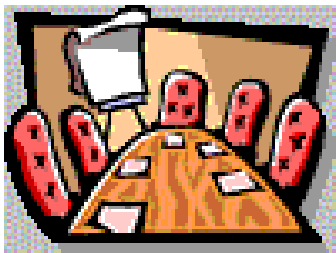


## Effective and Nourishing Meetings

One of our team members was at a Deanery meeting last week that modeled what an effective and nourishing meeting should be. It started promptly at 6:30pm with a blessing of the food by the host pastor followed by 20 minutes of delicious buffet food and good conversation, followed by 10 minutes of a gospel reading and faith sharing, followed by 2 presentations from outside speakers (who happened to be from the Pastoral Center), followed by the business of the Deanery. Everyone that usually comes was there. Issues were aired, questions and comments were welcome, but the agenda was adhered to. Plans were made and tasks divided up for the next meeting, and it ended on time. Is it possible to have an effective and nourishing meeting that people look forward to and attend? You bet!

### Homework

Anything worth doing is worth doing well. And organizing an effective and nourishing meeting is really worth doing, especially in this day and age when email, cell phones and faxes allow us to conduct so much business without meeting face-to-face. However, you have to prepare. Asking for agenda items beforehand and getting an agenda to the participants beforehand respects the participants. It isn't easy because it does require estimating how much



time each item will require and deciding what can be done at this meeting and what needs to be deferred or handled in another manner. Getting materials related to what will be discussed and decided upon to the participants beforehand is also an act of respect that will pay off with more focused discussion and more well-considered decisions during the meeting. Assigning tasks to participants at the end of the last meeting shares responsibility for the success of this meeting and

takes the burden off of your shoulders. Plus it invites creativity and allows people to express themselves in their own way in service of the group assembled. But you may want to check in or send a reminder before the meeting to make sure that the volunteers remembered to do what they said they'd do.

### H.A.L.T.

*Hungry. Angry. Lonely. Tired.*

You can expect that at least one person in the group assembled will be hungry, angry, lonely, or tired. And if they are, they will not be able to focus on the meeting agenda. They may even act to subvert the agenda until they get their more immediate (to them) needs met. So you will want to plan for this by addressing these normal human conditions in one way or another. If you have a meeting planned close to a



meal time, it might be smart to build a meal into it as was done at the Deanery meeting mentioned above. Then everyone won't be hungry during the meeting. Even if the meeting is planned for the middle of a morning or an afternoon, having healthy snacks and at least water available will help individuals who might have missed a meal address their hunger need. People are understandably happier when they are fed, and more likely to contribute positively to the task at hand. It isn't as easy to address anger (or other sharp emotions) at a meeting, but still possible. Having a check-in or sharing at the start of a meeting, even if it is just with the person you are sitting next to, can allow someone who is angry or hurting to express that, which goes a long way toward helping them then be able to address the meeting agenda items. Our natural loneliness can be addressed at a meeting by a little socializing before the meeting begins, celebrating birthdays or accomplishments at the start, or even by telling a joke and getting the group to laugh. And we can plan for people possibly being tired by scheduling meetings at better times for most people (e.g., not right after lunch), not letting a meeting go too late into the evening, and by having caffeinated beverages available.



### Meeting Execution

In order to respect the time of the participants and obtain the objectives you desire from the meeting, you'll want to make sure that the meeting:



- starts on time,
- stays focused,
- sticks with the agenda as much as practicable,
- invites participation,
- moves along when an item is discussed and decided,
- wraps up with action steps & commitments,
- plans for the next meeting,
- and ends on time.

The team is now feeling connected, informed, and refocused on the mission at hand. After the meeting it is a good idea to get a summary of the meeting or the minutes to the participants within a couple of days. Then you and the others will have time to implement what was decided, prepare for the next meeting, and report back what was done—at the next effective and nourishing meeting!

Attached, for your reference, is a one-page meeting checklist which may be helpful in planning, preparing and conducting your meetings.