



MINISTRY OF THE PARISH  
COUNCIL SERIES

*PRODUCTIVE  
PARISH COUNCIL  
MEETINGS*

Parish Development Ministry,  
Archdiocese of Western Pennsylvania, Orthodox Church in America

1/13/2016

Session Three: January 12, 2016

# Presenter

## Joseph Kormos

- Orthodox Parish Development
  - 8 years
  - 85 Orthodox parishes
  - 25+ multi-parish workshops & webinars
- Useful parish & professional experience



Parish Development  
Ministry Leader,  
Archdiocese of Western PA

# Series Goal: Better Parish Councils



FROM  
Parish Fire Department



TO  
Shared Leadership Body

Tonight

## Council Meetings



Important!

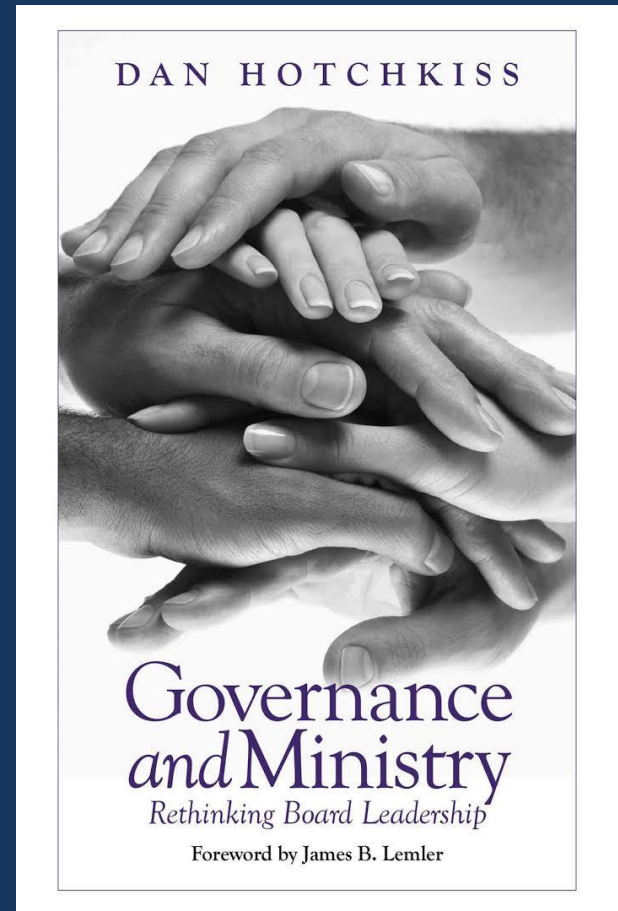
Improvable

1-3 Actions

Empowered

# Primary Source

Numerous quotes, concepts & ideas  
used in this session

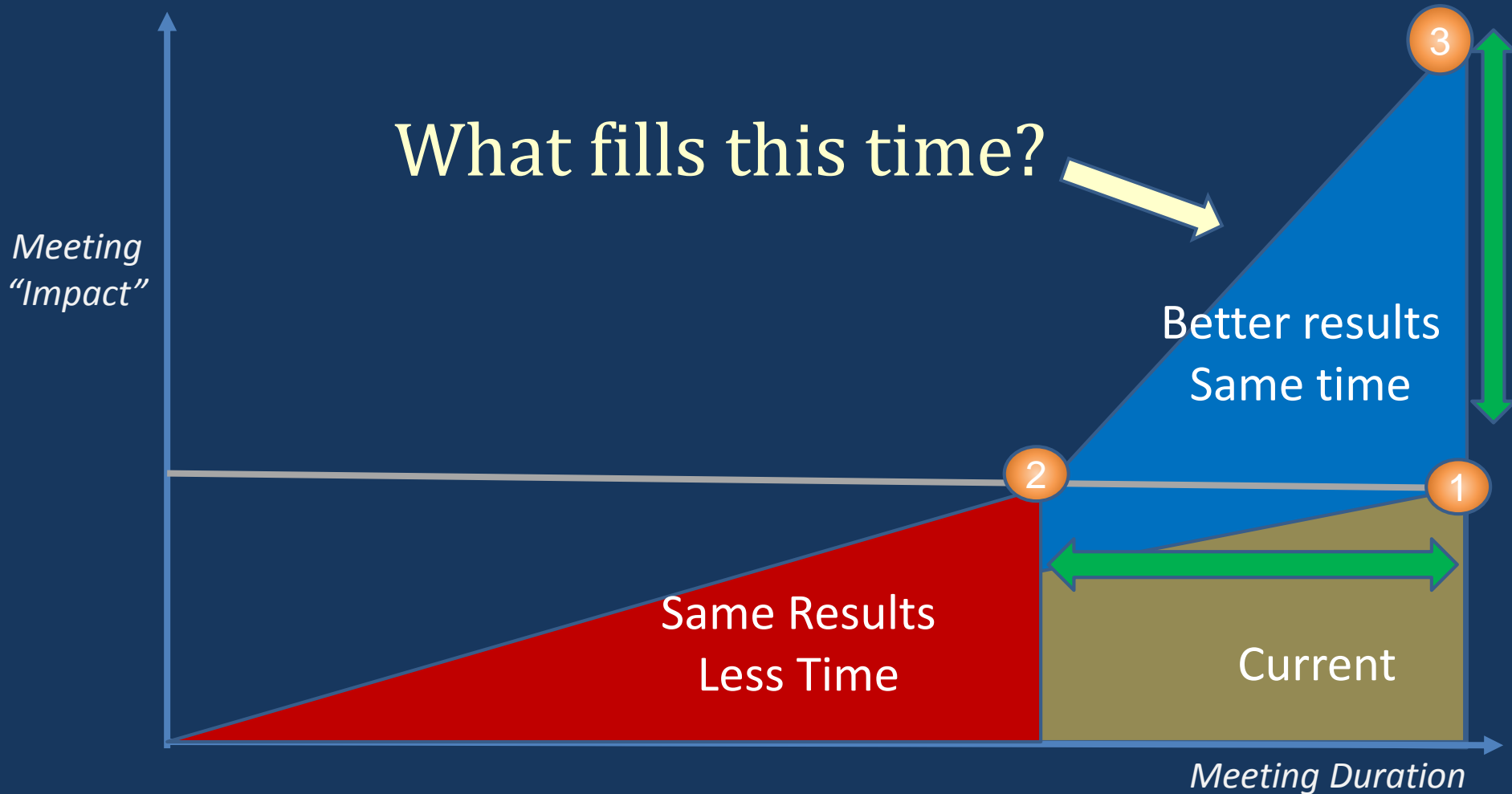


# Importance of “Meetings”

- Primary venue for PC action
  - ▣ Where ideas go to die
- PC recruiting is biggest issue
  - ▣ Biggest obstacle ... what PC is ‘known for’
  - ▣ “They have meetings”
  - ▣ ‘about’ sitting in a boring meeting

# More “Productive”

What fills this time?



# Outline



*Find 1-3 Useful actions!*

# Outline

- Review purpose
- Think of a meeting
- Your meetings



# Energy for transition?

?



# Differing Viewpoints



Green Eye Shade

Current  
Save  
Implementers

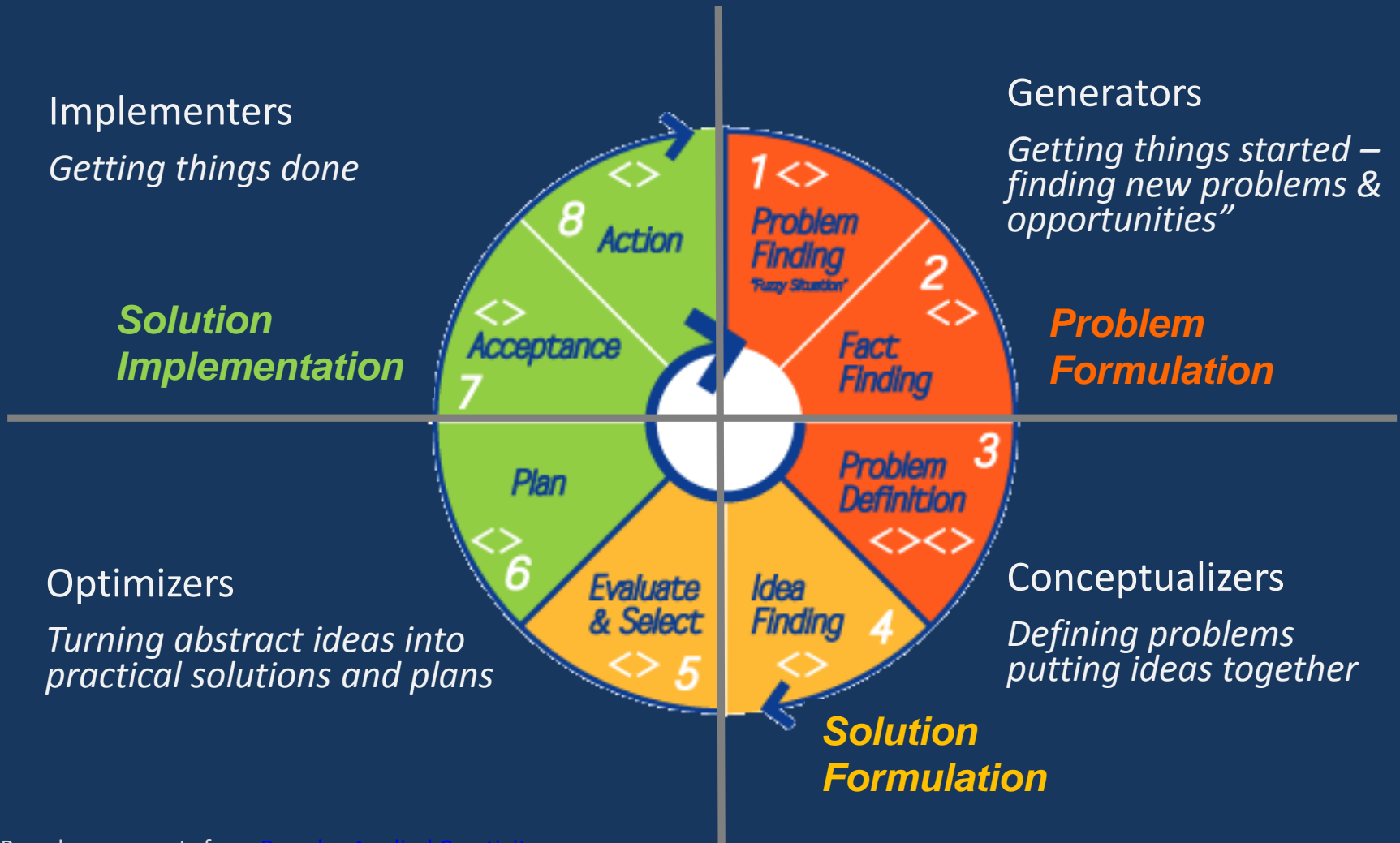


Rose Colored Glasses

Future  
Spend  
Conceptualizers

# Different People: Different “Likes”

12



# Possible actions for commitment to improve meetings...

# Review Parish Council Purpose

Stewards of parish ability to fulfill its total mission.

- Oversight
- Planning
- Ministry

Discover possibilities... Discern priorities ... Drive change

# Think of a Meeting...

## Why Bad?

- ❑ Start/ End late
- ❑ Little accomplished
- ❑ Boring
- ❑ Overbearing personality
- ❑ Generate hard feelings
- ❑ Same old; revisit issues/decisions

# Think of a Meeting...

## Why Bad?

- ❑ Start/ End late
- ❑ Little accomplished
- ❑ Boring
- ❑ Overbearing personality
- ❑ Generate hard feelings
- ❑ Same old; revisit issues/decisions


## Why Good?

- ❑ Great discussion?
- ❑ Energy?
- ❑ Learning? Personal Growth?
- ❑ Many contributors?
- ❑ Decisions?

# Discuss *Your* Meetings

## “Typical Meeting Content” *from a parish website*

- Review monthly financial statements
- Review & approve funding requests outside budget.
- Review parish calendar
- Reports by council members
- Planning special events & programs



Who  
wants to  
do this?

# Define Target Meeting Qualities

Traditional	New
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Transmission of info</li><li>• Money</li><li>• Same agenda</li><li>• Focus on past &amp; present</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Emphasize participation and action</li><li>• Strategic &amp; generative thinking</li><li>• Variation</li><li>• Outcome driven</li><li>• Focus on future</li></ul>

# Outline



- “Hybrid”
- Pre-send
- Check in
- Consent
- Focus
- Pastoral matters
- Annual cycle

## Typical Agenda

- Call to order
- Minutes
- Correspondence
- Reports – Clergy; Officers; Committees
- Old Business
- New Business
- Announcements
- Adjourn

## Hybrid

- Gathering
  - (“Check in”)
- Prayer, Scripture & Formation
- Consent Decision items
- Discussion items (Annual cycle)
- Pastoral matters
- Social time/reflection
  - (“Check out”)

Decision & Dialogue

Urgent & Important

Current & Future

Material & Spiritual

Engagement

## Hybrid

- Gathering
  - ▣ (“Check in”)
- Prayer, Scripture & Formation
- Consent Decision items
- Discussion items  
(Annual cycle)
- Pastoral matters
- Social time/reflection
  - ▣ (“Check out”)

# Check In

- Gathering -- **“Check in”**
- Prayer & Formation
- Consent Decision items
- Discussion items
- Pastoral Matters
- Social time/reflection - “Check out”

- Transition –from “outside” to “here”
- Focus on one another & common task
- Everyone talk



## Pre-send

- ▣ Agenda
- ▣ Reports
- ▣ Background reading



# Consent Agenda

## Save time!

- ❑ Prepared -- packet ahead of time
- ❑ Decision items -- no discussion  
Essential/ routine Non  
controversial  
PC must act.

- ❑ Approve minutes
- ❑ Most reports
- ❑ Shift money: one budget to another
- ❑ Routine policy of document changes
- ❑ Empower treasurer to open a new account
- ❑ Adjust insurance deductibles
- ❑ Certify delegates to a meeting etc.

# Consent Agenda

## Save time!

- Prepared -- packet ahead of time
- Decision items -- no discussion  
Essential/ routine Non controversial  
PC must act.
- Approve or move. Never discuss

- 'Does anyone wish to move an item from consent agenda to discussion agenda?'
- 'In favor? Opposed? All consent items are approved.' (en masse)

***Then -- on to matters of greater import!***

# Parkinson's Law of Triviality

The time spent on an agenda item varies inversely to the \$ sum involved.

# Limit Financial Reports/ Discussions



4-6 x /year  
Effective reporting

Councils are fascinated with  
concrete decisions that cause it  
to micromanage.

# Protect the Agenda

- Resolve to limit agenda items
- Process & owner
- Delegate to others

Too often councils react to items brought by others.  
Over time they lose their  
*ability to initiate action.*



# Protect the Agenda

## **Avoid**

Problem solving/ One off  
*(Managing)*

## **Accept**

Policy framework  
*(Governing)*

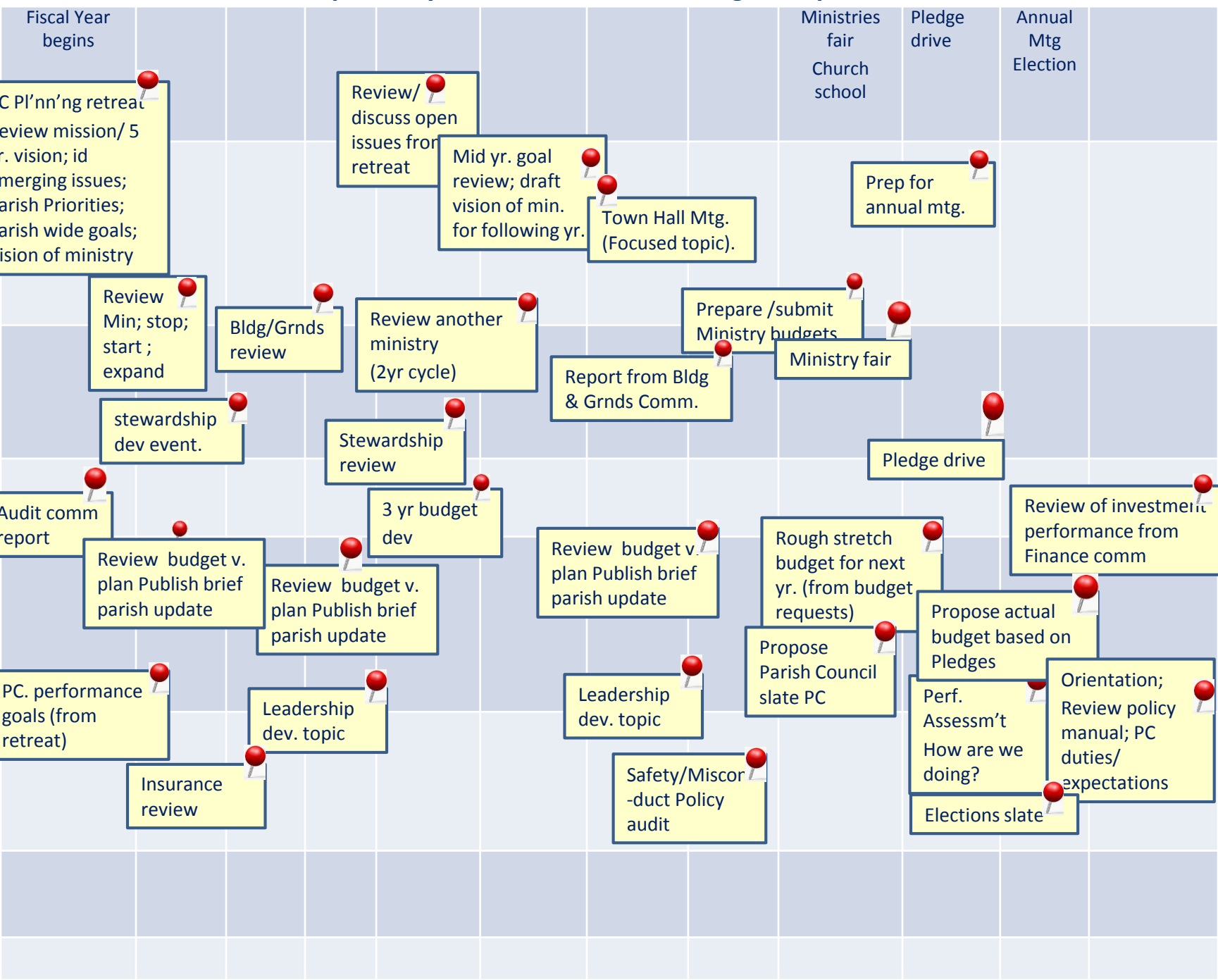


# Parish Council Annual Topic Cycle

Month	Topic
Jan	Review Plan for Annual meeting; Annual meeting prep; assignments, reports
Feb	Orientation & Training; review goals; Council policy manual; performance objectives
Mar	Planning Retreat
April	Focus topic: Review Risk Related Issues: Misconduct; Safety, Facilities; Insurance
May	Ministries Planning: start, stop; continue; revise
June	Ministry area review: e.g. Education; Outreach or Evangelization
July	3 Yr Vision budget update
Aug	Miscellaneous topic from annual retreat
Sept	Stewardship Ministry Review
Oct	Policy book review; nominating committee
Nov	PC Self evaluation: How are we doing?
Dec	Finalize budget for annual meeting

Jan Feb Mar Apr May Jun Jul Aug Sept Oct Nov Dec

Key events  
(Non Liturgical)  
Plan'g & Vision  
Ministry Devpt  
Stewardship  
Budget & Financial  
Parish Council Devpt  
Manage risk



# Agenda Monthly Focus Points

- 1-2 Big Picture “Questions”
- From routine to urgent & significant
- State planned action

Parish Council Agenda St XXX Orthodox Church February 2016		
<b>What are our ministry priorities for upcoming 2 year period?</b> We will have a first discussion -with <i>final approval next month</i> -in time to guide the budget.		
Time	Segment/ Topic	Leader
6:45	Check in	Bob
6:50	Opening Prayer & Scripture	Fr. John & Frank
6:55	Formation Topic: Servant Leadership	
7:10	Consent decision Items – <i>no discussion</i>	Bob
7:15	Discussion topics 1. Referred from Consent section <b>2. Annual ministry priorities –first discussion</b> 3. Stewardship development topic	Sarah to facilitate
8:30	Pastoral Topics	Fr John
8:45	Reflection/check out	

# Agenda Monthly Focal Points

## **How well are we fulfilling our mission with respect to youth?**

As part of our ongoing process of discernment wrt youth PC will hold one hr. session with Youth ministry. Youth reps will participate. *No PC action is anticipated.*

**Should we be in the building rental business?** We will discuss a proposed PC policy on rentals. The committee will have modified the policy from last month's preliminary discussion. *We anticipate a final vote tonight.*

# Pastoral Matters

- Gathering -- “Check in”
- Prayer
- Formation
- Consent Decision items
- Discussion items
  - Annual cycle
- **Pastoral Matters**
- Social time/reflection  
“Check out”

“We have a permanent line item on the agenda called “pastoral matters” which implicitly reminds our council that they have a **pastoral role** without having to harp on it. People have always responded. While this never reveals items of an inappropriate nature, it usually takes the form of a **review of new members or inquirers who might need more attention from council members**, whom I gently encourage to think in terms of having a **duty to these people** as council members; it also gives a minute to update the council on prayer needs, and even **prompts them to share their own**.

Our meetings can go long, but we almost always end with a litany related to the people or matters raised in the pastoral section of the meeting.”

*An OCA Priest*

# Outline



# Blend Facilitating AND Chairing

## Parish Council Meetings

## Facilitating



- Process centric
- Content neutral
- On feet
- flip chart: summarize & focus attention
- Leader is helper and enabler - support group to achieve results.

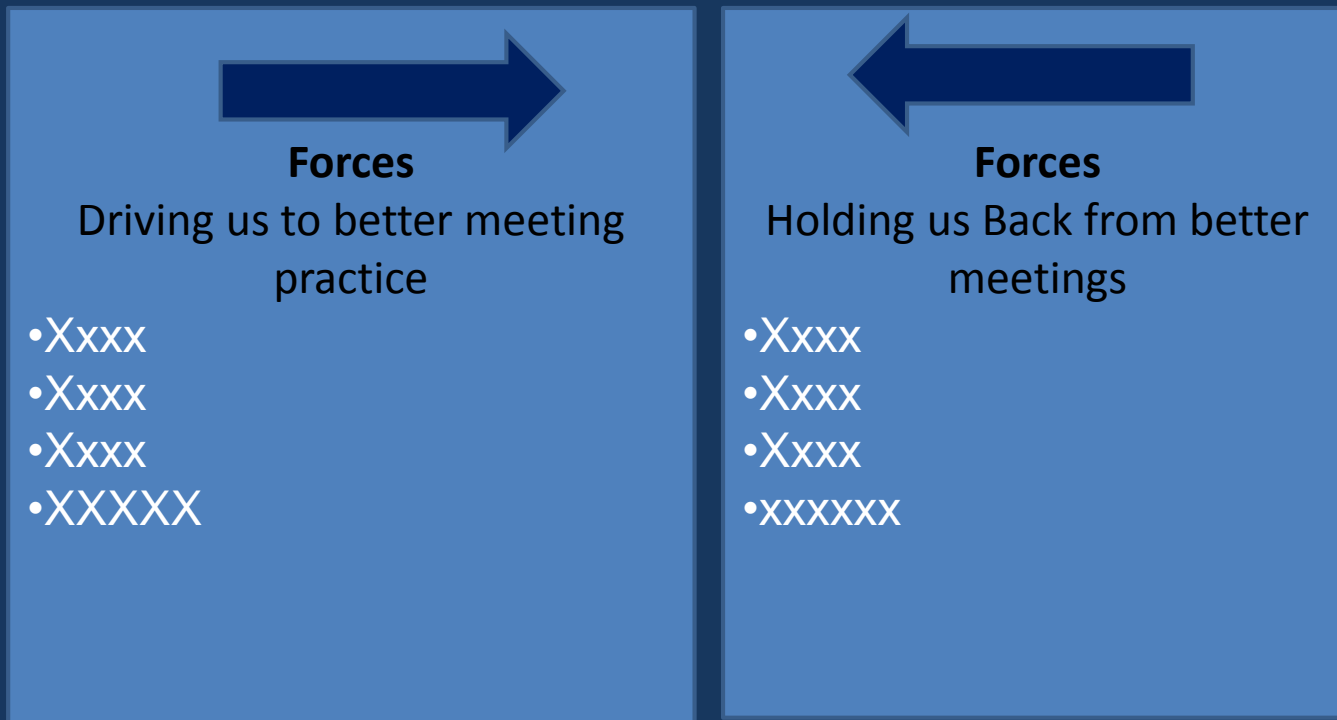
# Chairing



- Decisions
- Little emphasis on process tools.
- Power Position
- At beginning for agenda review, minutes, reports.

# Process/Decision Tools

## Force Field



# Good Facilities

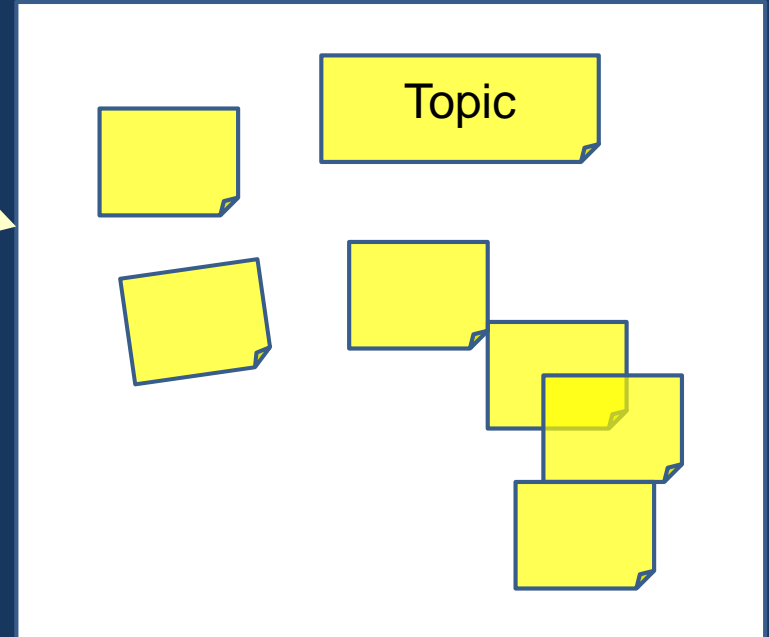


# Good Facilities

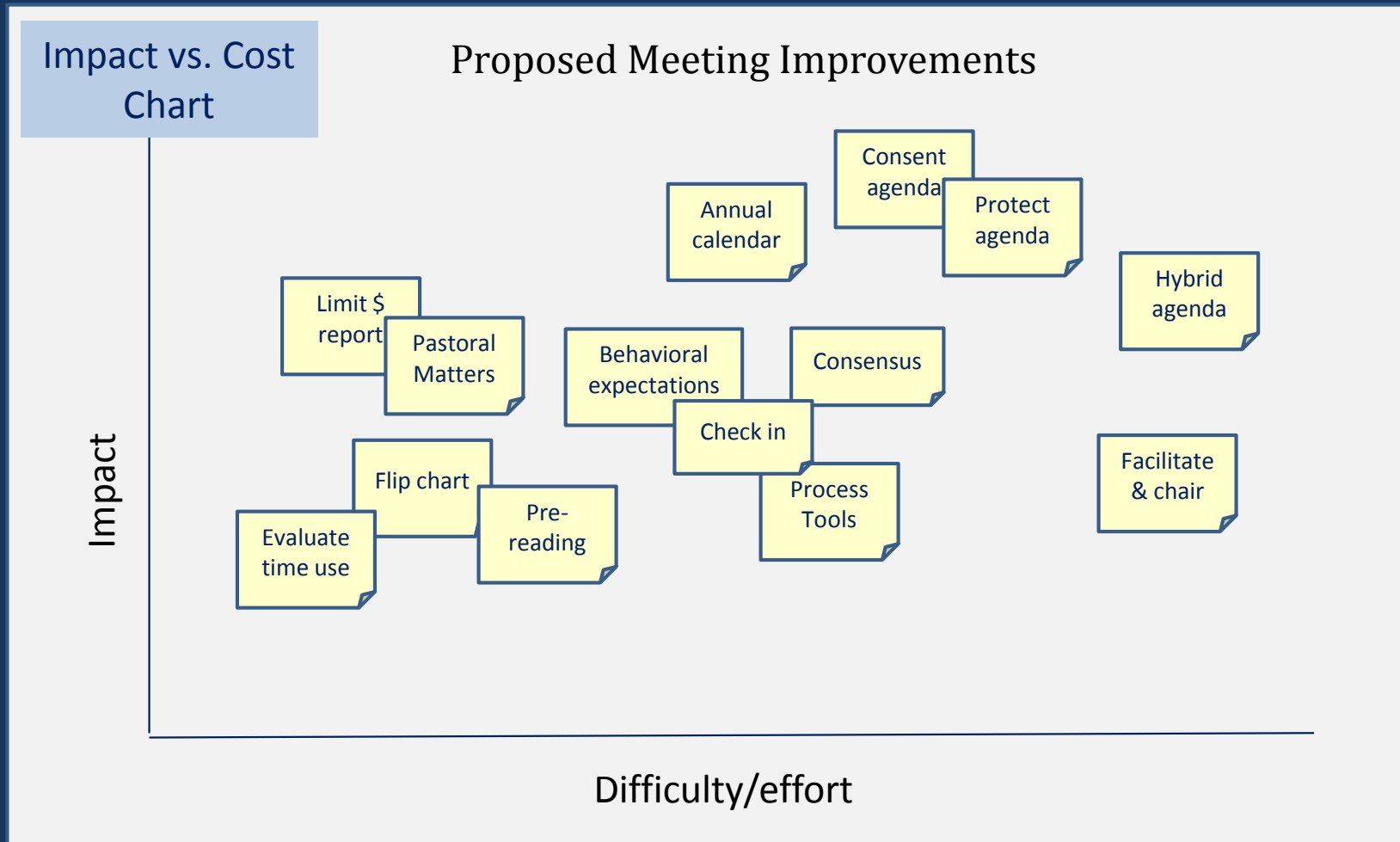
White wall!



Toolbox  
with  
tools



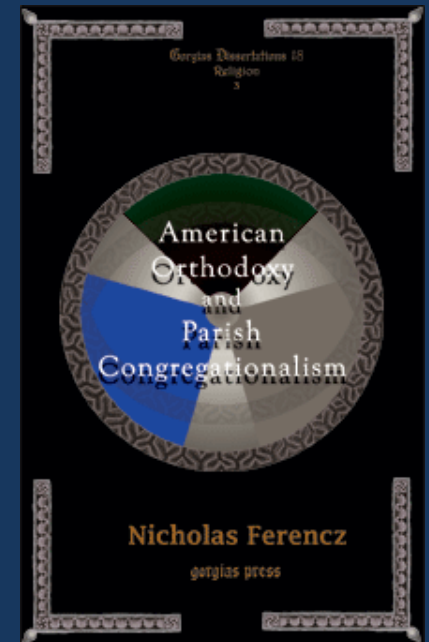
# Process/Decision Tools



# Consensus

# “Sobornost” (Conciliarity)

- All actions flow from Eucharistic Assembly
- Opposed to authoritarianism, individualism, democracy
- Communal harmony
- Liturgy expresses call to consensual praise of God -- *not a call to vote*



# Consensus

A group process of seeking substantial though **not necessarily unanimous** agreement on a significant matter. The group strives to attain a conclusion which **all can support**, even if some still disagree.

# Role of Consensus

## Useful Phrases for Discerning Consensus:

- ▣ Does everyone accept this decision?
- ▣ Is anyone opposed to this decision?
- ▣ Can everyone live with this decision?
- ▣ Can everyone support this decision?

## Consensus: Useful View

"I understand what most of you would like to do. I personally would not do that, but I feel that you understand what my alternative would be. I have had sufficient opportunity to openly share my thoughts and feelings. I feel that I have been listened to, but I clearly have not been able to sway you to my point of view. Therefore, I will support what most of you wish to do."

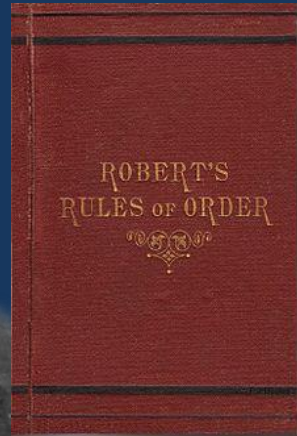
# Premature Consensus

- Common problem
- Keep the conversation going with:
  - “Thank you for that idea. What other options are there? Let’s see if we can identify at least two more before we discuss them.”



# Limit Roberts Rules

- ❑ Lose it –or tone down considerably
- ❑ Often keeps body from expressing itself –getting to desired “center”
- ❑ Stacks odds against interchange



Brig Gen. Henry Robert

# Outline



# Evaluate Meeting

No one step a council can take instills accountability better than periodic evaluation of its own performance.

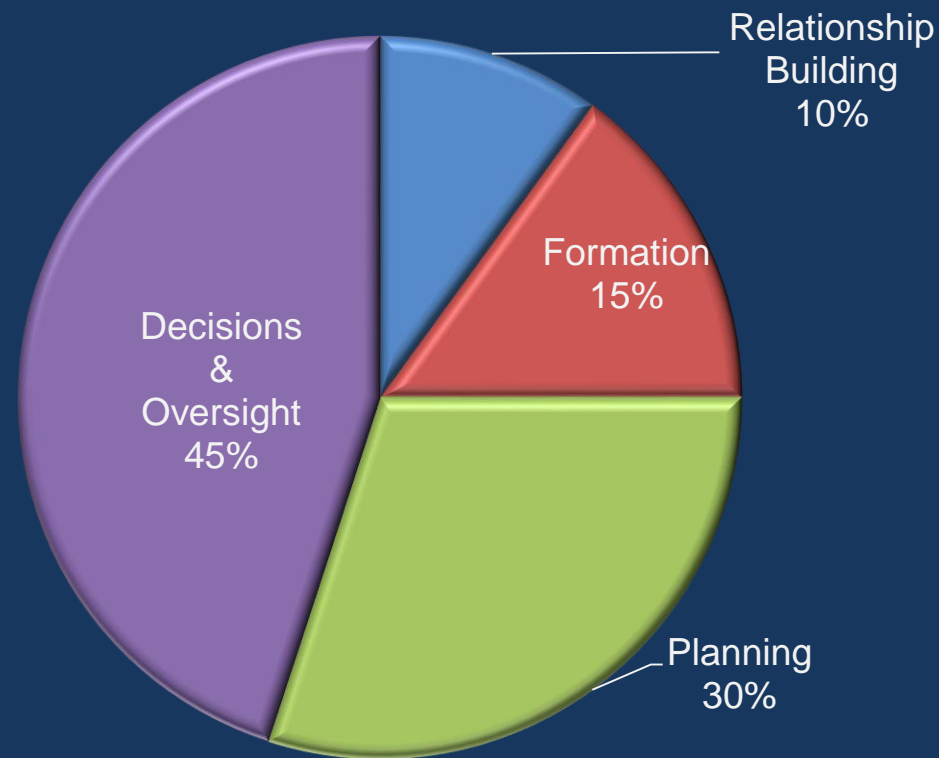
*Dan Hotchkiss, Governance and Ministry*

# Evaluate Meeting

## After Action Review

- What worked? What didn't?
- How can we improve?
- Urgent /important
- Manage vs Govern?
- Isolate one thing – target next meeting; remind at start
- Process improvement goal

## Parish Council Time Allocation ? Actual? Desired?



# Establish Behavioral Norms

- ❑ What is NOT acceptable here
- ❑ Council manual/ orientation

Not  
Participating

Disinterest

Unprepared

Working During Meeting

Interrupting

Disrespect

Share the floor

Late

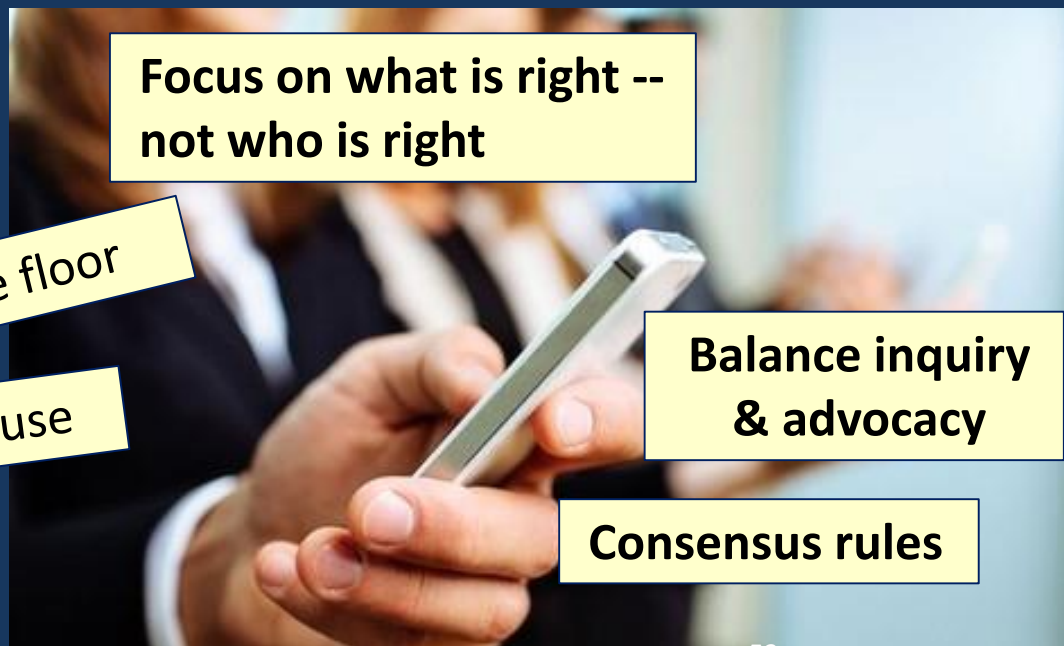
No show/no excuse

Phone/text/email

**Focus on what is right --  
not who is right**

**Balance inquiry  
& advocacy**

**Consensus rules**



# Communicate

- Action Minutes
  - ▣ Soon!
- Parish Summary
  - ▣ Minutes Cryptic; lack “why” ; background; nuance
  - ▣ Discuss occasionally

Me  
“In

1. Theme/ Target Outcome
2. Process Tools
3. Facilities
4. Hybrid agenda
5. Pastoral time
6. Check in
7. Annual calendar
8. Consensus
9. Limit Roberts
10. Post review
11. Communicate to parish

1. Guard agenda
2. Consent agenda
3. No \$ report every month
4. Pre-reading; expect preparedness
5. Evaluate time use in meetings



## Session 4

□ Tuesday February 9, 2016

□ Register:

<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/3451693925085093378>

□ Slides available at

<http://www.ocadwpa.org/webinars.html>

# Session 4 Potential Topics

- ❑ PC Manual
- ❑ Duty of Obedience (Care & Loyalty already covered)
- ❑ Encouraging PC candidates; why reluctant to serve on PC
- ❑ Encourage PC to participate beyond meetings
- ❑ Vision
- ❑ Dialogue - Open questions invite conversation before a decision. Change
- ❑ More on ministry structure council; Ministry leaders vs members at large
- ❑ Clergy laity tension
- ❑ Learning to delegate; Micro managing
- ❑ Strengthen skills discussion
- ❑ Relationships among diverse groups
- ❑ Implementing this stuff

# Final Exam

## "Final Exam" – Ministry of the Parish Council

1) The three most oft cited problems/issues for parish councils as indicated by attendees are:

\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_.

2) The term most often used to describe improper Orthodox parish governance in America is \_\_\_\_\_.

3) The three most significant factors influencing the rise of *congregationalism* in Orthodox parishes were: \_\_\_\_\_.

4) Three important secular influences on Orthodox churches in America were:

1) \_\_\_\_\_, 2) \_\_\_\_\_,  
3) \_\_\_\_\_.

5) Some factors leading to continued *congregationalism* today are:

1) \_\_\_\_\_  
2) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**THE END**

1/13/2016

Thank You for Your Attention