Meeting Function and Protocol

The following is offered from the office of the Secretary of the Synod with the hope that it will be of use for those fulfilling various responsibilities and in the conduct of church business within the diocese.

1. **Scope**
   Meetings of councils, boards, commissions, corporations or standing committees have specific legal authority and responsibilities in the organization. Be clear about the group's decision-making power. To what other bodies is this group responsible and how does it relate to the organization? Appropriate and consistent accountable reporting needs to be considered. Terms of reference or "Roles and Responsibilities" should exist for every functioning group, be publically available for reference and reviewed at least annually by the group and / or by the person or group to whom it is responsible.

2. **Minutes or Notes**
   Meetings of bodies with legal decision making authority require minutes adopted and approved by the group. (See Appendix 2 "Preparing Minutes of Meetings") Working or task groups, teams and other committees should always, at the least, record notes for each meeting, and often "notes" are the most appropriate and useful tool. Consensus decisions rather than official motions are often a feature of these groups.

3. **Decisions**
   "Motions" are official proposals for a decision and become "resolutions" or "carried motions" when adopted by vote. Decisions by consensus, in the Church, are always preferred to official motions moved, seconded and voted upon. Robert's Rules of Order is a useful guide for meeting procedure but often not entirely appropriate to the work of the Church. Refer to "*Procedures for Meetings and Organizations*" (Kerr and King) for more information on meeting protocol and procedure.

4. **The Agenda**
   The agenda should always be prepared in advance and circulated to all those expected or entitled to be in attendance. <u>Never</u> should an agenda be circulated on the day of the meeting. Every agenda should include:
   - Date place and time (with ending time, if possible) of the meeting
   - List of members
   - Regrets communicated by members to date
   - Opening and closing formalities: prayers, introductions and appointment of recording secretary, if necessary
   - Study, reflection or devotional
   - Review and adoption of minutes or agreement on notes of the last meeting(s)
   - Summary of current status on past business, completion, implementation, unfinished items
   - Reports on current items if available.
   - List of new or continuing items of business
   - Other business

- Proposed date, time and place of the next meeting
- Attachments: minutes/notes of the last meeting; reports, backgrounders or other information supporting the agenda. Notes on particular items are often helpful

5. Meetings by teleconference

Meetings by teleconference are often not a substitute for the work of a group but can make work possible when distance or time constraints prevent it. At the time of writing, the Diocese subscribes to a teleconference service which can be utilized upon request. Voice over Internet Protocols (VOIP) applications like Skype can be a cost effective and efficient way to facilitate meetings by teleconference. Some additional considerations are necessary when chairing or participating a meeting by teleconference. (See Appendix 3 Protocol for Meetings by Teleconference)

6. Meeting Roles

Attention to meeting roles, preferably in advance, should always be considered.

Convener. If there is no chair, the convener attends to the tasks associated with calling the meeting and proposing an agenda. Filling the necessary roles of chair and secretary are normally one of the first items on the meeting agenda.

Chair. The chair is responsible for calling the meeting, communicating the agenda (at least one day in advance), presiding at / facilitating the meeting, assuring necessary communication happens before and after the meeting, and monitoring progress on the implementation of decisions made. (See Appendix 1- The Role of the Meeting Chair)

Recording Secretary. A recording secretary provides the record-keeping requirements in the form of minutes or notes and correspondence if requested. If desired, the secretary will often have post-meeting documentation reviewed by the chair prior to circulation and as soon as possible following. (See Appendix 3 - Preparing Minutes of Meetings)

7. Reports

Avoiding narrative style reporting is preferred. A priority listing of items and a brief description of their status and time line facilitates communicating progress most effectively.

8. References

Canon Two - Diocesan Business - Part 1 Rules of Order and Procedure
Regulation 4-2 Rules of Order of Diocesan Council
 "*Procedures for Meetings and Organizations*" (Kerr and King - Carswell Publishing)
Roles and Responsibilities Template (see the Diocesan Council page)

Appendix 1 The Role of the Meeting Chair
Appendix 2 Preparing Minutes of Meetings
Appendix 3 Protocol for Meetings by Teleconference
Appendix 4 Meeting Agenda Template (rtf format)

Secretary of Synod
05 October 2009

The Role of the Meeting Chair

1. Lead
   - The example of the chair is very important
   - Be Prepared, be Punctual, be Positive

2. Begin
   - Open with prayer and preferably with study, a reading or devotional
   - Assure that someone is designated to take minutes/notes
   - Briefly review the goals of the meeting (the agenda)
   - Number 1 for the chair is to assure all on the team buy-in to the goals

3. Delegate
   - Every task that arises should be accompanied by an invitation to "do" something to further the goals
   - Participation of all around the table is the preferred outcome

4. Promote Fairness
   - Ensure equal opportunity for members to speak
   - Be realistic in expectations of the members mindful of other responsibilities

5. Document
   - Provide the agenda prior to each meeting (never the same day - the earlier the better)
   - Ensure that minutes or notes are circulated within 7 days of each meeting/teleconference;
   - Make certain action and responsibility decisions are easy to find in the minutes (A second right hand column? Carried motions bolded and numbered?)

6. Refresh
   - A quick "to do list" summary by e-mail the day after the meeting helps

7. Support the Team
   - Ask members about their experience as part of the group between meetings – call them or visit. Encourage suggestions.

8. Encourage being positive
   - Consider implementing the "positive rule": Anyone who voices a problem must also offer a potential solution.

The Role of the Meeting Chair

Meeting Preparation Checklist

❏   Review of the scope of the group and the purpose(s) of the particular meeting

❏   Call the meeting (reminder or notice one or two weeks in advance)

❏   Prepare the agenda (*See Directive 8.15-4 - The Agenda*)

- Date/time/place
- List of attendees / members
- Opening and closing formalities
- Study, reading or devotional
- Recording Secretary
- Matters arising (from the last meeting(s)
- Items of new or continuing business
- Next meeting
- Attachments: minutes/notes; reports; backgrounders; agenda notes

❏   Circulation of the agenda to members (at least one day in advance)

Preparing Minutes of Meetings

1. "Minutes" are the official record of a meeting and usually will cover the following:
   - Regrets or apologies for absence. Communicated by those who cannot attend. These should be received by the chair as early as possible prior to the meeting. If attendance for a majority is known in advance, the meeting may need to be postponed or cancelled.
   - Minutes of the last meeting. If there is agreement that these are accurate they should be appropriately authorized and filed by the secretary and preferably the chair.
   - Matters arising. Report of action taken or progress made since the last meeting.
   - New or continuing business. New items should be listed and decisions made and accurately recorded.
   - Other business or items. Items, often identified early in the meeting, not listed on the agenda.
   - Date/Time/Place of next meeting.

2. Tips on Writing Minutes.
   - Minutes should include the title of the meeting (what); those attending and those who communicated regrets (who); the place of the meeting (where); the time (when); the business accomplished or decisions made with motions carried in their final or amended form including motions defeated; and brief reference to significant details or objective summaries of debate when appropriate.
   - Minutes are not "hours." Never should minutes be a transcription of the dialogue of the meeting. Concentrate on what is relevant and what decisions are taken. Be as brief, concise, objective and accurate as possible.
   - Compose minutes from notes as soon as possible after the meeting while it is still fresh in your mind. If this is impossible, at least read through the notes making sure they can be understood and gaps can be filled.
   - When writing the minutes from notes, plenty of numbered points and sub-headings tend to clarify and make the document more useful for later reference.
   - Use the past tense. It is often better to choose the passive rather than the active voice. (It was agreed…, It was decided…) These two examples demonstrate the empty 'it' construction. Minutes should be impersonal avoiding the use of 'we' and 'us'.
   - Upon completion of the draft of the minutes, check carefully for accuracy of content and also for correct spelling and punctuation. Finish the draft as soon after the meeting as possible.
   - When complete, the chair may wish to check the draft prior to circulation to members. The draft of the minutes should be circulated to all who attended, preferably within seven days.

Meetings by Teleconference

Follow procedures and protocols for normal meetings (*See Directive 8.15*) noting the following in additional considerations. The role of the chair is especially important on a teleconference.

1. Give attention to time zone differences when planning, if necessary. The chair should have a complete list of participants, e-mails and telephone numbers at hand in case a contact needs to be made before, during or after the call. Telephone prayer is quite acceptable.

2. Circulate teleconference call information well in advance. This includes connection number and participant code and support documents or files for the meeting. A meeting agenda mailed in advance *(See Directive 8.15-4)* including the member list, the call contact details etc ... is very important. If there are specific files or web sites that need to be open for reference, note these in the agenda.

3. The chair should be on the line at least 10-15 minutes before the scheduled start time. Participants should be encouraged to join at least 5 minutes before the start. The meeting should begin on time.

4. As participants join the call (usually indicated by a beep), acknowledge that there is a new caller. At the start time, a roll call conducted by the chair is essential. Make introductions as necessary or, early arrivals might be assigned tasks (round about) of greeting the next joining participant as a team building activity. Don't assume someone is not on the call just because you didn't hear their name.

5. Begin with the following reminders about conduct during the meeting:
    - Ask that each speaker announce their name each time they begin to speak. Interruptions are encouraged.
    - Ask about individual time constraints and decide upon or announce the end time.
    - Ask that participants announce if they are leaving the call, even for a short period.
    - Remind participants that one speaker at a time is the rule.

6. Delegate and assign duties to help engage participants: eg. time-keeper; note-taker; question- keeper; to do list-keeper; keeper of a list of actions and those responsible.

7. Staying on topic is especially necessary in a teleconference. If the conversation wanders, the chair needs to take action in a respectful manner to refocus the topic at hand.

8. If participants can be online at the same time they are on the phone, consider web-based collaboration tools to create shared electronic notes, flip charts, etc. Sometimes allowing "side chats" or "chat breakouts" can increase participant engagement.

9. Interactive techniques that might be helpful:

A. "The clock." Draw a clock with numbers, 1, 2, 3 o'clock etc ... If there are more that 12 participants, assign 1:30, 2:30 etc ... Assign names to numbers and use for roll call and participant check-ins.

B. "Just three words." Ask each participant to use just three words to respond to a specific question or issue. Record the responses for use during or after the call to observe similarities, differences or patterns.

C. Location maps. For teleconferences that happen regularly, create a location map with photos of participants and distribute by e-mail or post on a web site.

D. Telephone break out techniques. Pair up participants in advance and share a phone list. During the call, assign a pairs task, have the pairs leave the main call and work for 10-15 minutes and return to the main number at a stated time to report out/debrief the activity.

E. "Side" conversations. If someone wants to comment directly to a previous speaker, they can use that person's name to focus their attention. "Sarah, I am not sure I agree with that approach ..." Generally, the larger the group, the more directive facilitation needs to be to keep a small number of people from dominating the call.

F. Recap often. Summarize issues and restate understandings often in order to provide clarity. On any particular issue, this task can be delegated to a participant.

G. Repetition. Repeat essential numbers and figures, and feel free to ask others to repeat them.

H. Follow-up. Distribute notes or minutes immediately after the meeting (the same day).

I. Closure. Before terminating the call check-in with each participant for final thoughts or comments. Ask participants to offer brief feedback on the experience as a reply to receiving the notes or minutes. A quick evaluation process at the end of the call or by e-mail following: What did we intend to do, what did we do, what should we have done differently?, to improve subsequent meetings or, ask for "just three words" to describe the call.

J. End the call promptly and as close as possible to the time announced in advance.

AGENDA

Meeting of the [*Title of the Group*]
Date, time and location

Membership

xxxxx | xxxxx | xxxxx | xxxxx | xxxxx | xxxxx | xxxxx | xxxxx | xxxxx | xxxxx |
xxxxx | xxxxx | xxxxx | xxxxx | xxxxx | xxxxx

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1. Open
    1.1   Prayer and introductions
    1.2   Regrets

    1.3   Study or devotional
    1.4   Agenda review, additions

2. Last meeting(s)
    2.1   Notes or minutes
    2.2   Items finished, unfinished, pending

3. Reports
    3.1
    3.2
    3.3

4. Unfinished business items
    4.1
    4.2
    4.3
    4.4
    4.5

5. New or continuing business items
    5.1
    5.2
    5.3
    5.4

6. Close
    6.1   Closing comments / questions
    6.2   Next meeting
    6.3   Prayer

Agenda Notes

1.
2.
3.