

**"We must stop  
meeting like this!"**

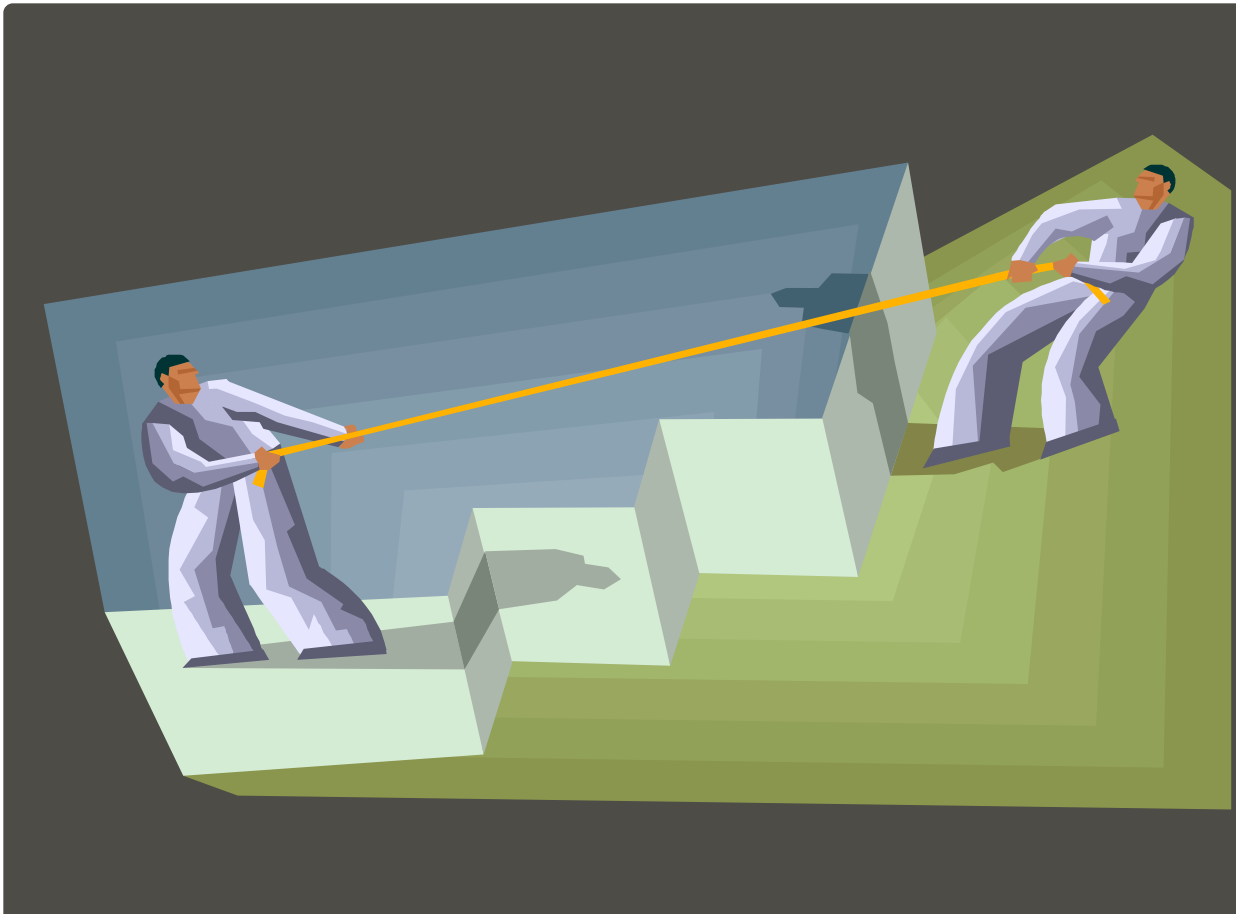
**Making Meetings Matter**

Kenneth J. Kovach, *Facilitator*



People first began meeting in this forum around 500 BC. Public meeting, particular religious ceremonies, legal and political management of the city and shopping was carried on in the Forum. The "Via Sacra" road ran through the forum and apparently the traffic was as busy as central Rome is today.

The Roman Forum: The “good old days” of civility and good order!



Parish community meetings – Council, committees, etc. – have been places for challenging situations.

Misunderstandings, frustrations, unclear communications, open conflicts, anger towards others may result when the leader loses control as well as when the leader fails to plan ahead.

**Tension is good . . .** for a rubber band, however, in a meeting it could result in disaster for all.

- 25%-75% of managers' and professionals' time is spent in meetings.
- More than 33% of time spent in meetings is *unproductive*.
- The cost to businesses of this time is an estimated \$37 billion a year.
- What is the human cost of these unproductive meetings?
- Although 75% say it is "almost essential" to have an agenda, they use an agenda only 50% of the time.
- Only 64% of meetings achieve their intended outcome.

## Meeting Facts

# Shared Ministry: *Priest & Parish Council*

51

“The most basic task of the Church leader is to discern the spiritual gifts of all those under his authority, and to encourage those gifts to be used to the full for the benefit of all.”

~ Saint John Chrysostom ~



- Understand different types of meeting – when to use them.
- Understand the basics of meeting management – how to align the 3 P's:
  - Purpose
  - People
  - Process
- Understand the physical “stuff” to support effective meetings.
- Explore the dynamics of “good, bad, and ugly” meetings.
- Learn rescue tactics for meetings going bad.

## Session Objectives

- **Consensus** occurs when the Parish Council agrees upon a decision, strategy, or plan of action that all council members can live with, and can support for the good of the church.
- **Consensus** is often incorrectly assumed to imply complete agreement, but is rather the ability to support a given decision.

**Consensus – “Sobornost”**

## 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?



## Role of Consensus



# **Benefits of Making Decisions by Consensus:**

- Greater sense of parish unity
- Improved morale and parish culture
- Increased productivity and quality of work
- Reduced cost in terms of time and resources

## **Role of Consensus**

- Meetings of our parish organizations are not as productive as they could be because:

(1) The purpose of the meeting is often unclear.

(2) There is no agenda or organized format.

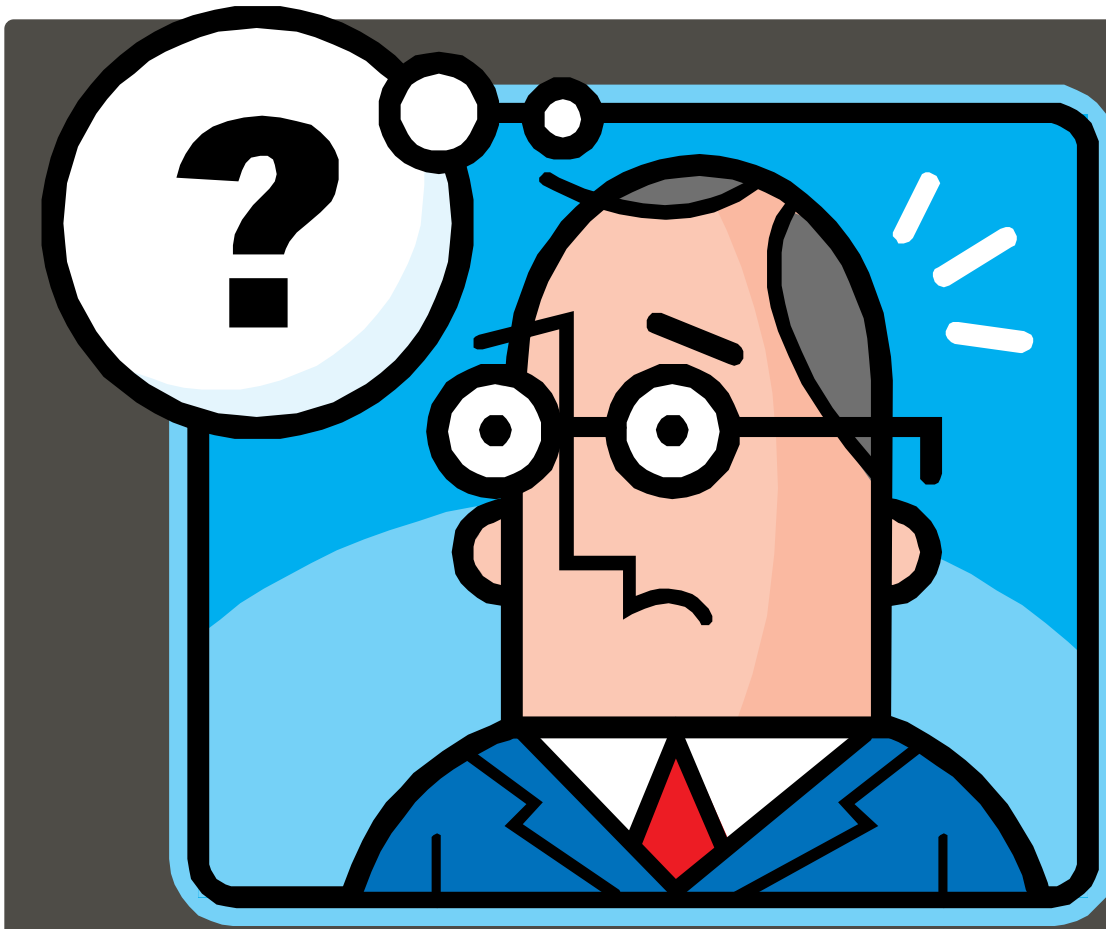
(3) The leader tries to accomplish too much.

(4) The meeting starts late.

## Participant Poll

- Do you need a meeting? Will another venue work instead?
- Do you have a clear ***meeting objective?***
  - What do you hope to accomplish by holding the meeting?
- Who should / will participate?
  - Whose input is needed?
  - Who is needed to make a decision?
  - Whose “buy-in” is needed to move forward?

## Pre-Meeting Planning



Effective meetings  
produce results  
and begin with  
meeting planning.

What do you hope  
to accomplish?

*"Begin with the  
end in mind."*

*Stephen Covey*

Is a meeting the  
appropriate vehicle  
for accomplishing  
the outcomes you  
expect?

# Why have a meeting?

- To solve a problem.
- To make a decision.
- To develop a plan.
- To generate ideas.
- To gather or convey information.
- To get a response to information.

**Why have a meeting?**

- The purpose is clear to all attendees.
- All who are needed are attending and **only** those who are needed are attending.
- Participants are prepared.
- Time is used effectively.
- Participants are committed.
- The main goal is achieving the objectives—not meeting for the sake of meeting.
- The outcome should justify the investment of time and resources.
- Actions, responsibilities and a mechanism for review (evaluation) are clear.

## Criteria for an Effective Meeting

- Preparation depends on the circulation in good time of an agenda for the meeting.
- The meeting notice should provide information about
  - Date, time, place, and intended duration
  - People attending and their roles/responsibilities
  - Purpose(s)
  - Preliminary documentation, information, etc.
  - The procedure for adding any items to the agenda.

## Preparation

- Prepare the agenda in advance.
- State the purpose of the meeting.
- Assign realistic time frames to each agenda item.
- Organize items to be discussed in order of their *importance* to most participants – starting with top-priority topics.

**Create a Solid Agenda**



- Describe each item to be discussed, why it must be addressed, and if any *action* is required on the item.
- Send the agenda to the participants in advance.
- Send any pre-work (reading materials, charts, graphs, etc.) in advance of the meeting.

**Create a Solid Agenda**

- Start and end meetings on time!
  - Don't repeat what was already covered if people arrive late.
- Hold one conversation at a time.
- Honor points of view that are different than yours.
- Don't interrupt.
- Speak openly and honestly.

**Establish Ground Rules**

- Stay on topic; don't lose your focus.
- Wrap-up meetings with a clear statement of the next steps: what are your action steps?
- Review who is responsible for each action item.

**Establish Ground Rules  
(continued)**

- **Meeting Note Taker:**

- Someone other than the meeting chair.
- Send minutes to all invitees with a few (2 or 3) days of the meeting.
- Include all decisions, action items, identify each person responsible for completing action items, and state the due date for each action item.

- **Meeting Chair:**

- Follow-up with each person who has an action item mid-way between meetings.
- Establish “accountability for results” where each person is held responsible for completing their assigned tasks by the due date.
- Report on progress and outcomes at the next meeting and expect results.

## Meeting Mechanics

- **Meeting Participants:**

- Arrive on time and come prepared.
- Help keep meetings focused and on topic.
- Avoid side conversations.
- Don't let the meeting run later than planned.



**Meeting Mechanics - continued**

- Prepare for each meeting in advance.
- Create a solid agenda.
- Establish ground rules early.
- Expect accountability, come prepared.
- Follow-up meeting meetings.
- Assign responsibility for note taking.
- Send meeting notes with a few days of the meeting.

## **Meeting Mechanics - SUMMARY**



# The Basics of Meeting Management



Purpose

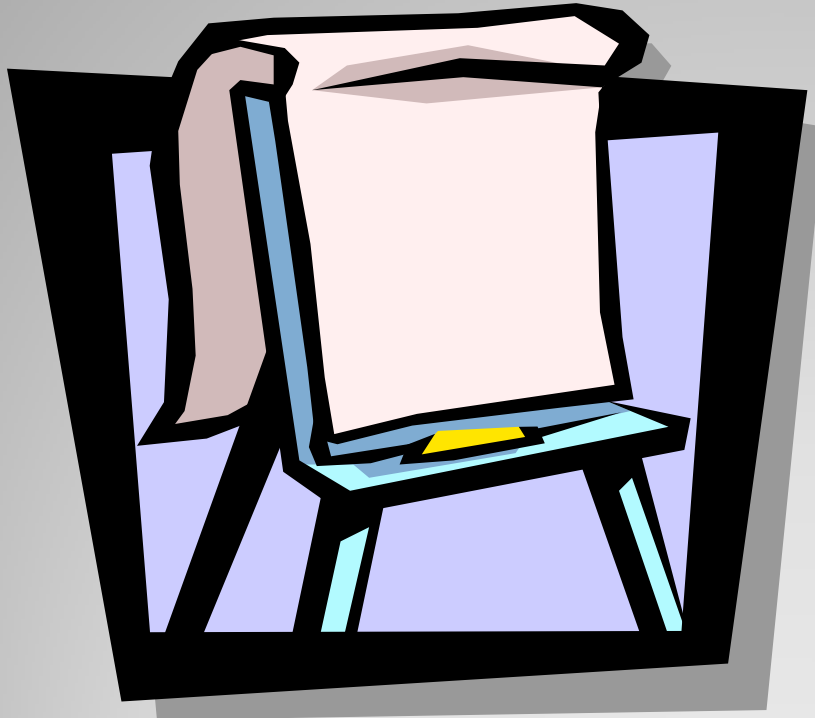
People

Process

**How to Align the 3 P's**

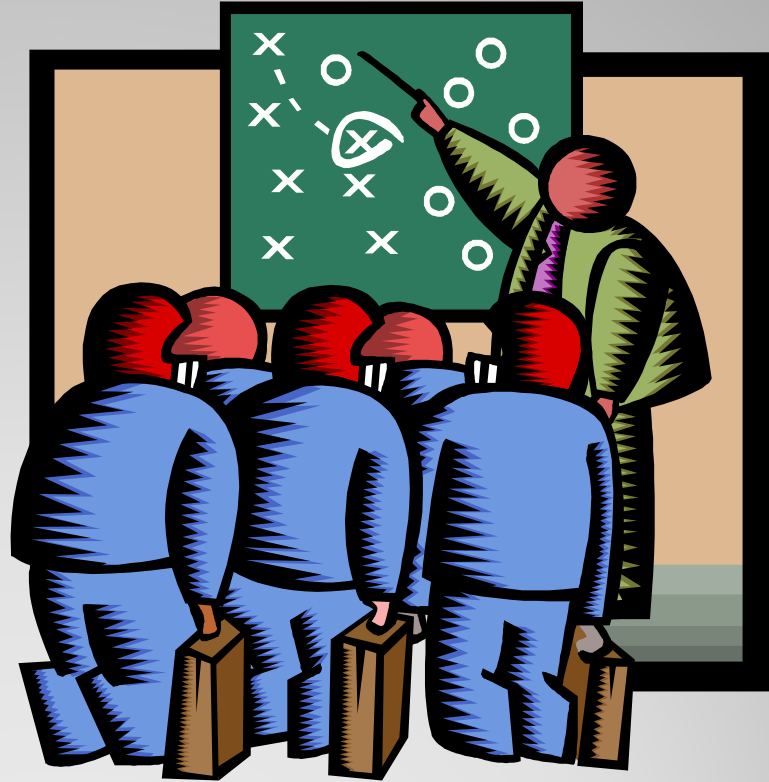


- The “flip chart” is your primary visual aid!



**The “Stuff” needed for Productive Meetings**

- The “agenda” is your game plan.



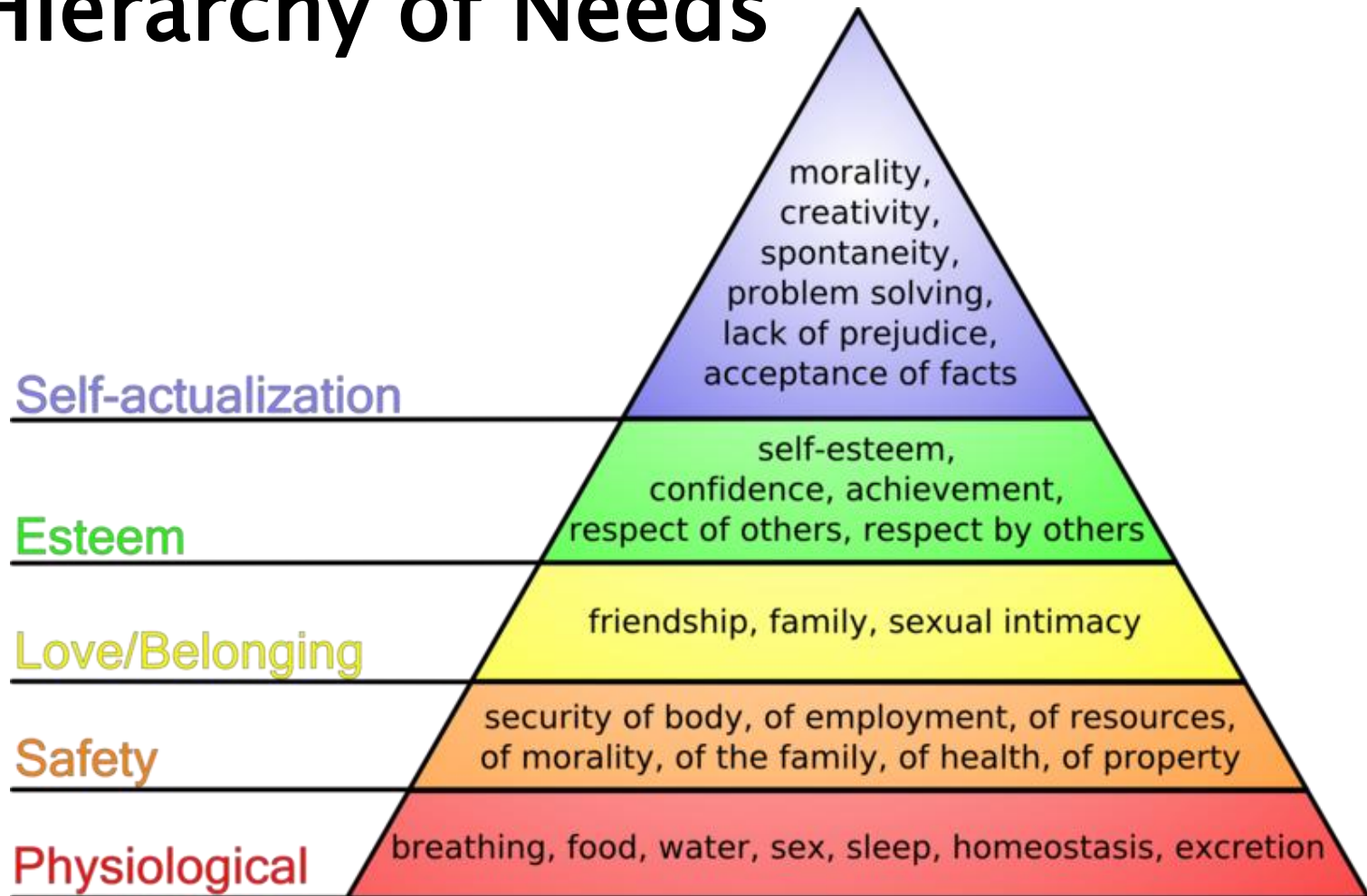
**The “Stuff” needed for Productive Meetings**

- The “meeting room” is your home base.



**The “Stuff” needed for Productive Meetings**

# Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs



- When you think about some of the past meetings either you conducted or were a participant in, what was really “bad” or “ugly?”

(1) The meeting broke up because those who were supposed to make reports – provide information - didn’t show up.

(2) Several people walked out because they were insulted by what was going on?

**Participant Poll: “The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly” of Meetings**

- When you think about some of the past meetings either you conducted or were a participant in, what was really “bad” or “ugly?”

(3) The meeting chair gave a “tongue lashing” to the participants for their lack of civility.

(4) The agenda was loaded with everything but the “kitchen sink” and everyone somewhere else to get to following the meeting.

**Participant Poll: “The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly” of Meetings**

- **Dealing with Competing Conversations**

- **Use non-verbal communication**

- Look steadily at the participants for a moment.
    - Raise your eyebrows while looking or wave to the participants.
    - Stop the person who has the floor.

- **Ask a question.**

- Call on one of the group members participating in the competing conversation.
    - With a brief summary of the discussion occurring in the meeting as a whole, ask for her / his opinion.
    - Ask her/him to share her/his ideas with the rest of the people in the meeting.

**Rescue Tactics for Meetings  
"Going Bad"**

- **Dealing with Competing Conversations**

- **Verbally intervene.**

- Directly ask the group members participating in the competing conversation to rejoin the group discussion, without using sarcasm or anger.
    - Say: "I'm afraid we're missing good ideas when everyone is talking at once."

- **Establish a group signal.**

- The group signal reminds participants to hold one discussion at a time.
  - One signal that works effectively is to make a non-verbal **time out** sign followed by holding up one index finger to indicate **one meeting at a time.**

**Rescue Tactics for Meetings  
"Going Bad"**



- **Creating Group Norms**

- **Group members as coworkers.**

- All group members are equal.
    - Every group member's opinion will be thoughtfully considered.
    - Each group member will keep all commitments.
    - Each group member agrees to constantly assess whether group members are honoring their commitment to group norms.

- **Group member communication.**

- Group members will speak respectfully to each other; will not talk down to each other; will positively recognize and thank each other for group contributions.

- **Group member interaction in meetings.**

- Group members will listen without interrupting; hold no side or competing conversations; follow the ground rules set by the group at the beginning.

## **Rescue Tactics for Meetings "Going Bad"**

- **Creating Group Norms**

- **Group problem solving, conflict resolution, and decision making.**
  - Group members will make decisions by **consensus**, but majority will rule if timely consensus is not reached.
  - Conflicts will be resolved directly with the persons in conflict.

- **Group norms** can encompass as many topics as the group deems necessary for successful functioning.
  - Start with a few group norms and add more norms as needed.
  - Make sure the group norms are written and posted where group members are reminded of their commitment.

**Rescue Tactics for Meetings  
“Going Bad”**

- (1) Selecting participants.
- (2) Developing agendas.
- (3) Opening meetings.
- (4) Establishing ground rules for meetings.
- (5) Time management.
- (6) Evaluations of meeting process.
- (7) Evaluating the overall meeting.
- (8) Closing meetings.

## **SUMMARY: Basic Guide to Conducting Effective Meetings**

- **Divergent Thinking Tools**

Tips for  
Improving  
Creativity



**Session Three – coming up!**