



“Fostering Unity: Strategies for Aligning Goals and Managing Disagreements”



Webinar Series

2025

Monday,
November 17
6:30-7:45 p.m. PDT

This webinar explores practical strategies for aligning goals, fostering collaboration, and managing disagreements. Join us as we discuss faith-driven approaches to building a culture of trust, mutual respect, and shared purpose.



OUR SPEAKERS FOR THIS EVENING

Steve Tibbs



Dr. Mitch Owen





“Fostering Unity: Strategies for Aligning Goals and Managing Disagreements”

Unity in the Church

1. Does and Does Not Look Like
2. Ways to Encourage Unity
3. Getting Back on Track
4. Interpersonal Tips

GOAL OF UNITY



Get Everyone On The Same Page



To Work Together in Common Mission

“Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot would say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear would say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,”

“If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it.”

1 Corinthians 12:14; 26

... and Avoid Wasted Strength...

*Where the Same Energy is Expended, But
Only Yields Tension (and winner and losers)*



Unity in the Church

1. Solidarity amongst of the Parish focused upon the Christ - Focused Why and Mission of the Church
2. Enables to Fulfill our Calling
3. Maintained by the People

“How good and pleasant it is when God’s people live together in unity!”
Psalm 133:1
4. Is Not Uniformity nor Conformity; Not about people merely agreeing on things or “falling in line”
5. It Creates a Positive Parish Culture

Culture

Invisibly “Know To Be True...”

The lived personality of the parish, shaped over time by faith, leadership, traditions, and people

- Attitudes & Values
- Behaviors & Habits
- How People Treat Each Other
- How Decisions Are Made
- What The Parish Celebrates (Or Avoids)

... & How We Do Things”



HOW DOES A PARISH...



Progressive Separation

Disagreement

- ✓ Normal differences in ideas
- ✓ Healthy when guided

Conflict

- ✓ When disagreement becomes emotional
- ✓ Transitions from issue to personal

Disunity

- ✓ Broadens
- ✓ Breakdown of trust & shared identity
- ✓ Requires deeper restoration



Reasons for Disunity

1. Lack of participation in Liturgical Worship and Communion
2. Lack of Prayer
3. Mission is Lost - WHY and Vision are forgotten
4. Overt Self Opinion(s)
5. Gossip becomes unsubstantiated truisms
6. Work Cloaked in Darkness - No Transparency
7. Avoidance
8. Silos

Downside

Unmanaged Disunity

- 1 Loss of Spiritual Focus
- 2 Vision & Mission Drift
- 3 Erosion of Trust
- 4 Damaged Relationships
- 5 Entrenching of Factions
6. Culture Clash
7. Decreased Ministry Effectiveness
8. Financial Strain
9. Clergy Strain
10. Parishioner Decline

People Leave

1. People Leave Due to Unresolved Conflict - Lifeway Research

- ❖ 70% who leave their church cite conflict as a major factor.
- ❖ 25% stated personal conflict, either with another member or with leadership, was the primary reason for leaving.

2. Leadership and Conflict - Barna Group

- ❖ Conflict with leadership is a significant factor.
- ❖ 33% left due to disillusionment with church leadership, which often stemmed from unresolved conflicts.

3. Church Conflict Resolution - Alban Institute

- ❖ 2/3 of all churches experience conflict at some level.
- ❖ 50% of churches that do not address conflict effectively see a significant drop in membership.

4. Personal Conflict and Church Exit - Faith Communities Today

- ❖ 20% who left a parish, cited conflicts between members or cliques.

Upside of Disunity

Can Provide Real Opportunities For Growth

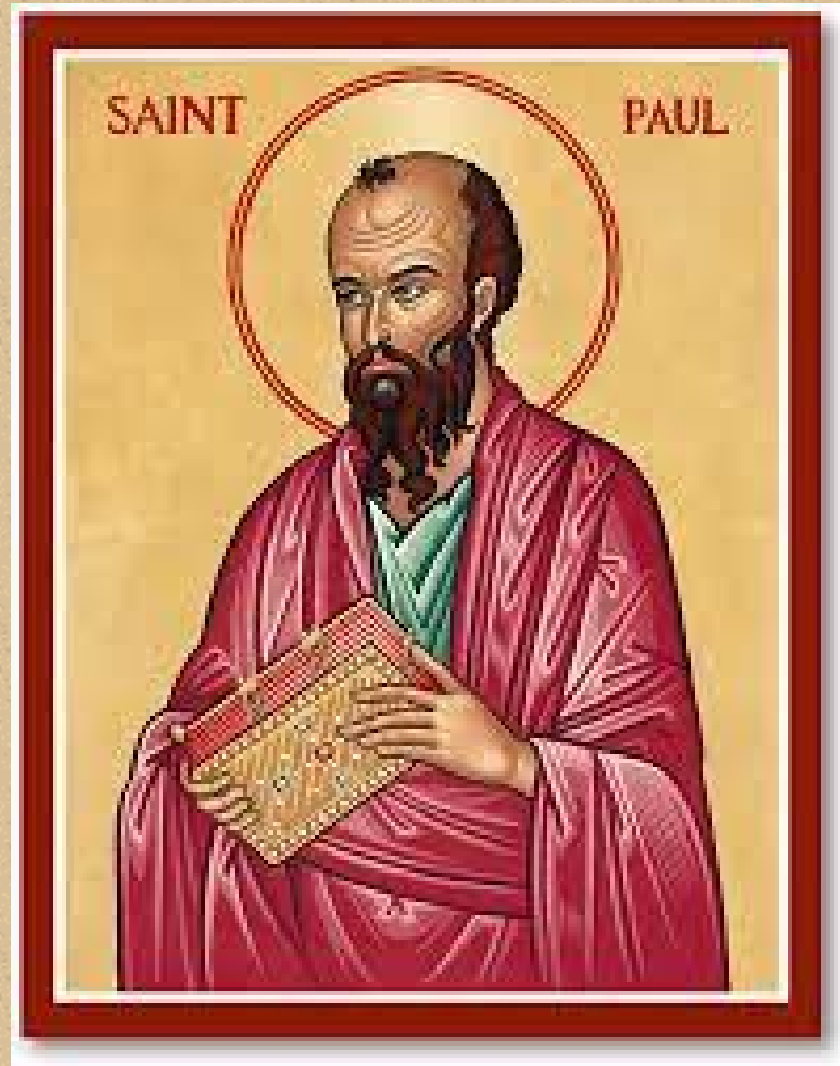
- A deeper understanding of one another
- A strengthened community
- Ability to demonstrate Christian principles of **LOVE, FORGIVENESS, HUMILITY & UNITY**



PERCEPTIONS
ALIGNMENT
LESSONS

“Bear with each other and
forgive one another if any of
you has a grievance against
someone. Forgive as the Lord
forgave you”

Colossians 3:13



a word on
PERCEPTIONS...



PERCEPTIONS

FALSE ASSUMPTIONS:

1. We think we understand when we see everything. But, in reality, understanding is in the detail.



PERCEPTIONS

FALSE ASSUMPTIONS:

1. We think we understand when we see everything. But, in reality, understanding is in the detail.



PERCEPTIONS



“Better real darkness than false light, say the saints; better real confusion than false clarity.”

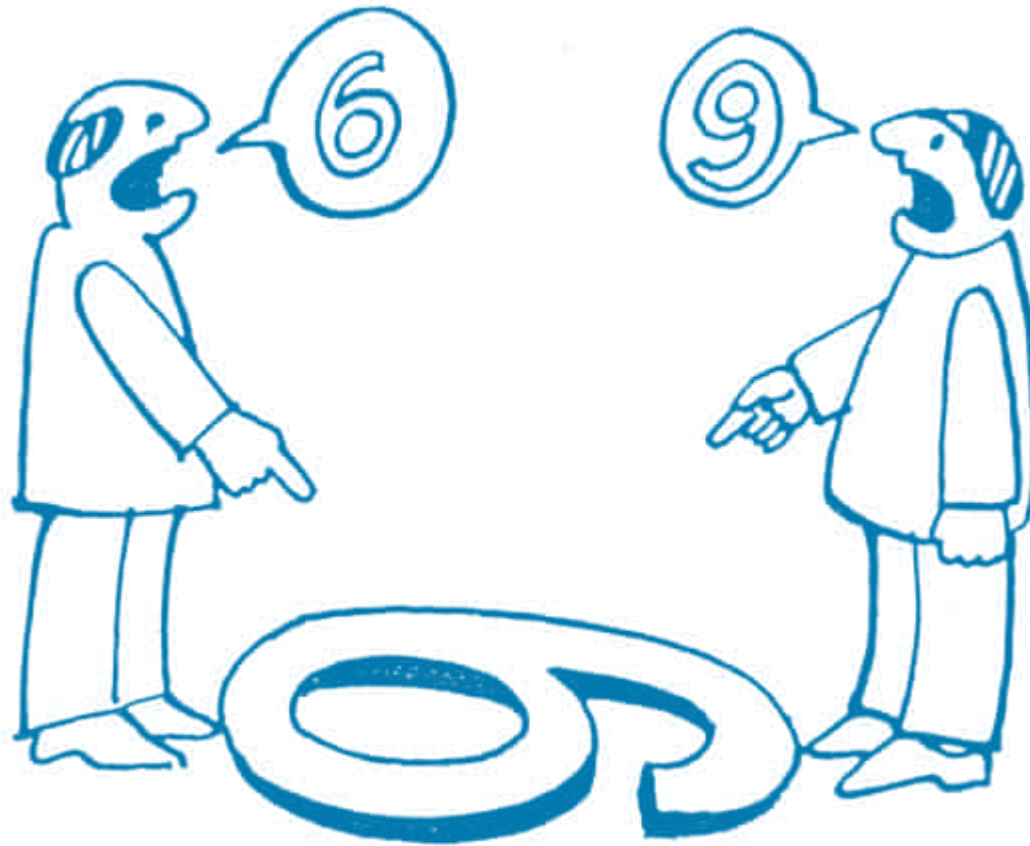
+ Fr. Thomas Hopko, Former Dean, St. Vladimir's

PERCEPTIONS

FALSE ASSUMPTIONS:

2. What we see is the same as what everyone else sees.

PERCEPTIONS



PERCEPTIONS



PERCEPTIONS

GREEN



RED

BLUE YELLOW

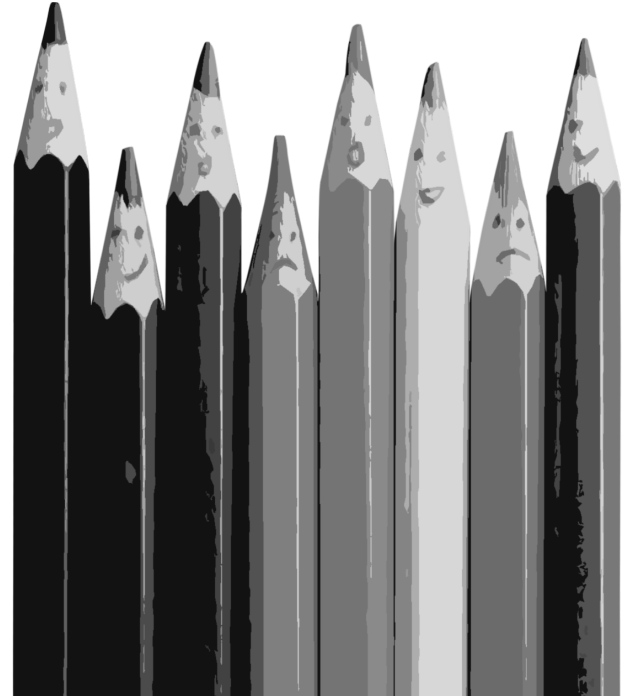


PERCEPTIONS

Recognize Colors (differences)



Don't Assume



PERCEPTIONS

REALITY & FIT

3. Your knowledge and experience make you unique, *but to be effective you need to understand how that fits.*

FRAME OF REFERENCE



Definition

Parish Experiences

Family

Expectations

PERCEPTIONS

OPPORTUNITY

4. Pool our collective knowledge and see the world as it truly is.

ALIGN KEY AREAS



Purpose

Right
Foundation

1



Plan

Clear
Priorities

2



People

Positive
Behaviors

3

PURPOSE (WHY)



“WHY” does your parish exist?

FOCUS ON THE WHY

Represent

Brand
Culture
Phronema

Who

What

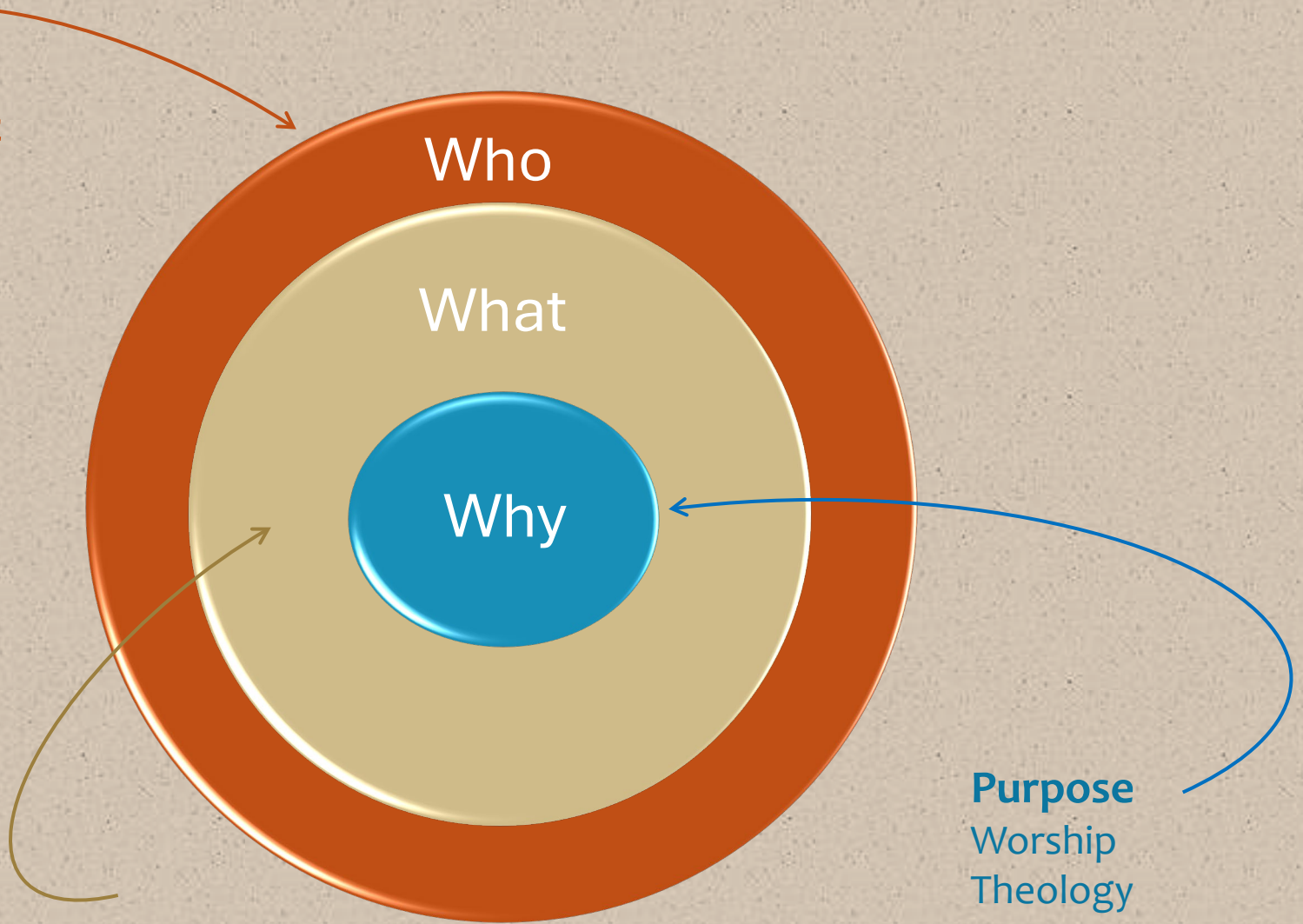
Why

Purpose

Worship
Theology

Connection

Fellowship
Ministries, Outreach & Events



THE ORTHODOX PARISH – A LIVING HOUSE OF FAITH



WORSHIP

PERSONAL FAITH FORMATION

LEADERSHIP

Gift Based Support

Fund Raising
Stewardship
Planned (Estate) Giving

Site Management

Capital Improvements
Facility Maintenance

CULTURE

Ministries

Catechism
Christian Education
Evangelism
Faith Formation
Fellowship
Music Ministry
Outreach
Philanthropy
Seniors
Young Adults
Youth
.....

VISION

Parish Systems

Administration
Budgeting
Communications
Financial Mgmt.
Governance
Human Resources
Insurance
Legal
Planning
Safety & Security
Technology

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WHY

Bring People Closer To Christ

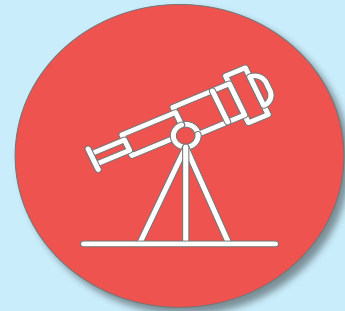
Using the WHY as a Mission Filter...

Would Your Parish Be Different Tomorrow if All Ministries Thought This Way?

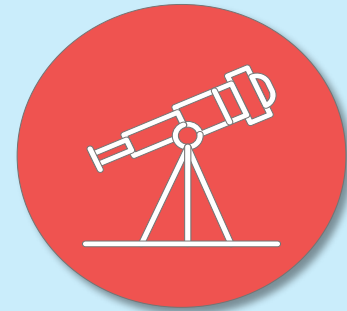
The Purpose of Our ...

- ✓ Youth Program is to Bring Our Youth Closer to Christ
- ✓ Stewardship Program is to Bring People Closer to Christ
- ✓ Facilities Committee is to Bring People Closer to Christ
- ✓ Parish Council is to Bring People Closer to Christ

PLAN



PLAN



- ✓ Annual Plan To Deliver Your WHY
- ✓ Unique to the Parish (or Ministry)
- ✓ Clear - Simple
- ✓ Communicated in Multiple Formats
- ✓ Accountable “We Said - We Did”

CONSTRUCTING THE PARISH PLAN

*“In their hearts
humans plan their
course, but
the LORD establishes
their steps.”
Proverbs 16:9*

5 Approvals - Parish Council and General Assembly (November)
Receive the blessings of the Proistamenos to seek formal approval from all assemblies

4 Annual Budget (October)
Conduct cost analysis to determine program impact on budget goals – adjust as needed

3 Parish Annual Calendar (October)
Create High-Level Annual Calendar of Events based upon Plan Recommendations

2 Metropolis Direction (October)
Confirm the direction and obligations for parish support to our Holy Metropolis

1 Ministries, Programs and Services (October)
Determine the actions required which will effectively enable the identified Key Parish Priorities

Plan Development

4 Parish Priorities (September)
Establish the top annual priorities which will guide the annual parish plan

3 Parish and Parish Council Principles (September)
Affirm in order to guide plan development

2 Parish Mission, Vision, Values and Culture (September)
Confirm and/or Revise

1 Parish Strategic Plan Review (September)
Review the existing plan to link and guide spiritual, ministry and program decisions

“Foundations”
Parish Leadership Retreat

2024 PRIORITIES



WORSHIP

SAFETY & SECURITY

FAITH FORMATION

MUTUAL SUPPORT

In-reach / Fellowship

- +** Continue Work on Welcoming Plan/Approach
- Update Ambassador Ministry
- ✓** Establish 1-2 activities for Senior Community

Site Management

- +** Address Deferred Maintenance
- Update Small Hall Bathrooms
- Draft Plan for Front Entry Update

Technology

- Upgrade Parishioner Database System
- ✓** Improve Sound in Sanctuary (speakers/mics)

Legal

- +** Review/Update Parish-By Laws
- ✓** Implement New Youth Safety Program

Youth & Young Adults

- +** Identify Ministry Leaders

2023
Parish
Key Priorities

Shared at November
General Assembly;
Used to build budget

Notations in RED were
updates at Spring GA
to report on progress

- ✓ Worship of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ
- ✓ Participate in the Sacramental Life of our Church
- ✓ Install Church Iconography **YES ++**
- ✓ Re-Design Financial Reporting **YES**
- ✓ Utilize “Breeze” CRM system **YES +**
- ✓ Deliver Youth and Young Adult Programs **YES**
 - VBS; Fireside Chat; Young Adult meetings; Outings; Combined inter-Orthodox Programs; “Hunger Strike”
- ✓ Continue Parish Fundraisers **YES**
 - Harvesting Hope ; Greek Festival ; Golf Tournament
- ✓ Hold Parish Celebrations **YES+**
 - Father’s 25th year at Parish
 - Parish Feast Day Celebration
- ✓ Offer Outreach Programs **YES**
 - OCMC
 - Mission IS Possible
 - Tunnels to Towers
 - HCHC

PEOPLE



A DEFINING MOMENT



A point-in-time when a person is challenged to make a pivotal decision which may significantly impact others

- ❖ Reveals what is “inside”
- ❖ A manifestation of the “WHY”



“Edging God Out”

Purpose

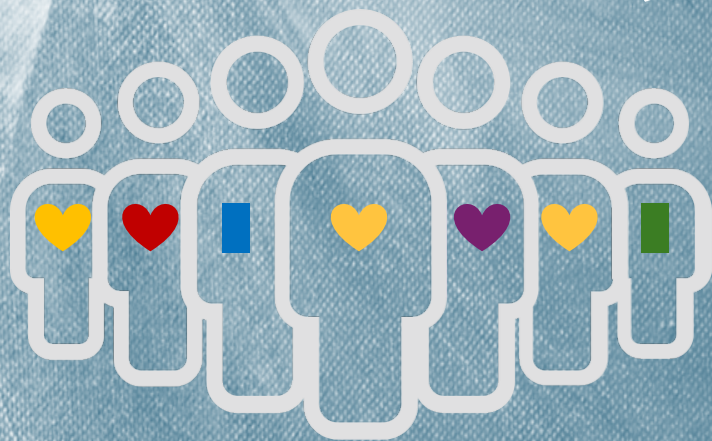
Plan



People

↑ Purpose

Plan



People



“What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don’t they come from your desires that battle within you? You desire but do not have, so you kill. You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask God.” James 4:1-2



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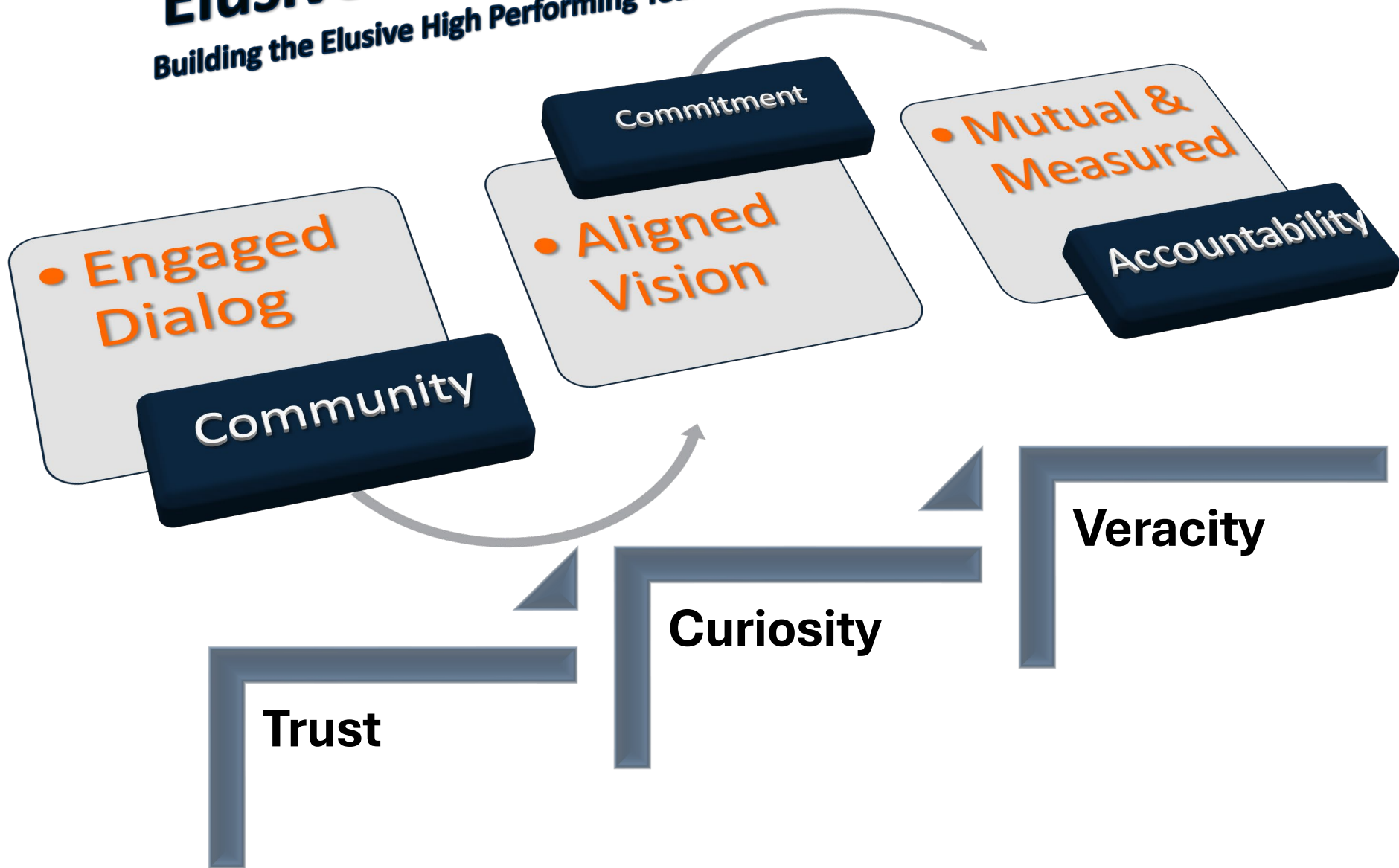
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Mitchen Leadership and Organization Development

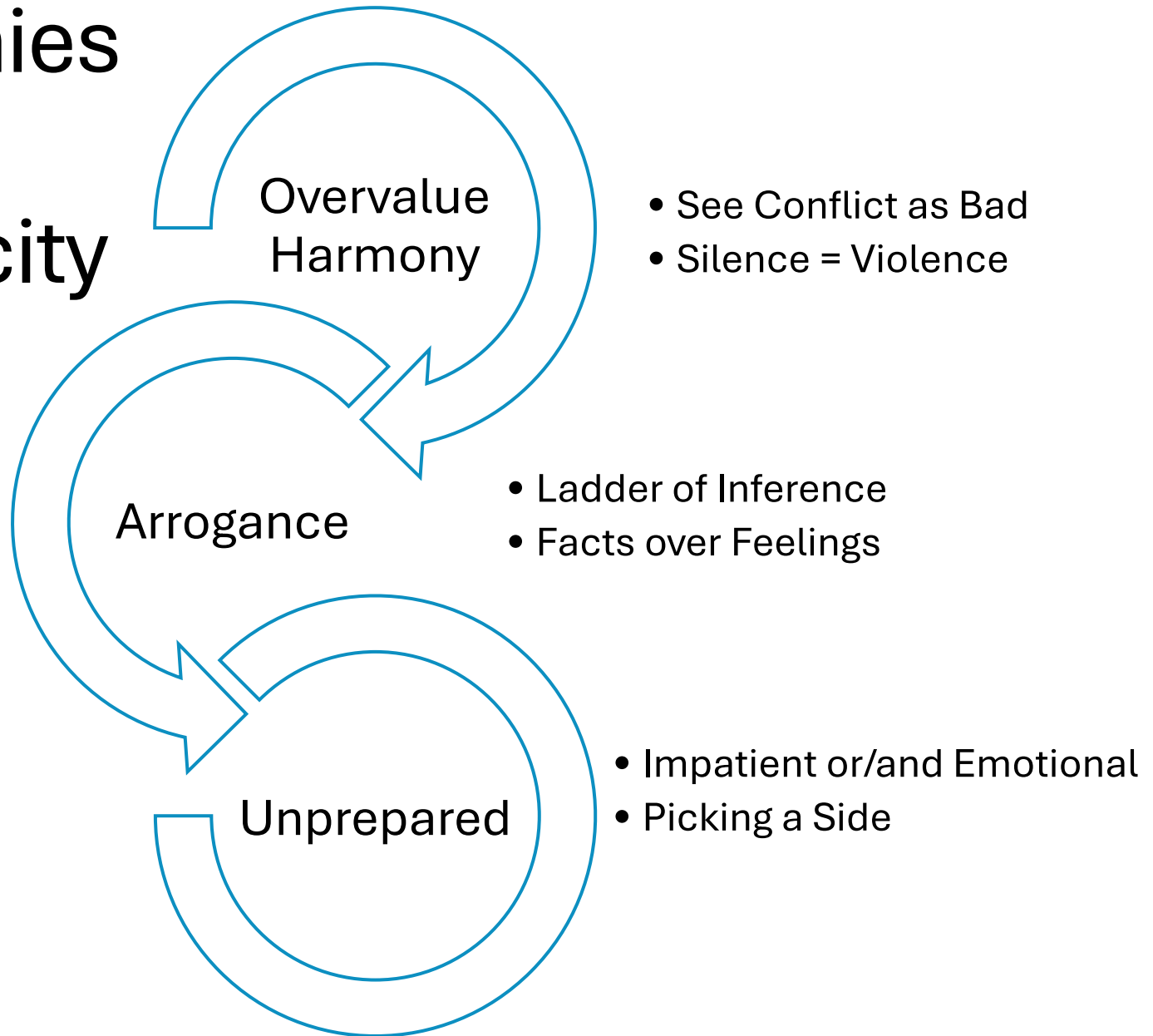


Elusive Leadership

Building the Elusive High Performing Team



Enemies of Veracity



Ownership &
Responsibility

The Art of
Listening

Understanding &
Sharing my
Intentions and
Story

Rephrase
Reframe
Reflect



Make it Safe



**The Right
Conversation**



Common Ground and
Shared Purpose

Time
Scope Permanence

Content - Event
Process - Pattern
Relationship

Interests vs.
positions

BADGER Approach

Beginning

- Overview, Share intentions & story, explain roles/ process/ confidential

Acquire Info

- Perceptions/ learn their story & needs/ check understanding

Define Issue(s)

- Main concern/ common ground / share purpose

Generate Alternative

- Any potential solution

Evaluate Alternatives

- Workability/ reality check/ prevent disagreements in future

Resolve

- Rephrase agreement or conclusions/ specifics



Executive Development
Strategic Positioning
Change Management
Leadership Development
Employee Engagement
Organizational Strengthening
Master Facilitation

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**GROWING LEADERS
GROWING SUCCESSFUL TEAMS
CELEBRATING 35 YEARS OF EXCELLENCE**

Birthplace of Elusive Leadership™

Sustaining Unity

Spiritual Focus Emphasize prayer, forgiveness, and reconciliation as core values in the community.

Amplify the “WHY” Focus on the shared faith, mission, and vision.

Healthy Leadership Leaders who model Love, Worship and Servant leadership.

Collaborative Decision-Making Involve a broader section of the parish community in decisions to foster a sense of shared ownership.

Open Communication Encourage honest and respectful dialogue without fear of retribution.

Mediation Bring in neutral third parties to facilitate the resolution of deeper conflicts.

Leadership Training Equip clergy and parish leaders with conflict resolution skills.

Recap

Managing Disagreement

- Listen First
- Clarify Viewpoints
- Use WHY As Filter

Resolving Conflict

- Use Guided Dialogue
- Clarify Misunderstandings
- Reaffirm Relationship

Rebuilding Unity

- Re-center On Christ & Mission
- Rebuild Trust
- Align Ministries To Vision
- Share Wins
- Cross-group Relationships
- Transparent Leadership

Priest - or Ministry Leader - as the Mediator

1. Prepare & Use Discernment

- Understand the Situation
- Mediator role: Impartial and Compassionate
- Are you qualified to handle the situation?
- Confirm Attendees

2. Set the Stage

- Create a Safe Space
- Set a Definitive Meeting Date & Time

3. Set the Tone

- Begin with a Prayer
- Set Expectations & Parameters

4. Facilitate Open Dialogue

- Allow expression of concerns
- Clarify Issues
- Listen

5. Find Common Ground

- Identify areas of agreement
- Focus on our shared identity as members of the Body of Christ
- Stress the Importance of Unity

6. Encourage Forgiveness & Reconciliation

"Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you." Ephesians 4:31-32

7. Identify Practical Next Steps

- Confirm in a written plan
- Draw in others, if appropriate

8. Follow-up with Both Parties

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God." Matthew 5:9

Sustaining Unity

Theological Foundations of Unity

- ✚ Holy Trinity
- ✚ Church as the Body of Christ
- ✚ Liturgical Participation

Culture of Forgiveness

- ✚ Confession
- ✚ Prayer
- ✚ Seeking Forgiveness & Healing

Scriptural References Emphasizing Unity, Peace and Forgiveness

Ephesians 4:1-3 (Unity and Peace)

“Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.”

James 1:19 (Listening and Understanding)

“My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry.”

Proverbs 19:1 (Overlooking Offenses)

“A person’s wisdom yields patience; it is to one’s glory to overlook an offense.”

Romans 12:18 (Living in Peace)

“If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.”

Issue Resolution

(But, What if They Still Don't Agree?)



1. Respectfully disagree, but remain faithful to Christ and His Church without becoming unpleasant to, or about, one another.
2. When open discord is allowed amongst church leadership, it will ultimately lead to a decline in the church.

1:1 Issue Resolution

1 PREPARE

- Pray and Reflect
- Prepare / Define the Issue

2 ENGAGE

- Initiate the Conversation
- Set a Calm, Professional Tone
- Acknowledge the Situation
- Seek Clarification / Root Cause
- Actively Listen
- Validate Feelings

3 COMMIT

- Agree on a Course of Action
- Call the Person the Next Day





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DISCUSSION

