

A photograph of a woman with braided hair, wearing a light blue sleeveless top, smiling as she looks at a computer monitor. She is sitting at a desk with a keyboard and papers. In the foreground, the backs of two other people's heads are visible, suggesting a collaborative meeting environment.

Crafting Effective Vestry Meetings



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October 2011

What's Your Mental Model?

- What do you imagine your vestry's role?
 - Rubber stamp
 - Finance committee
 - Representing values of specific constituencies
 - Unpaid rector's staff
 - Board of directors



What's Your Mental Model?

- Your mental model will both shape your vestry and how its members relate to each other and to your pastoral leader.



What's Your Mental Model?

- The dominant model is the institutional model:
- Church is viewed in terms of
 - Laws
 - Procedures
 - committees



What's Your Mental Model?

- The institutional model is characterized by:
 - Debating and voting
 - Winners and losers
 - In-power and out-of-power

That breeds division in the church and the vestry as majority rule dominates actions and planning



What's Your Mental Model?

- A better model might be vestry as a community of disciples (Acts 6:2)
- Ministry starts by being alone with God
- Community flows from solitude
- Ministry flows from community

“Ministry is not something we do; ministry is the overflow of solitude and community.”

–Henri Nouwen, *Moving from Solitude to Community to Ministry*



What's Your Mental Model?

- Vestry as a Learning Community
 - Shares with rector/vicar oversight of the spiritual and material concerns of the congregation
 - A microcosm of the congregation reflecting what they believe God is calling them to become
 - Continually learning as it expands the mission of the church and better serves the congregation



What's the Focus?

- Money or Mission?

- How is the meeting organized?

- What do we need to do to recover a mission focus?



What's the Focus?

- Administration vs. Spirituality
 - We need a compelling case for blending administrative and spiritual leadership
 - There is more to administrative and managerial responsibilities than establishing goals and meeting deadlines.



What's the Focus?

- Other dimensions of our work include:
 - The emotional
 - Relational
 - Psychological
 - And spiritual

Aspects of working together with others that require a multi-dimensional, holistic approach



What's the Focus?

- Every aspect of leadership is influenced by our spirituality, that is, by our sense of connection to God.



What's the Focus?

- Boards slip into triviality for two reasons:
 - because they don't know how to delegate and
 - because they don't know how else they would spend their time.
 - A third reason is that some people are so used to boards that deal with trivia they don't recognize the problem.

--Dan Hotchkiss, *Governance and Ministry: Rethinking Board leadership*



What's the Focus?

- Effective vestries/bishop's committees have three types of work:
 - **Fiduciary**—tending to the stewardship of tangible assets
 - **Strategic**—working to set the congregation's priorities and seeing that resources are being deployed in accordance with those priorities
 - **Generative**—framing problems and making sense of the shifting environment congregations find themselves in

--Sue Beaumont, *Determining Ideal Board Size*



Planning-When does it begin?

- The last vestry meeting
 - What are the loose ends?
 - Who needs to be contacted in the mean time?
 - What discussion items may be ready for decision
 - What major themes need to be discussed to move mission planning forward?



Planning-Who Is Responsible?

- First and foremost: the Rector/Vicar
 - Pastor is chief architect for aligning vision, mission and strategy of the church
 - Don't confuse servant role of pastoral caregiver with leadership responsibility as captain of the ship of the church



Planning-Who Is Responsible?

- First and foremost: the Rector/Vicar
 - No one else can fulfill this role as captain of the ship of the church
 - Failing to exercise this responsibility invites entropy to set in



Planning-Who Is Responsible?

- Rector/Vicar is not solely responsible for planning
 - Wardens and/or an Executive Committee should share that responsibility
 - Failing to exercise this responsibility invites entropy to set in



Planning-Who Is Responsible?

- Rector/Vicar, Wardens and Executive Committee
 - Plan the agenda for the next vestry meeting
 - Ensure that relevant information is available for discussion and decision



The Agenda

- Sent out so vestry members receive it at least a week before the meeting
- Includes all items to be presented and who will present them with suggested time allocations



The Agenda

- Four key areas
 - Formation
 - Information
 - Discussion
 - Decision



The Agenda

Formation

This is the first priority for a vestry—formation as a community/ learning community



The Agenda

Information

Sharing information that needs no discussion or decision by the vestry: *e.g.*, new members, upcoming events, staff information, administrative matters



The Agenda

Discussion

For those things that require feedback or brainstorming but about which the vestry is not ready to decide.



The Agenda

Discussion

Best practice is to discuss a matter at one meeting before deciding it (voting) at the next.



The Agenda

Decision

Unless it is a slam dunk, only after an issue is discussed at one vestry meeting is it placed on the Decision part of the agenda.



The Agenda

Decision

Best practice is that
Decision part of the
agenda has the fewest
items and takes up the
least amount of time.



The Agenda

The Treasurer's Report

- Treasurer's and other relevant financial reports are sent out with the agenda if they are to be presented at the meeting
- Members are encouraged to discuss their questions on the financials with the Treasurer **BEFORE** the meeting



The Agenda

The Treasurer's Report

- When asking a financial question ask:
 - Is this information for the good of the vestry as a whole, or is it simply based on my need to know or my need for clarification?



The Agenda

Reducing the time spent on financial matters

- Have vestry authorize wardens to spend up to \$1,000 on church–related repairs without prior vestry approval
- Authorize Executive Committee to spend up to \$2000 without prior vestry approval
- Wardens and Executive Committee would keep vestry apprised of expenses in a report during the INFORMATION part of the agenda



Follow Through

Be SMART:

Specific

Measurable

Attainable

Relevant/Realistic

Time-bound



Follow Through

Be SPECIFIC:

- A specific goal will usually answer the five "W" questions:
 - **What:** What do I want to accomplish?
 - **Why:** Specific reasons, purpose or benefits of accomplishing the goal.
 - **Who:** Who is involved?
 - **Where:** Identify a location.
 - **Which:** Identify requirements and constraints



Follow Through

Be MEASURABLE:

- A measurable goal will usually answer questions such as:
 - How much?
 - How many?
 - How will I know when it is accomplished?



Follow Through

Be ATTAINABLE:

- While an attainable goal may stretch a team in order to achieve it, the goal is not extreme. That is, the goals are neither out of reach nor below standard performance, as these may be considered meaningless.
- The theory states that an attainable goal may cause goal-setters to identify previously overlooked opportunities to bring themselves closer to the achievement of their goals.
 - An attainable goal will usually answer the question:
 - **How: How can the goal be accomplished?**



Follow Through

Be RELEVANT/REALISTIC:

- A relevant goal must represent an objective that the goal-setter is willing and able to work towards. This does not mean the goal cannot be high. A goal is probably relevant if the goal-setter believes that it can be accomplished. If the goal-setter has accomplished anything similar in the past they may have identified a relevant goal.
 - A relevant goal will usually answer the question:
 - Does this seem worthwhile?



Follow Through

Be TIME-BOUND:

- A commitment to a deadline helps a team focus their efforts on completion of the goal on or before the due date. This part of the S.M.A.R.T goal criteria is intended to prevent goals from being overtaken by the day-to-day crises that invariably arise in an organization. A time-bound goal is intended to establish a sense of urgency.
- A time-bound goal will usually answer the question:
 - When?
 - What can I do 6 months from now?
 - What can I do 6 weeks from now?
 - What can I do today?



Follow Through

Be SMART-ER:

- E Evaluate
- R Re-evaluate



Follow Through

SWOT:

SWOT ANALYSIS

