

BUILDING VIBRANT PARISHES

Webinar SERIES



MINISTRY OF THE PARISH COUNCIL

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

11/2/2015

Session One: November 2, 2015

Principles of Orthodox Parish Governance

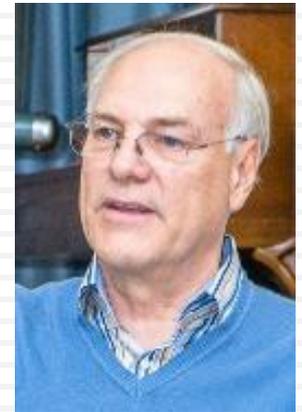
Presenter

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Joseph Kormos

Parish Development Ministry Leader, Archdiocese of Western PA

- Seven Years Orthodox Parish Development and Renewal
 - ▣ Visited 83 Orthodox parishes
 - ▣ Over 25 multi-parish workshops & webinars
- Christ the Savior – Holy Spirit Orthodox Church, OCA Cincinnati, OH
 - ▣ Numerous positions



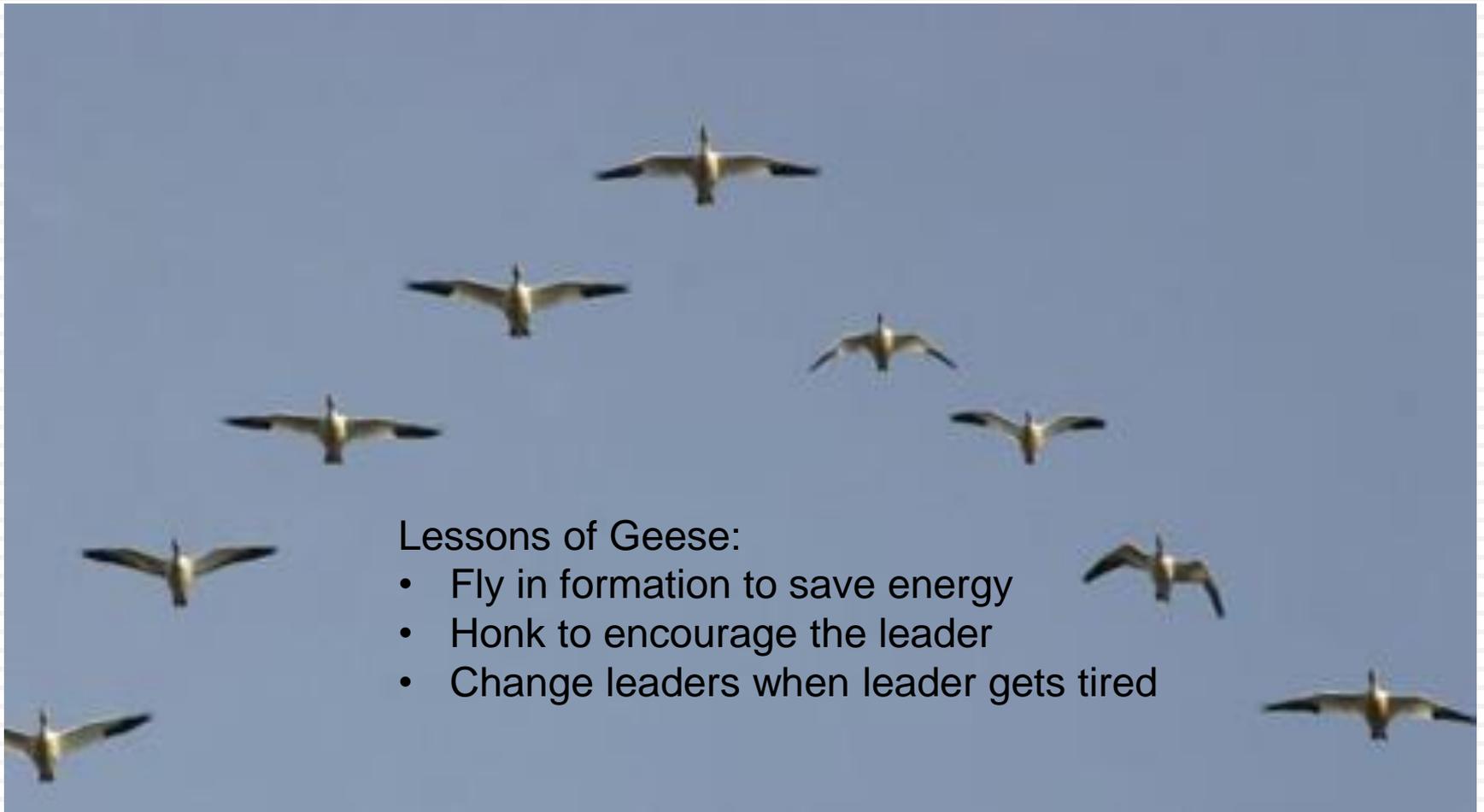
Why This Topic: Critical Time

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- Parishes are facing great difficulties - \$, membership, commitment, cultural
- “Christianity” & “Church” are now negative terms
- Soccer ... et al
- Transparency (financial, vision, direction, priorities etc.) is expected/needed
- Priests, bishops can't do it alone.
- We need to “fly in formation”

Flying in Formation

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Lessons of Geese:

- Fly in formation to save energy
- Honk to encourage the leader
- Change leaders when leader gets tired

Series Goal

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Provide a Foundation for Better Parish Councils
Based on Proper Orthodox Doctrine – *not conventional mythology*

From

- Parish fire department – day to day
- Focusing on bills, budgets, buildings
- Wrestling for power & control



To

- a shared leadership body...
co-responsible to with the priest to...
- discover possibilities
 - discern priorities
 - drive change,
 - prepare the parish for vital ministry
 - ...and a ***brighter future***

What If...

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- Parish Councils were...
 - ▣ A center of *inspirational* parish leadership
 - ▣ Recognized by all as *exemplary* parish stewards.
 - ▣ Actively moving the parish to *face forward* to a brighter future
- An atmosphere of *trust, hope & collaboration* existed between priest and council.
- Council members *grew & deepened* their faith.
- Energized with a new vitality... meetings seemed *shorter* than they actually are!
- The parish's best people see value & honor in serving on council.

Sources

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Webinar Series

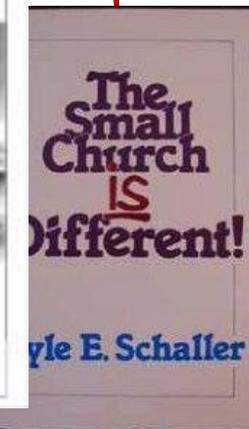
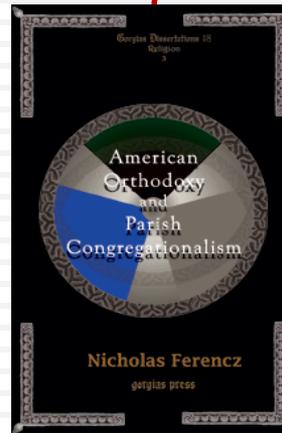
Parish Council Training Greek
Orthodox Archdiocese &
Antiochian Archdiocese

OCA Docs

- OCA statute
- Oath of office
- Metropolitan Council docs

Leader Day 2014
Archdiocese of Western PA,
OCA

Attendee
Inputs



Session Outline

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Session 1

Principles of Orthodox Ecclesiology; Secular influences; PC Purpose/Role; Authority & Responsibility

Session 2

Healthy Habits & Practices (\$ & other) of Good Parish Councils; Expectations & Roles of PC members; Structure; Link to ministry; Policies; Committees

Session 3

Improving Parish Council Meetings; Roberts Rules; Consensus

Session 4 (*if necessary*)

Unfinished topics; Exploring Typical PC/Leadership Issues

Not

- Stewardship techniques
- Charitable Projects
- Growth & Evangelization
- Education
- Vision
- Interparish collaboration
- Facilities maintenance
- Change

But rather PC as an **engine** for these topics...

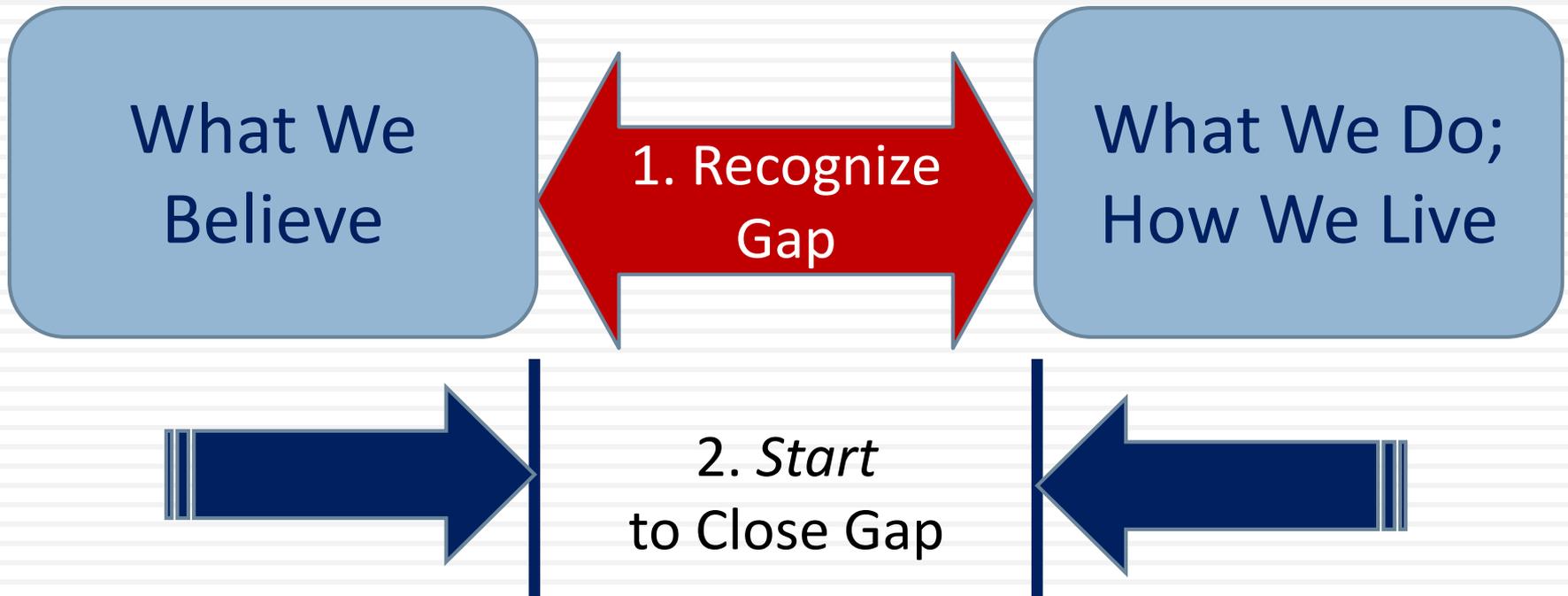
Questions

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- Where/how did you learn about the Parish Council? What it does? Proper behavior? Ground rules?
- Has your parish council made a meaningful improvement to its practices recently?
- What are the 2-3 most important things your parish does? How often do you talk about those things?

Core Problem -Gap

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Target Takeaways

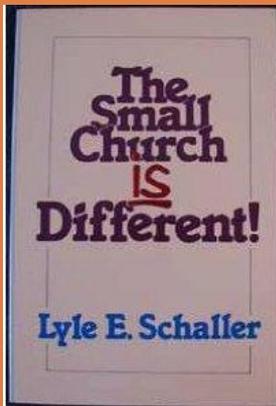
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1. Discuss what was learned at this session at your next council meeting.
2. Two functional improvements to your parish council by ____.
3. Commit to “covenant”

Consider special webinar for your Council?
Use this series as training/certification for
council members

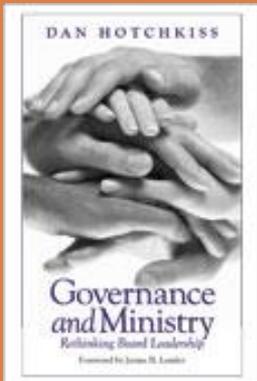
Style and Roles Vary by Parish Size

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“In the typical long established small church the parish council often functions as a **committee of the whole** and focuses on details not policy.”

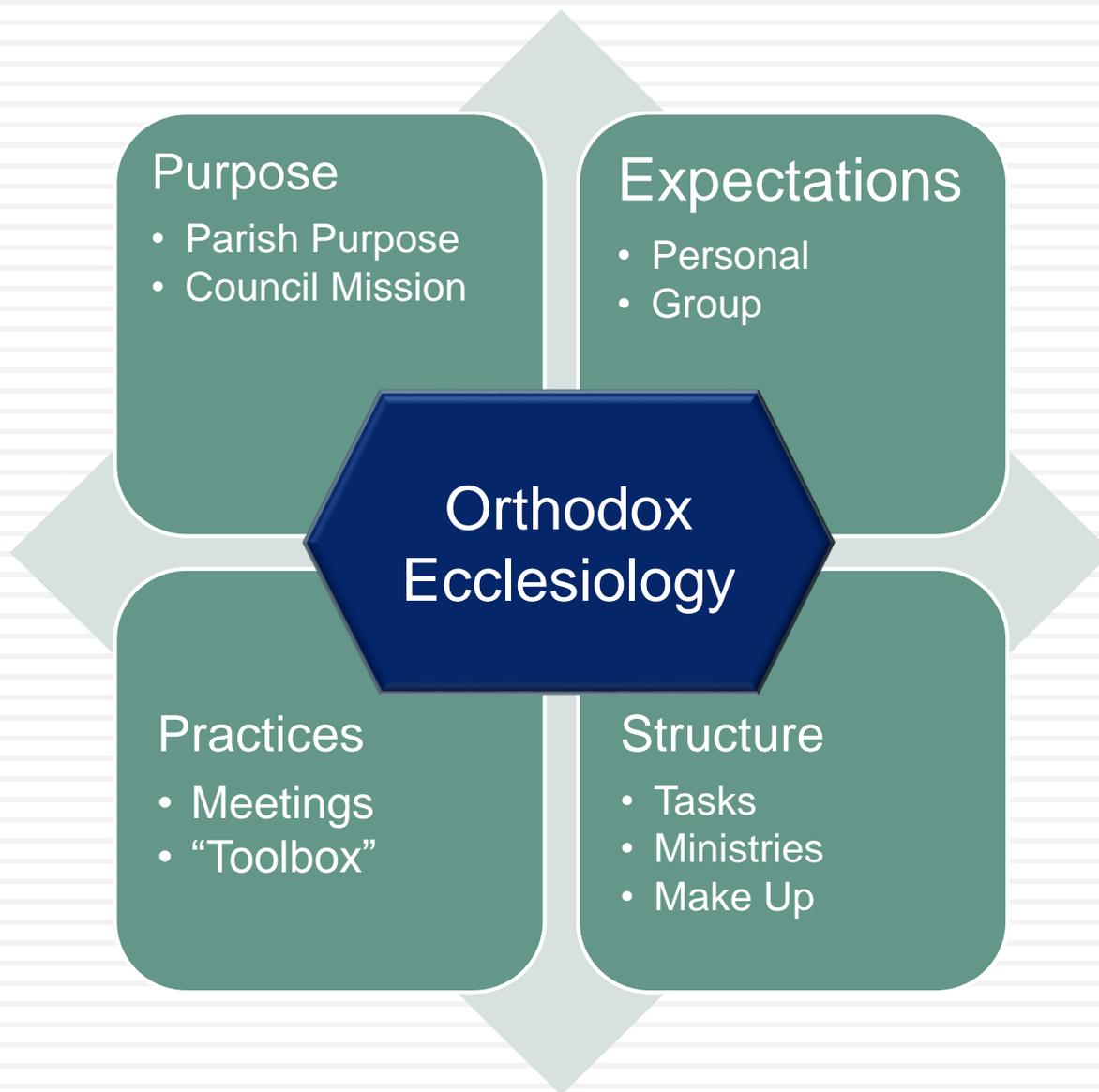
The Small Church is Different
Lyle E Schaller



As a parish grows they need a council that can rise above day to day and think about the bigger picture – not just annually but all the time.

Governance and Ministry – Rethinking Board Leadership
Dan Hotchkiss

Parish Leadership Framework



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Orthodox Ecclesiology

Key Principles Guiding Orthodox Parish Governance

How Did We Get This Way?

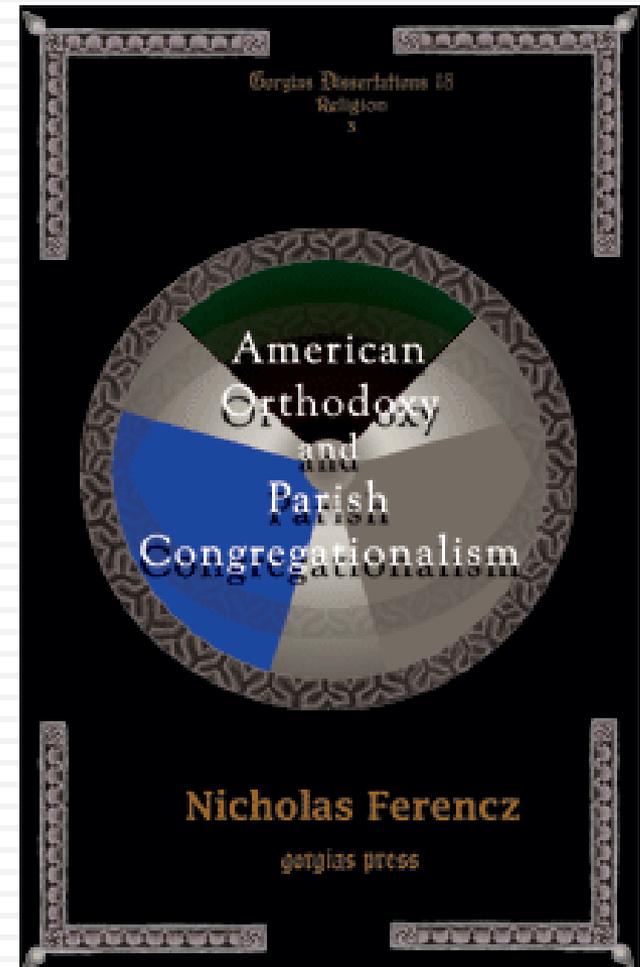
Source

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Much of the material in this section of this presentation was derived from the book:

American Orthodoxy and Parish Congregationalism

by Fr. Nicholas Ferencz



Orthodox Ecclesiology

Governance is an Extension of Eucharistic Assembly

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- Fulfillment of church
- Paradigm for all activities in the church
- Christ centered – not just a group gathered for common purpose
- Requires clergy and laity – “Amen”
- Liturgical “president” also presides in all areas of parish life.
- Active lay participation

Orthodox Ecclesiology

Four Principles

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1. Bishop is source of authority, fullness & unity. Authority flows from Bishop to Priest

2. Clergy and Laity collaborate
Share responsibilities...both “need each other” Both are *laos*: “people of god”



4. Conciliarity

- Consensual unanimity at Eucharistic gathering applies outside the liturgy. (“*let us love one another that with one mind..*”) Harmony & unity
- Opposed to authoritarianism, individualism or democracy

3. No separation of spiritual & material

Past Influences on Orthodox Congregationalism in America

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Toth Movement

Disrespect of Clergy/Hierarchy

Large distances; small numbers

Lack of hierarchical presence

Bldg ownership by societies

Lack of hierarchical leadership

Legal requirements for property ownership

Disconnect: Russian seminary training; inherited piety

Disconnect from Diocese

Brotherhoods/ Societies

Ethnicism

Nationalism

Protestant influence

Communism/ turmoil

Competing Jurisdictions

American freedom of choice; sense of democracy

Active role/ founding by laity

Congregationalism in American Orthodoxy

Key Factors & Impact

Category	Factors	Outcomes
Leadership Vacuum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bishops or priests not present/ inaccessible • Temporary assignments • Poor leadership skill • Distance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Laity saw themselves as founders/ “owners “of the parish; “our parish” • “Board” focused on buildings; bills; budgets • Saw priest as employee; hired spiritual specialist; isolated laity from spiritual role
Orthodox Turmoil	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Toth Schism movement • Jurisdictional competition • Nationalism • Ethnic differences • Communism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced the authority and leadership of clergy • Confirmed existing/new parishes in congregational structure • Distrust of clergy; other ethnic groups (outsiders) • Inward focus >> Disconnected from Diocese • Sense of parish autonomy; diocesan responsibility optional; loyalty to our parish; sovereignty
American & Secular Influences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lay Societies <i>Dual leadership structure: Owned church buildings; de facto authority for “material” issues;</i> • Protestant influence <i>“Boards”; hiring pastor</i> • Required property ownership • American freedom of choice; democracy; separation of powers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Ours” vs. “Stewards” • Legalities, “Membership”, Voting, Motions, Dues, Entitlement, Ownership, “Club” • Isolation of laity/lay leaders from spiritual roles • Disassociation of parish council from parish ministries

Congregationalism in American Orthodoxy

Key Factors & Impact

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Orthodox
Ecclesiology

- Eucharistic model
- Authority lies with Bishop
- Material AND spiritual
- Clergy AND Laity both people of God; distinct yet equal
- “Sobornost” – harmony & unity

...deviated in
American practice
due to...

- *Leadership vacuum*
Bishop accessibility
Temporary assign'ts
Leadership skill
Distance
- *Orthodox turmoil*
Toth Schism
Jurisdictionalism
Nationalism/ Ethnicity,
Communism
- *Secular influences*
Lay Societies: de facto
authority
Protestant influences
("Boards"; hiring)
Property ownership
American democracy;
freedom of choice
separation of powers

...leading to...

- Laity needing to play a strong leadership role – “our parish”
- Sense of ownership not stewardship
- Retain control of our destiny
- Disconnect from Diocese
- Distrust/ vilification of clergy

And often
resulting in...

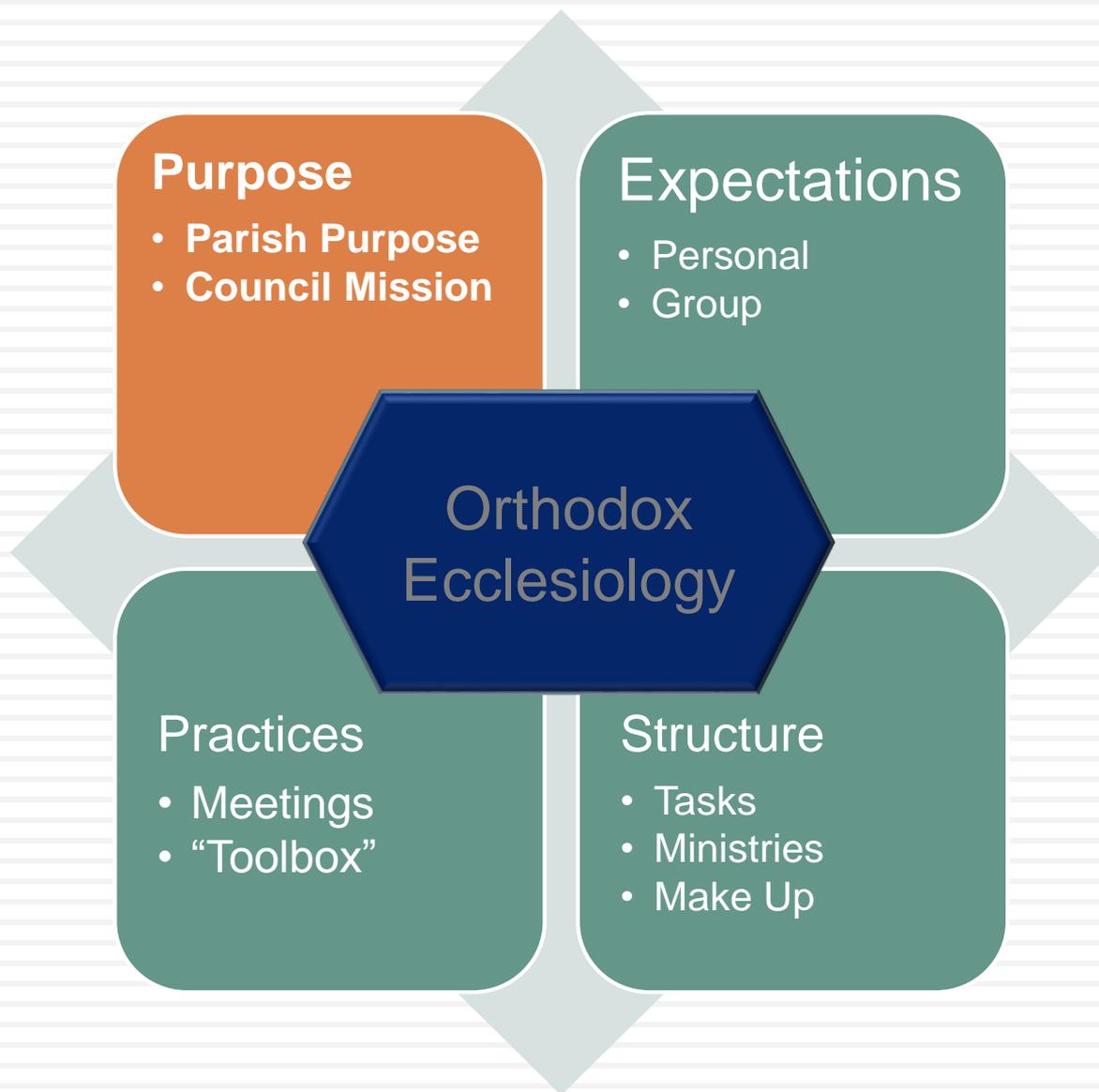
- Congregationalism**
- Parish exists for “us”/ by us
 - Separation of spiritual & material
 - Priest is employee
 - Parish “board” concerned with buildings; budgets
 - Parish autonomy; independence from diocese
 - Attitude - Legalities, Membership, Voting, Motions, Dues, Entitlement, Ownership
 - Primary loyalty/ responsibility to the “corporation”

Current Factors Fostering *Congregationalism*

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- ❑ Lack of consistent diocesan policies (compensation)
- ❑ Poorly run dioceses/central church
- ❑ Standards & policies treated as *optional*
- ❑ Impaired leadership & “governance maturity”
 - ❑ Hierarchs, clergy & laity
- ❑ Clergy appointment process treated as a hiring process
- ❑ Bottom up mission planting
- ❑ Internet – all have right to express an opinion -- informed or not -- and do so!
- ❑ Property ownership laws

Parish Leadership Framework



The Parish

Old OCA Statute

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“The parish is a local community of the Church having at its head a duly appointed priest and consisting of Orthodox Christians who live in accordance with the teachings of the Orthodox Church, comply with the discipline and rules of the Church, and regularly support their parish. Being subordinate to the Diocesan Authority, it is a component part of the Diocese.”

The Parish

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Parishes are constituent parts of the Diocese

- As a community, members are committed to promote the Gospel as preached and lived by the Holy Orthodox Church.
- Both Parish and Diocese need to express the *fullness* of the Church
 - ▣ One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic
 - ▣ Do work of Christ in the World
- Parish is exclusively under the jurisdiction and authority of the Bishop.
 - ▣ Parish receives its mandate and prerogative to exist from the Bishop
 - ▣ In practicality the Bishop delegates authority to his priest.
- For civil administrative purposes alone, it is chartered/ incorporated as a not-for-profit religious association within the State of ____.

Who 'Owns' the Parish?

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In a sense...

the “owner” of a parish is its mission – the small piece of God’s will that belongs to it.

Parish Council bears the responsibility and the opportunity to move the mission & parish life into the future.



Forever → making choices on behalf
of his great, great grandchildren

Mission?

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- What good the parish means to do
- Whom it hopes to benefit & how
- What it claims as its central principles or values

A Typical Mission Statement

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The mission of _____ Orthodox Church is to proclaim and live out the gospel of our Lord, God and Savior Jesus Christ as it has been handed down to us since apostolic times. We call all people of the _____ area to Christ through the Holy Orthodox Church.

We accomplish this by:

- ❑ Worshiping as a community in the fullness of joy and truth.
- ❑ Uniting ourselves with Christ through sacramental life.
- ❑ Expressing the love of Christ to all through our lives.
- ❑ Sharing this joy with those around us.
- ❑ Educating people about the Truth and Presence of Orthodoxy.
- ❑ Offering the Love of Christ to those in need, both in word and action.

Parish Council



Parish Council

A Shared Leadership Body

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The Parish Council is co-responsible with the rector for the health & vibrancy of the parish. Working together they drive & inspire growth, change & development to fulfill the parish's total mission as a Christian community.

Practical Ramifications

- ❑ Stands in the stead of the parish community
- ❑ “Parish Council” – not “Board of Trustees”
- ❑ Parish Council is NOT solely involved with the material/ “temporal”
- ❑ Priest is NOT solely involved with “spiritual”
- ❑ Led by the priest -- collaboratively
 - Presides over Parish Council; fully participates in decisions; has final approval of decisions
 - Priest runs parish council & parish meetings unless he chooses to turn chair over to an appropriate leader.
- ❑ Consensus, whenever possible, is the desired approach to decision making.

Parish Council Oath of Office

I, (*NAME*), having been elected a member of the Parish Council of the parish of _____, in the city of _____, Orthodox Church in America, Diocese of _____, hereby solemnly swear and promise to the Almighty God before His Holy Gospel and the Life-Giving Cross, that I will **zealously, honestly, voluntarily, with diligence, and fear of God**, fulfill the duties of my office, according to the requirements of the Statute of the Orthodox Church in America, the By-Laws of our Parish, and the Sacred Canons of our Holy Orthodox Church, upholding not my personal interests, but the glory of God, the welfare of the Holy Church, and the salvation of my soul, remembering that for all this **I will have to give an answer before my Lord and God at His last fearful judgment**. I promise that I will uphold the pursuit of peace, tranquility, and brotherly Christian love among the parishioners of our Church.

In witness of this my oath and solemn promise, I kiss the words of the Holy Gospel and the Life-Giving Cross of my Savior and Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Parish Council

Solicited Comments from Priests

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- “For me the most important aspect of the Parish Council is that they take seriously the fact that they are actually **co-ministers of the Gospel** with the clergy and everyone who serves the Church.
- They do not have any role which is in opposition to the clergy, nor that is not the clergy's interest, or which is reserved uniquely to them.
- Everyone in the parish is there to love God and love neighbor, and the Parish Council is as responsible as the clergy and all the laity to make that happen in the parish, **to make the parish to be the Body of Christ.**”

Parish Council

Solicited Comments from Priests

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“Of course, this requires the clergy to understand this as well and to fully work with and respect the work of the parish council.

Not every decision a parish or a parish council has to make requires a seminary degree. But every decision is spiritual in every sense of the word. The business of the parish - paying bills, maintaining the building, dealing with mundane issues - is all spiritual because the parish is the Body of Christ.”

Parish Council

Solicited Comments from Priests

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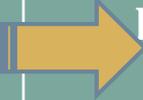
- “Members of parish council should hold to a vision that they are personally and collectively responsible to make the parish be the Body of Christ --to love God and love neighbor.
- If they can't work in that Spirit, they don't belong on parish council.”

Consider...

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- Saying No
 - ▣ “Parish Councils do some of their best work when they do not give parishioners what they want but rather teach them to want something new.”
- Spiritual and Material
 - ▣ “No goal is so purely spiritual that it requires no money, space or time and no action is so financial/material as to lack ethical or spiritual implications”

Parish “Models” - A Comparison

	Trusteeship/ Congregational	 Eucharistic/Conciliar/ Stewardship/ Hierarchical
Purpose	Parish exists for “us” On its own; for its own “Sovereign” --Diocesan responsibility “optional”	Exists For Christ; To do work of Christ in the World Constituent part of Diocese Mandate to exist from hierarch One, Holy, Catholic & Apostolic
Attitude	Legalities , Membership, Voting, Motions, Dues, Entitlement, Ownership	Stewards Sojourners Eucharistic Consensus
Priest	Employee Hired specialist	Leader of parish; appointed by hierarch Authority flows from Hierarchal authority
Parish Council	Material issues only – bills/building/budgets Priest: “Spiritual advisor” Elected “officers” & trustees	Focused on TOTAL MISSION of parish Material & Spiritual concerns Extension of Eucharistic Assembly Priest is leader Collaborative -- not authoritarian or democratic; Co -responsible; Shared Leadership

Benefits

Why Is This Better?

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- **Continuity with belief** - If you believe something you live it; you don't behave in a way counter to the norms simply because mutations crept in unwittingly.
- **Unity with others** – This is the norm in many parishes. (Not all certainly)
- **Speed and Effectiveness** - Should make decisions and their implementation faster easier. Not only should we get more done we can expect better decisions and results – more people with correct skills would be motivated to serve on parish council and other leadership positions.
- **Right stuff/next level** – Old model was understandable for its time. A new leadership mindset is needed to help us define and implement the types of programs relevant for today. To help current members, to keep youth & to attract new persons to our parish.
- **Trust** - By definition this is a system based on trust – which is after all more enjoyable than distrust. A system that strives to grow a community where everything is designed to teach behavior centered on the Gospel should seem inherently attractive. While probably not that effective/practical in the “world”, such a system should be effective in a community of love (church) -- and become a distinctive quality by which we (Christians) are recognized. (Admittedly it has its risks)
- **Continuity with/ learning from past** - It could be argued that the parish forefathers built an Orthodox community for their time, in the best way they knew how. That continues as today's job.

THE END

11/2/2015

Thank You for Your Attention