

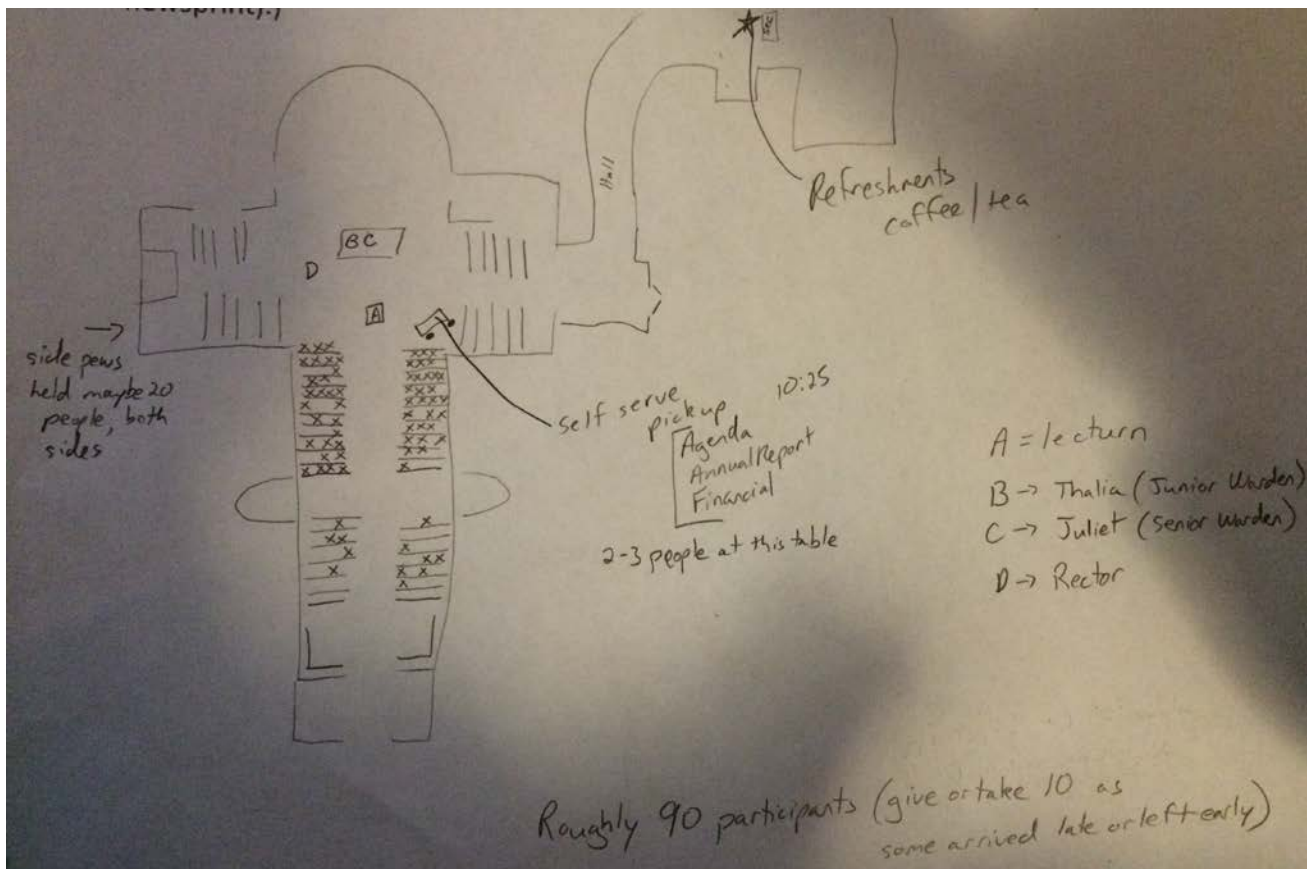
## Observing and Interpreting a Meeting

### Observation:

How is the room set up? Who is sitting where? (Draw a rough diagram of the set up, noting where the chair/moderator, members, participants, visitors, etc. are sitting and the location of any kinds of presentation materials (white board, projector, newsprint).)

### Annual Meeting for my church

- Held in church space, rector and wardens say by altar location
  - Rector organized and kept meeting moving along
  - Senior and Junior Wardens tallied votes for vestry positions
- Roughly 90 participants in church pews, numbered varied slightly by perhaps 10 with latecomers or early departers.
- Presentation materials were at a table in front of the first pew to the right side. Crowded pass through for people coming in with coffee from the hallway to seats passing those picking up materials.



What is going on before the meeting? (Who is talking to whom? What is the mood? What kinds of interactions occur? Is there a written agenda? Did members have materials beforehand or did they receive them as they arrived? Are there refreshments? What are they? Who takes them?)

#### BEFORE MEETING

- Last service just ended and a significant number of people crowded the hallway for coffee/tea. (Normal 11am service canceled to allow for time for this annual meeting)

#### WHO IS TALKING

- Small clusters of people talking in hallway, near beverage table, and also scattered through church space.
- Mostly people talking to those near them. Some groups simply speaking with those they arrived with and are in the same pew with.
- Ballots handed out for Vestry nominees – most were collected prior to nominees' introductions, but information for each was emailed and also available in the handout at the table with materials.

#### MEETING MATERIALS

- Table with materials was fixed for self-serve pickup of agenda, Annual Report and Budget
  - Position of table made it a bit awkward for late arrivals to feel comfortable to pickup the documents.
  - Table position created a bottleneck of flow from people heading to their seats from the hallway.
- Refreshments included coffee and tea, which were located in the hallway

#### MOOD

- A handful of individuals were rushing around prepping tables, ballot printouts, other paperwork – this predominantly was undertaken by the Senior Warden, Junior Warden and two or three appointed individuals focused on annual meeting reports and financial reports.
- Everyone else was fairly calm. There was a hum of chatter throughout as multiple conversations were happening at the same time in a space that carries sound.

How does the meeting begin? (Who calls the meeting to order? How does it get started? What are the initial comments or items of business? Note both the official start to the meeting and any other comments and how this shapes the course of the meeting and the mood of the room.)

The meeting held a very formal structure which aligned with the Agenda.

- The Rector initiated the meeting with a Prayer for Church Meetings found in the Book of Common Prayer (pg 818). This certainly seemed to bring people together and get their attention.
- The Rector reviewed the Canon rules on Annual Meetings
  - Who should participate in the meeting based on Sunday service attendance duration and financial contributions for the last 6 months
- Nominees for Vestry introduced
- Voting for Vestry – Senior Warden spoke regarding rules for voting. Individuals need to receive majority vote to be chosen. Since four were required to be voted for, the voting may have to repeat for 1 or all of the nominees depending on if they achieve majority of votes.
- A handful of volunteers helped distribute and collect ballots as they were filled out. Honor system was relied upon that someone did not fill out more than one ballot. Ballots were folded in half before being collected into a basket. (Some control on election, but not fully)
- Voting completed in first round with successful individuals receiving majority votes.
- Agenda followed rigidly, but rector did interject jokes and humor during the “wait periods” to keep the atmosphere upbeat amidst deep/serious messages
- Recognition of milestone work anniversary of building maintenance person; his family was present – 30 years of service to our church. He felt sincere gratitude for the kinds words from our Rector (and the Rector made it clear he did not have to sit through the entire meeting but could leave with his family to enjoy the rest of the day!)
- Recognition of retiring Vestry members
- Deputies to Diocesan Convention – alternates for 2017 and deputies for 2018 were nominated from the floor. The number needed were nominated, motion passed.
- Reports – Rector, Associate Rector, Senior Warden, Junior Warden, Stewardship, Finance.
  - Some were summarized nicely and had a nice verbal pattern (like the rector). Others were read directly from the report in the handout given to the congregation which felt a bit lengthy and scripted (even though it was!)
- Election results were announced – first round for Vestry was successful. No additional rounds needed, also no voting needed for other positions as the appropriate amount of individuals were nominated.
- Hymn 525
- Blessing and Dismissal

What happens during the meeting? (Note two or three significant events or decisions that were made. Describe the process by which those decisions occurred.)

(See above – description follows agenda)

- Vestry members were introduced, new nominees had the potential to be brought in from the floor and were voted upon in one round of votes – 4 members
- Deputies to Diocesan Convention were nominated and motion passed
- Convocation Reps were nominated and passed.

Led by Rector

10:38

- Vote for Vestry Members (4 of 8)
  - Opening for Vestry Introductions
  - Option for new nominees
  - Closed openings for new nominees
  - Voting continues while meeting progresses
  - **\*\*MOST** ballots handed out AND collected before meeting even started!
  - Senior Warden clarified winning requires majority of ballots and repetitive rounds may be required until majority is received

10:50

- Recognition of Enrique's 30<sup>th</sup> year of service at our church as groundsman; introduced his wife and children
  - Senior Warden's sister voluntary made book plates for him as a gift. The book inside was a Psalm commentary which the local author came to autograph for him as well.

10:52

- Recognize outgoing Vestry (4)
  - One was the senior warden
  - One was a Sunday school teacher who was actually teaching this morning
  - Two others present

10:55

*[Mom w/ two kids left]*

- 3 Reps as alternates for Diocesan Committee last year; they are now going this year as deputies, so 3 new alternates selected for next year.
  - 3 nominated from the floor and closed.

10:58

- Convocation Representative --- for diocesan matters
  - Every parish should have 6, with 2 meetings/yr (normally one in Fall and Spring meeting often gets canceled)

11:01

*[older couple left- maybe a dozen late arrivals trickle in]*

- Reports
  - Rector
    - Handling potential new immigration for immigrants – developing plan of how to reach out to those in fear
    - Managing parishioners out lash toward homosexuals

- Concluded we are here for God's work and acknowledging His joy in being Rector at our church

11:11

- Associate Rector
  - Begins with acknowledgement of joy in working with Rector & serving this parish
  - Gave short summary that connected to her written report in handout/email

11:13

- Senior Warden – read her report directly (2.5 pages)

11:26

- Junior Warden's report – read directly as well

*[8+ people left]*

11:33

- Stewardship – given by one individual
  - \$735k pledged already; \$25k more than last year w/ 60 less pledges (average pledge is higher)
  - 270 people who pledged last year, have not pledged yet
  - Hopeful outlook
- Finance – one individual – this report was separate from Annual report
  - Reviewed different methods of looking at numbers through a variety of printed graphs and charts.
  - Asked for questions – 3 Qs
    - \$130k-\$150k in rental income probably won't change much
    - 4<sup>th</sup> Q – on debt borrowed against endowment for capital campaign project last year. Amortized over 10 years

12:01

- Rector gave a gentleman, who headed the renovation projects last year, an award

12:04

- Senior Warden announced Vestry winners

12:05

- New business

12:09

- End with a Hymn – church congregation singing together

### Analysis:

What are your impressions of the meeting (Was it orderly? Was it worthwhile? Was there energy in the room? Where the people engaged in the meeting?)

The meeting was very well structured. It followed a prescribed methodology and had an agenda that was not a new structure. Behind the meeting was years of processing the information in similar ways, which enabled the organizers to know better what is expected of them as well. The start to the meeting was a bit chaotic with crossover traffic from the beverage table and those retrieving paperwork, but the rest of the meeting ran smoothly. Useful decisions were made regarding members of Vestry and two other groups expediently and in a manner consistent with our canon, which was made clear to us (most especially valuable to those unfamiliar with the processes).

What process was used to make decisions? What there more than one?

Decision making followed voting for positions as prescribed by our canon, so the structure to the procedure was set and methodical. For Vestry, a requirement of majority of votes was necessary. While we had to vote for four people on a ballot of eight, it is possible one individual have a greater number of votes over four others, but still not have more than a 50% total of possible votes. For example, if 100 people voted and the top four candidates received 74-66-51-49 votes respectively, then a new ballot would have been printed with FIVE names and the requirement given to vote for only 1 person as the individual who received 49 votes did not receive a majority even though s/he had the fourth highest total. (I found that interesting)

What are the outcomes?

All mentioned earlier. The decisions revolved around positions that needed to be filled and all voting and nominating occurred expediently (probably because no one nominated themselves to the other two committees once the needed limit was reached, thus avoiding the need for voting).

How did people treat one another?

People were civil. Some side conversations indicated there could be some underlying frustrations, but this wasn't clear and the extent of where those frustrations might be or how severe is unknown. I did not notice or hear rude remarks toward the process or others, and this also includes non-verbal cues. I think the hymn sung together at the end provided a means to unite people in a common task, be it as simple as singing a song, and also keeping our minds cognizant of the fact that it is all for our church and the congregation.

Was there conflict? How was it handled?

None.

What was the role of moderator/chair? (How did she/he function in the meeting?)

Our Rector (head pastor) led the entire meeting. He transitioned to each new Agenda item and kept the mood lively with some jokes to help alleviate the stress of a lengthy meeting.

**Synopsis:**

Write a one page synopsis of the key dynamics of this meeting – both the overt decisions/processes and the underlying organizational issues that you observe. How well did the person leading do? What suggestions would you make? If you were the overall leader of this organization, what steps would you take after this meeting?

The Episcopal Church has a very formal structure to its meetings. This structure provides a framework of expected items to be covered in a meeting. It also appears to provide deep spiritual awareness and maintain corporate connection battling individualistic egos or needs. With a repeatable paradigm, meetings are not only easy to recreate based on a given layout, but participants also know what to expect to occur each year.

As our Rector, head pastor, led the entire meeting through the agenda outlined in a handout, he maintained his role as head of this parish as well as initiated with a prayer to keep the congregants mindful of the focus of these tasks at hand in correlation to our ministry for God. While many parts of the process were explicitly emphasized, such as the rector's review of specific items in the canon that detail the structure of the annual meeting and the senior warden explaining the election requirements as a majority, there were a couple of odd dynamics. First, election ballots were distributed upon entry into the space in an effort to be efficient. However, it gave people a rushed sense about when they were actually needed and some were being collected before the meeting even started. In all fairness, all information regarding nominees was emailed out ahead of time. However, it puts an unfair spin on election results due to the possibility of double-votes or people potentially being accidentally missed. [I do not believe the process was tainted by such actions.] Second, the carrying of open coffee and tea paper-cups into the church space through a bottleneck of paperwork distribution was a bit chaotic just as the meeting was getting started.

Agenda items were adhered to well and the structure to the meeting was sound. Information was clear and explained with opportunity for questions, even regarding finances. Through the lengthy meeting, the rector did a wonderful job with timely jokes to keep the mood upbeat and lively.

If I were the leader of the meeting, I would follow up with the congregation with all of the election results and reminders of the written reports from each leader. This would most likely predominantly be carried out via email, but also accommodated to desiring individuals in paper form, for the sake of reminding those who were present and informing those who were unable to attend. I believe it important to keep the entire congregation 'in the loop' so they always feel the sense that they are completely a part of the church.

Lastly, I would gather the other speakers and leaders of the meeting, along with a couple prominent individuals from the congregation and assess the best parts of the meeting in conjunction with what might need to be improved. If setting a meeting time is too complex, this could very well be achieved with a simple ten minute follow up on an individual basis.