for caring and for being a much needed connection to the hearing world. "We wouldn't have the project without him," said one person. "They [the hearing] would have been long gone."

A major frustration for Tom was the apparent near impossibility of getting the new board organized. He found that he could not get the concept of committees and task forces operative, so the board worked as a committee of the whole. They were encountering the differing assumptions held by deaf and hearing members of the board about how business would be done. Hearing persons who participate in voluntary organizations come from a culture that includes Roberts Rules of Order. It is unusual for a deaf person to have had comparable experiences of organizational

membership.

If the work of shepherding the fledgling board fell to Tom, the harmonizing task fell to Sandra, who continued in her associate pastor role until she was named the senior pastor late in that first project implementation year. As pastor, Sandra helped the board members of HANDS to move the project toward greater autonomy. She directed her time with them toward individual pastoral support, and educational and interpretive work to support them in the organizational tasks. Looking back, they came to feel that in the long run some good for HANDS came of Phil's leaving. "We're stronger," said a board member. "We fight, fight 'til we get what we want." Members now had to work out issues with each other--no one would rescue them by doing it for them.

With Autonomy Came Advocacy

The goals in the first project year focused on advocacy for changes in systems that affect the lives of the deaf. In their initial efforts, HANDS supported the Ridge Board of Deaf Ministry in its attempts to bring about change in the Metropolitan Chicago Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. These efforts included an educational phase and an action phase. In the first phase they hosted visits from representatives of other social ministries during a denominational conference, raising consciousness with denominational groups that American Sign Language is a language distinct from American English--and that there is likewise a distinct deaf culture. In the action phase, they successfully lobbied the Synod to vote an extra delegate designated for the deaf language culture group. This same effort for additional representation did not succeed at the national level. Further efforts to build an advocacy network on both the local/regional and the national level met with mixed results.

The question of advocacy versus direct service was a growing center of conflict on the HANDS board. As particular needs were raised the members encountered a recurring temptation to move HANDS into one or more service areas. The matter remained unresolved. Meanwhile, the first year saw some development of referral services for people in need and recognition of HANDS' existence by at least one hospital.

HANDS efforts to develop formal organizational partnerships also moved slowly. Indeed, Ridge Church continued to be the only significant partner, inasmuch as the church continued to serve as the base for the project. The designation of a certain number of seats on the HANDS board for members of the Ridge Board of Deaf Ministry expressed their desire that the project continue the identification with Ridge's own deaf ministry; it reflected as well the reality that the fledgling organization needed to rely on some of the congregation's resources until it could develop its own bylaws and file for independent not-for-profit status. Even as the board worked toward eventual autonomy, they maintained their ties with the church.

IV. The Second Implementation Year: Leadership Tranitions

HANDS' second annual meeting, held in the church basement because a large crowd was not expected, was actually attended by 277 people. Besides the tripling of attendance from the first meeting, there were other significant changes reflected in this annual event. Most telling was the election of a deaf person as chair of HANDS--and this shift in leadership signaled a shift in style as well. The story is told that at this meeting, with a deaf person in the chair, hearing people who applauded by clapping instead of by waving their hands in the air (the gesture used by the deaf)

were squirted from the platform with a squirtgun as a reminder. Deaf members find this a very funny story and obviously enjoy telling it, while some hearing members tend not to find it as funny. Beyond the possible indignity of being squirted, there was emerging an air of rowdy fun characterizing both socialization and business meetings among the deaf that seemed inappropriate to some hearing members.

The changes had begun several months before, with the hiring of Colleen Corbett as part-time director of the HANDS program. A deaf woman who was raised in a hearing family, one of Colleen's goals was to help both groups understand each other. Colleen was already active in social and civic groups working for the deaf when a HANDS member invited her to come to a meeting. A Roman Catholic herself, she responded positively when she learned that it was not just a Ridge Lutheran Church project. She brought a broad knowledge of the deaf community to the board, along with a network of civic contacts. When the time came to search for a director, Colleen was among those who argued that the job should be open to deaf as well as hearing persons, and eventually she was the one chosen.

Though hired for fifteen hours per week, Colleen admits that she worked many more hours than that. Even routine business takes longer when each phone call uses a keyboard device or a relay service. Furthermore, as the visibility of HANDS grew, so did the demands for its services. Colleen was ambitious for HANDS and for its potential significance in bridging the deaf and hearing worlds, and welcomed its increasing public recognition.

Shortly before the second annual meeting, it became apparent that there were conflicts in the leadership group, particularly between Tom VanderVeen and Colleen Corbett. Equally strong personalities with equally strong convictions about how to get things done, impatient yet forced into a laborious task of communication, it was not surprising that they found themselves struggling. Tom saw organization, goal-setting, and focused effort as essential to his vision for HANDS. Colleen, growing up as a deaf person in a hearing culture, had learned to accomplish things through a style of individualized confrontation designed to get the attention of the inattentive.

There were other differences between the two. It was important to Tom that HANDS was part of the mission of Ridge Church and that it had specifically Christian goals. He sometimes perceived the deaf members, led by Colleen, as trying to take over the project, and he feared that they would try to take it out of Ridge Church. On the one hand, Tom's convictions about empowering the deaf to manage their own project were very strong; yet when the deaf did take over, he found it hard to trust them. These perceptions were strengthened by his observation that the deaf members tended to vote as a bloc, both in the church and on the project board.

After one year as chair of the board, Tom urged them to elect one of the deaf members as chair. He said later, "Doing it myself wasn't doing anybody any good. We had to empower the deaf to do it on their own." Brian Rascher, a young hearing impaired man who was an active leader in Ridge's Board of Deaf Ministry, Was elected to chair HANDS at the second annual meeting.

Brian and his wife were enthusiastic members at Ridge. "When we were kids," Brian says, "there were no interpreters in church. We just had to sit there. Boring!" He recounts their search for a pastor to marry them and tells of finding Ridge because it was listed in the TDD (Telecommunication Device for the Deaf) directory. He speaks highly of the congregation as a loving, caring group of people. Along with other deaf and hearing impaired members of Ridge, Brian did not want the Board of Deaf Ministry to be merged into HANDS. They felt that they had more power in the congregation as a board within the church structure of the Parish Planning Council. Brian was willing, however, to lend his energy, good humor, credibility with both communities and leadership abilities to HANDS.

He quickly became deeply involved with the project, even as he had already been active within the larger deaf community in Chicago. Tom VanderVeen remained with HANDS as treasurer.

Cultures in Conflict

Some of Tom's frustrations were echoed by other board members early in HANDS' second year. "Everything takes twice as long because all conversations have to be signed," said one. Sandra observed that this project needed twice the time of the other Church and Community projects; it had taken eighteen months for them to cover the organizational tasks that took others nine. In addition to the extra time, board members pointed to different ways of doing things and differences in experience between deaf and hearing persons. Conversations in sign language tended to break out at any time during a meeting because the deaf were not aurally aware of verbal discussion already underway. The discipline of attending to one another's communication patterns took time to learn, and to the hearing members of the board the deaf members often seemed out of order.

They found other, less obvious differences. Hearing persons assume that written documents are equally accessible to everyone, but since ASL is a different language and not just English signed, a written document is a challenge in translation to a deaf person. The Church and Community Project required a comprehensive written proposal and periodic narrative reports--which held little significance for the deaf board members.

"Papers--documents--don't mean much to deaf people. They look at them and say, 'Whatever you hearing people want,'" admits a board member.

Added to the task-oriented differences were the emotional and personal ones. "Deaf people are emotional--VERY," says Colleen. Another person explains it this way: "Growing up, you don't get to hear how your parents deal with difficulties and solve problems. You don't know when they argue. You don't learn these interpersonal skills." Deaf board members have said that for many of them this was one of the first groups they had ever worked with; they did not yet understand group dynamics, give-and-take, or compromise.

Deaf people often have different perceptions about power and how to get it. Colleen reported that she had to learn the hard way to stick up for her rights when the hospital to which she took her son or emergency treatment did not have the TDD telephone that was required by law. She had a long wait until a priest who knew ASL was contacted to interpret for her; in the meantime she was treated like "a kind of crazy person." An attorney later told her she should sue the hospital.

Focus, Structure, and Confidence

Midway through the second project implementation year, HANDS was operating with a constitution and bylaws and a board of directors numbering thirteen. One third of the board members were from outside Ridge Church and one third were members from the deaf community. The three-year goal was to have two-thirds non-Ridge members and fifty-one percent deaf members. The organization's network included the deaf ministry of the Archdiocese of Chicago, social clubs of the deaf in the metropolitan area, related agencies of the ELCA denomination, businesses that supply communication devices to the deaf and of course, Ridge Lutheran. Through Colleen HANDS had representation on the mayor's Equal Access Council, and growing recognition among the deaf community as an advocacy and referral resource.

Some of the remaining tasks they faced were basic organizational ones. Tom continued to push

them to design and implement a working committee structure, and they needed to recruit more board members from outside the congregation. Other tasks concerned achieving consensus around goals. A continuing controversy in the board was about a proposed advocacy campaign to get the Domino's Pizza chain to install TDD's so deaf people could order pizza. Colleen felt that it would be an achievable advocacy action and would provide an important small success that could be a key to wider recognition. Others, including some of the deaf members, thought it would be more important to establish a national 800-number hotline for the deaf. Every decision was hard won, and some members, impatient with the chaotic process, thought about leaving. The balance between advocacy and direct service continued in dispute.

Towards the last quarter of its second year, the HANDS board began to function with greater confidence and become clearer about its tasks and goals. Among its accomplishments was a newsletter for the hearing impaired community that provided both service, through referral information, and advocacy, through the issues it raised. They began considering a long-term goal of raising funds to put the newsletter into a newspaper format and build a circulation of up to 20,000 deaf and hearing impaired readers.

They also had made a start on developing a committee structure with the appointment of two board members to each committee they needed; they hoped to attract additional committee members from outside the board. Hearing people on the board were learning sign language. Brian, Tom, Colleen, and Sandra continued in their active participation and support of HANDS. They still lacked an effective volunteer structure and fundraising knowledge and skills--but overall there was consensus that communication had improved and the group was working together with less frustration.

V. HANDS Anticipates the Future

Sandra Loman describes HANDS' experience as a long process of birth pains. She emphasizes how difficult it is for hearing and deaf to work together and to accomplish deaf leadership, and how slowly everything moves. Sandra feels, with others, that the struggle will be with them for some time to come. But, in the words of a board member, "You don't mind all the work if at the end there's a good feeling...and pride." Their hard-won growth together may be one of the most important achievements of HANDS.

In programmatic terms, it remains difficult for the HANDS board to focus on priority goals. The dispute continues between service and advocacy; Domino's Pizza and the national 800 hotline are still open issues. Meanwhile, the newsletter remains their most successful program--an important linkage for a growing number of deaf and hearing impaired people. The story is unfinished. HANDS moves along slowly and with great liveliness.

There seems to be no question that the HANDS project naturally tapped into the history and identity of the Ridge congregation. Their choice of a ministry with the deaf was so continuous with a major feature of the congregation's identity that HANDS did not seem at first to be a harbinger of change to them. Rather, it represented a locus of unity. "Everyone could feel good about something and do something about it," one member said. For a congregation that had seen a number of changes during Phil Weaver's pastorate, HANDS offered a continuity of mission that was familiar and might be pursued in traditional ways.

"People feel good about HANDS" is the ready consensus of a number of church members. It transcends cliques, age groups, and gender differences, and represents the bonding that exists

among members of the congregation. It is a center of agreement in a congregation where members talk openly about their fights. Even as HANDS has uncovered strong differences among board members, it has tapped into a deep commonality within the congregation.

Church members, nevertheless, speak of their hopes that more deaf persons would join the congregation. Yet two years into the project, Ridge members had not seen any signs of growth in the deaf membership. One member said, "Well, there are no new deaf members, but we still support it. That was not the criterion." It was, however, a hope.

There is also a growing recognition that HANDS is something more than an extension of the Board of Deaf Ministry within the congregation. Sandra Loman acknowledges that the growing separateness of HANDS and Ridge is a gray area for church members. Most members still think of the two as blended, and yet, she says, "HANDS needs to be on its own if it's going to get stronger. We need more non-church members on the board of HANDS."

There also has been a realization that the church's traditional expression of outreach and caring--volunteerism--does not characterize the congregation's relationship to HANDS. The emphasis on full equal participation of the deaf with the hearing and on the importance of the deaf taking the lead with their own community has meant that most church members have not been called upon for direct service with HANDS. Hearing persons cannot "pass" in the deaf world, and only gradually can they learn ways to be effective in service to that world. Without this traditional outlet for service, some Ridge members are confused and frustrated with their newest, and in some ways their proudest, mission endeavor. Tom VanderVeen says, "One thing I'm worried about. We have people who are members of Ridge waiting to be called as volunteers in our [HANDS] office. If we use them, they'll feel it's worthwhile. If we don't, they'll feel like we lost it. Even if we turn over decision-making to deaf more and more, we don't dare forget that Ridge is our sponsoring church."

There are clear attempts at assimilation of the two groups--though not without ambivalence on both sides. Deaf members appreciate the many efforts to include them fully in church committees and groups, but sometimes choose not to participate because of their discomfort in primarily hearing settings. They like to sit together in church and it facilitates the signing, yet their separateness is thereby visibly emphasized. Hearing members desire greater integration but are not used to having to negotiate inclusion. Negotiation occurs much more readily when there is a balance of power. If new church members from the deaf community are to be found, there will need to be a much more intentional evangelization and teaching effort using trained leadership among the deaf themselves.

The worship service has reflected increasing modifications to make it more accessible to the deaf. By the end of the project's second year, nearly everything in the service was interpreted. May was designated as Deaf Awareness Month, and the Silent Sunday service was held again. Yet a typical worship service designed entirely for the deaf is still greatly different from that to which the members of Ridge are accustomed. In the experience of the Catholic priest, "for the deaf everything that happens is defined visually." The communion chalice is clear glass. The Scripture is acted out, and the translation of Bible verses often turns on different imagery. There is not much music. Only deaf people are readers. Deaf Christians pay more attention to what Jesus did than to what he said, and they tend to find the insights of liberation theology helpful. There may be significant negotiations ahead if Ridge is to arrive at a worship style with which both groups will be comfortable.

Accompanying a heightened awareness on the part of the hearing members of Ridge is the gradual radicalization of its deaf membership that is underway through their involvement with HANDS. One deaf member of the board explained that with telecommunication devices and interpreters, the deaf are now independent of the hearing. With HANDS this has amounted to almost starting over with the deaf in charge. In the congregation, there may be a challenge to rethink

theologically the meaning of caring, and of reaching out. What is involved in the move from dependency relationships to independence? Can a mutuality of ministry be fashioned?

For both Ridge and HANDS, the latter remains both a question and hope. On Epiphany Sunday in the midst of the project's second year, Sandra Loman's sermon helped the congregation reflect on its experiences. She spoke of the frustration and impatience they had with the many meetings and with the slow pace of their progress as together they tried to shape a new ministry. "We've come a long, long ways," Sandra reflected. "And I am very proud of the congregation and all the others....We see the truth in looking back. The Holy Spirit used each one of us--the different languages, different cultures, different gifts. Out of the struggle can come a greater good. We will have more struggle..." finally she added, "as we meet--each with different ways of Seeing the world--and out of the mix can and will come something even better."

IV. Reflections on the Case Study

David A. Roozen

In a chapter on organizations as political systems in his remarkably provocative book, *Images of Organization* (1986), Gareth parallels a pluralist view of organizations with a pluralist view of society. "The term 'pluralism,'" Gareth notes (p 185)

> is used in political science to characterize idealized kinds of liberal democracies where potentially authoritarian tendencies are held in check by the free interplay of interest groups that have a stake in government. The pluralist vision is of a society where different groups bargain and compete for a share in the balance of power and use their influence to realize Aristotle's ideal of politics: a *negotiated order that creates unity out of diversity* (emphasis added).

It is clear in the case we have just read that the leaders of Ridge Lutheran Church intentionally set out to create a unity in HANDS out of the diversity that existed between the hearing and the deaf, and that it was intended for the deaf to be fully participant partners in this creation. HANDS, after all, was another step in Ridge's hearing members' movement from "ministry to" to "ministry with" the deaf. It is equally clear that Ridge's leadership had little idea how much struggle would be involved in negotiating that order, much less that the attempted embodiment of two of Ridge's most energizing theological values--the affirmation of diversity and the sharing of power--pre-ordained that politics would be a dominant reality.

Organizations as Coalitions

The first proposition of the political frame is that organizations are coalitions composed of varied individuals and interest groups. In the HANDS case we have two primary organizations to view through this lenses. As the case begins Ridge Lutheran Church is the focal arena as it sets about to create a new organization called HANDS, and the coalitional players in this first-year-contest are indeed varied. Several are groups or individuals with a formal structural position--e.g., Pastors Phil and Sandra, the Board of Deaf Ministry and the Parish Council to whom it is accountable, and the project Core Committee with Tom as its chair. Two of the most important groups have no formal status as groups--specifically Ridge's hearing members and Ridge's deaf and hearing impaired members. And one of the critical players is an external organization, namely the Church and Community Project. With the possible exception of the Parish Council, we read that each of these is in conflict with at least one other sometime during the case's unfolding, and it appears that even the

Parish Council had to work through some potentially divisive issues--e.g., whether or not the congregation had enough energy to take on yet another of Phil's initiatives, and how much time Sandra could divert from her work with the church to work with the HANDS board. once she became senior pastor.

After the first year HANDS is formally launched, it becomes the focal arena and the coalitional cast of its major stakeholders is even more starkly varied (at least in the case) than that of the church. Individuals and groups with formal structural positions within HANDS include, for example: its Board of Directors and chairs (first Tom, then Brian); its paid Director, Colleen; and the four informal groups or constituencies that are formally mandated to have representation on the board--Ridge and non-Ridge members, and the hearing and the deaf. Ridge members who either were or who desired to serve as volunteers represent an informal interest group. And then there are a host of external organizations, groups and individuals ranging from the Church and Community Project to various "network" allies, and from those deaf and hearing impaired with needs to be served, to those hearing who either "need their consciousness raised" or are targets of HANDS advocacy for structural reform.

If one were to graphically map out this cast of players one would quickly discover that within HANDS internal coalition structural, for example, most of the individuals have multiple group memberships. HANDS second board chair--Brian, for example, is also a member of Ridge, a member of Ridge's Board of Deaf Ministry, an active participant in several "deaf.' networks in the Greater Chicago area and, of course, is himself deaf. Indeed, the potential value of this rich array of relevant groups ties is one of the reasons he was chosen as chair. But we also know from the case that he had to confront situations that potentially pitted one of his group's interests against another of his group's interests--e.g., should Ridge's Board of Deaf Ministry be merged into HANDS?

Enduring Differences Makes Conflict Inevitable

In describing the informal mingling of hearing and deaf members before worship we read in the case, "There is familiarity, yet also strangeness." Later in the case we "hear" the deaf "say" of Tom--a long time hearing member of Ridge and deeply committed Chair of the HANDS board, "He thought he knew what we wanted, but he didn't." After almost 20 years of affirmingly working together to develop a ministry "with" each other, there is still a "strangeness" between Ridge's hearing and deaf members. Enduring differences.

As the author of the case correctly perceives, the dominant tension in the creation of HANDS is between two cultures--that of the hearing and of the non-hearing; grounded in and evolving out of two fundamentally different ways of experiencing and responding. Given the pervasiveness and depth of cultural differences, perhaps the only two really surprising things about the multitude of specific conflicts that they occasion in the case are that:

(1) The vast majority are over what the *Handbook for Congregational Studies* calls "process" issues and Leas and Kittlaus calls "substantive means"--e.g., the value of "written" documents, appropriate procedure for and behavior at meetings, the balance of and means of attaining power, formal/structural vs informal/relational approaches to confrontation and task attainment. Indeed the case tells us that when the control of HANDS shifted from the hearing to the deaf," it was like starting over." And,

(2) Given two decades of working with the deaf, that the leaders of Ridge Lutheran Church did not seemingly anticipate most of them. Indeed, one has to wonder why, given the relational

nature of deaf culture, Pastor Phil hand picked Tom to chair the original Core Committee. Perhaps it was because Phil looked for someone with the same energetic task orientation as himself.

That the cultural differences did not generate any direct conflict of goals or values is, as noted, a bit surprising. The case nevertheless provides a few hints as to why. First, it appears that the groups related to both cultures shared the same over-riding purpose--namely the "empowerment" of the deaf, both in HANDS and through HANDS; and that both the commonness of this purpose (as the structural frame would suggest) and the human relational values intrinsic to "empowerment" prompted the hearing culture, in particular, to back-off from some of its more "secondary" interests. Second, there is a progression of the deals sense of empowerment in the case and relatedly, of the deals forcefulness in asserting themselves. They are all but silent partners on the core committee, for example, but take control of HANDS in its second year and redefine the organization's process, and there is just a hint at the end of the case that Ridge Lutheran is being pushed to the point where it will have to thoroughly reexamine its theology and its "volunteer" driven approach to mission. Third, it is clear in the case that the one explicit conflict over goals--service vs advocacy--is a contested issue for both the hearing and the deaf.

As the latter point makes clear, not all of the contested differences in the case are between the hearing and deaf cultures. As the political frame would suggest, every difference is a potential point of tension. To note just a few: in the beginning of the case Tom is clearly frustrated by Pastor Phil's "dominating" style; Ridge's Board of Deaf Ministry has to struggle with its structural relationship to HANDS; and Ridge Lutheran members worry that allowing non-church members on HANDS board might dilute HANDS grounding in Christian values.

Power: The Most Important Resource

Power is the most important resource within the political frame because it is the medium through which conflicts of interests are ultimately resolved. Perhaps the most dramatic example of this in the case is the deals redefinition of HANDS' process when they attained control of the organization at the second annual meeting. What were their sources of power, and how consciously did they bring them to bear in the development of HANDS. We note only five by way of example. A first source of the deals power was Ridge's hearing member's valuing of "empowerment" and "sharing power." Structurally, this manifested itself in the decision (when the hearing still controlled the process) to require a strong representation of the deaf on the HANDS board. But more poignant in the case, it is clearly evident in Tom's decision not to stand for reelection as Board chair so that a deaf person could be elected. It is also evident in Sandra's Epiphany Sunday sermon as she interprets the gospel to the congregation as saying that cost of sharing will be struggle, but that we see the truth of the Holy Spirit using each of us. In each of these instances the deaf were granted authority to assert their interests.

A second source of the deals power was their structural inclusion through the Board of Deaf Ministry in Ridge's formal governance system. Note in the case the reason that the deaf give for not wanting the Board of Deaf Ministry to be merged into HANDS: "They felt that they had more power in the congregation as a board within the church structure of the Parish Planning Council." A third source of the deals power was their growing numbers and their cohesion. Recall deaf members working the crowd selling memberships at HANDS first annual meeting. The hearing initially objected because it appeared "out of order." One cannot help by wonder, however, if even then there was some anticipation of Tom's later observation (and frustration) that the deaf tended to vote as a block.

Still another source of the deals power was that one of "them" was hired as HANDS only paid staff person. If for no other reason than the sheer amount of hours this enabled her to give to the development of HANDS, it gave the deaf experience a tremendous amount of control over the shaping, initiating and public interpretation of HANDS' program, process and purpose. But more than that, in the person of Colleen it also brought expertise and her personal wealth of connectedness to deaf networks in the broader community. And finally, we note that another source of the deafs power was legal. It is not clear in the case whether or not HANDS used this source in their advocacy efforts; but it is clear that Colleen--out of personal experience--was well familiar with it.

For Better and For Worse

The unfolding of HANDS was anything but harmonious because of the differences that needed to be bridged. Nevertheless and despite a ready acknowledgement of the struggle, participants' experience and evaluation of process appears to be overwhelmingly positive. Yes there were moments of personal frustration, even flashes of anger and distrust, and a severe compromise of timely efficiency. But the positives of conflict clearly carry the day. Indeed, one can find connections in the case to all of the potential benefits of conflict prevalent in the literature summarized in our introduction. To note just a few: Ridge's experience with HANDS clearly surfaced problems in its "ministry with" the deaf that had previously been ignored. It also clearly motivated people on all sides of the hearing/deaf divide to know and understand each other better, and relatedly to know and understand one's own boundaries more fully--e.g., Ridge's growing realization of its strong investment in a "volunteer" orientation of social ministry. It also clearly enhanced the deafs sense of group cohesion, and perhaps more surprisingly, was experienced by the overall Ridge membership as a unifying experience for the congregation. And perhaps most importantly, it resulted in an recognizable increase in services available to the deaf.

A Blending of Frames

One of the models of church organization described in Burton's *Pastoral Paradigms* (1988), has a striking resemblance to Gareth's pluralistic view of organizations. Burton calls it the "negotiating paradigm," indicative of the paradigm's key structural characteristic, namely its flexibility in service of reconciling the opposites intrinsic to the paradigm's embrace of diversity. Unlike Gareth, however, Burton does not frame his paradigm either in the value free objectivity of political science; nor does Burton use a political frame. Rather, Burton's negotiating paradigm is primarily cast in human relational terms, and Burton advocates this paradigm over others because of his understanding of the Gospel. To the extent the unfolding of HANDS fits--both in terms of intention and actual dynamic--any organizational model described in the literature, it is Burton's negotiating paradigm. We see in the case, therefore, a wonderful mixing and blending and bumping of all four of our frames. But we also see in the case a clear example of the fact that one's intentions and one's preferred frame notwithstanding, politics will be present and that in conditions of diversity, shared/diffuse power and change it will be a dominant reality.