

# Dialogue and Discussion

Father Stephen Frase

# Meeting about our

## meetings:

The art of facilitating  
*dialogue* and  
*discussion*

(those terms do not mean  
the same thing)

### 2018 Small Parish Forum

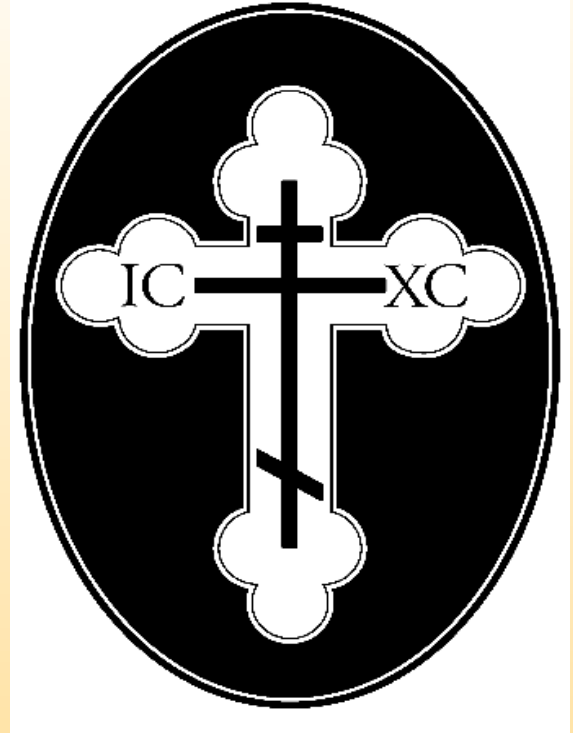
Fr. Stephen Frase

Associate Priest, St. Gregory of Nyssa;

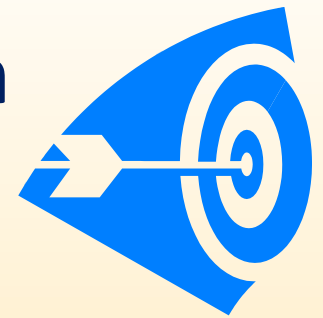
Priest-in-Charge,

St. Ephraim the Syrian Chapel, Athens, OH

[frstephenfrase@yahoo.com](mailto:frstephenfrase@yahoo.com)



# What do we hope to accomplish today?



**By the end of this learning opportunity, I can:**

- **Identify common meeting frustrations / struggles**
- **Describe important decisions parish ministry groups may be charged to form**
- **Contrast being an “adaptive” vs. merely an “adapted” parish**
- **Distinguish between the ways of talking known as *dialogue* and *discussion***
- ***Intentionally* engage in the two ways of talking**
- **Analyze positive outcomes of intentionally employing both ways of talking**
- **Take the skills acquired and have a plan for incorporating them into future ministry meetings**

# **Why do we sometimes *despise* meetings? Why do we sometimes enjoy meetings?**

- **At your table with 4 to 6 other people:**
  - Each person think of a “bad” meeting (at work, church, etc.). Why was it bad?
  - Then, think of a “good” meeting. Why was it good?
  - Each person shares without anyone else commenting, adding to, etc.
  - With the same group of people, agree on the top 1-2 causes of both bad meetings and good meetings.

# *Every Meeting Ever*



# **Important decisions ministry groups oftentimes need to form:**

**Lets brainstorm some important decisions  
parish council and other ministry groups face or  
may face.**

# Meeting about our meetings:

- If meetings are so important, then why do we invest so little time learning and working toward producing positive and productive meetings?
- When we invest the time to meet about our meetings, we are being *adaptive vs. adapted*.
  - What is the difference between these terms?
  - *Adapted* – The group / organization he become specialized to fit specific conditions within tightly defined boundaries (examples Blockbuster video; a parish organized to serve a particular ethnic group)
  - *Adaptive* – The group / organization is able to change form in concert with clarifying identity

# Meeting about our meetings:

- There are many ways groups can work toward improving their meetings and becoming a more adaptive entity.
- One of the more simple changes is to be *intentional* regarding *how* we speak with each other during meetings.



# 2 ways of speaking with each other during our meetings: *Dialogue* and *Discussion*

- **Dialogue**

- Greek for “Making meaning through words”
- Goal is *understanding*



- **Discussion**

- Latin for “To shake apart”
- Goal is to *form a decision*

# Let us practice!

- **Important discussion topic:**
  - **What type of candy will your group choose?**



# Let us reflect

(because we don't learn from experience, but we learn from *processing* our experience)

- What are the advantages to *intentionally* distinguishing between dialogue and discussion?



# As we conclude this session:

Keep in mind the following attitudes when working with your group:

- Be loving
- Be forgiving
- Be patient
- Be principled – principles are rules with *soft* edges
- Be intentional
- Be relentless



**What questions do  
you have?**



**Thank you for the  
opportunity to learn with  
you today and may your  
parish family have a joyous  
time as you continually  
improve together for God's  
glory!**

# Information for this session regarding dialogue and discussion is from

- Garmston, R.J. & Wellman, B.M. (2009). *The Adaptive School: A Sourcebook for Developing Collaborative Groups*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Norwood, Massachusetts: Christopher-Gordon Publishers, Inc.

# More learning opportunities:

- ***The Five Dysfunctions of a Team* by Patrick Lencioni**
- ***Crucial Conversations* by Kerry Patterson, Joseph Grenny, Ron McMillan, and Al Switzler**
- **<http://www.thinkingcollaborative.com/>**