



Episcopal Diocese of West Texas

Getting Started

by Ms. Terry Parsons

If excellence is your goal, where can you start?

I suggest you begin by scheduling two meetings, one for review, the other for planning.

Before the end of the year, gather the faithful (the committee, clergy, and significant workers) to review the year's activities. Identify what worked and what didn't. Think about what you think might work well next year. Can you identify potential additions to the committee? This should be a festive occasion. After all, the "fall begathon" is over for the year! Serve food and plan to enjoy yourselves. Regardless of the outcome of your efforts, God loves you and knows you struggle. Whatever you do, however, do not leave this meeting until you have scheduled a planning session to take place no later than the end of January.

Give yourselves plenty of time for reflection and contemplation for your planning meeting. The best such sessions are overnight at a retreat center. If this is not practical, consider an almost-all-day Saturday which takes place somewhere comfortable. (Some church furniture is of the sort that outlasted the Inquisition.) Try to invite a stranger to facilitate ("Strangers," commonly known as consultants, may be available in your own diocese. If not, check with the Office of Stewardship, Episcopal Church Center, 815 Second Avenue, New York, NY 10017 1-800-334-7626. They may have some suggestions.

Invite clergy and other lay leaders (vestry, etc.) to join you. Begin with inductive Bible study. Share stories. Dream boldly! And before the session is over, have a rough, general plan for the next three to five years as well as a specific plan for the current year.

Do not be surprised if you encounter resistance to attending these meetings. People are busy. I encourage you to be persistent. Excellence takes time and effort. In the long run it saves both.

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