

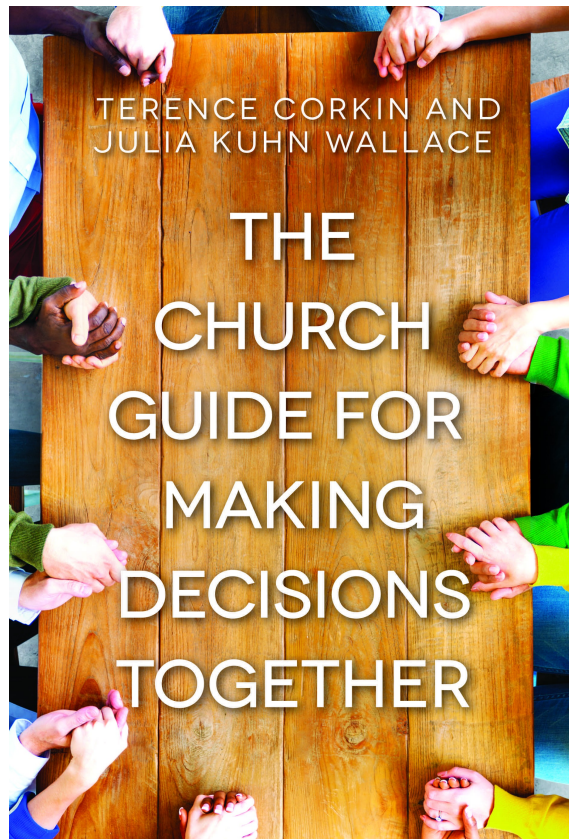


# Module 1: Lesson Outlines

Terence Corkin and Julia Kuhn Wallace

# Module 1 Lesson Outlines

This course is based on the book "The Church Guide for Making Decisions Together" by Terence Corkin and Julia Kuhn Wallace, Abingdon, 2017



## Module 1: Building Support for Consensus Based Discernment

### Lesson 1: Setting the scene – why change is needed

#### Outcomes

You will:

- understand why people are disengaging from church meetings
- be able to articulate the problems with Roberts' Rules of Order

#### Why We Need to Change How We Make Decisions

- Churches are experiencing growing incivility among members
- People leave the church and outsiders are appalled at Christian behavior
- People don't want to be involved in decision-making meetings
- Traditional meeting procedures aren't acceptable to many people today
- The current rules are confusing and disempowering

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## Roberts' Rules of Order

- Based on the rules of parliaments
- Movers and seconders who fight for their case
- Very structured and complex rules
- Rights based
- A simple majority is enough
- Can create many losers

## The Problem with Parliamentary Procedures

- Forces a "yes" and "no" choice
- Creates winners and losers
- Privileges educated people
- Can be confusing
- Little study, or small group interaction
- Inherently combative/oppositional
- Limits the range of outcomes
- Little care for church values

## Conclusion

- The present way of making decisions isn't working for most people
- The witness of the church is compromised
- Roberts' Rules are out of date
- It is time for a new way

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## Lesson 2: The values in a consensus Discernment Process

### Outcomes

You will

- increase the quality of your church's witness by improving the behavior and Christian character of your decision-making process
- Encounter the presence of God more in your meetings

### Rooted in Christian Values

- Encourages and generates collaboration
- Celebrates God's gift of diversity
- Humility
- Respects everyone
- Honesty about what is important

### Theological Foundations

- Discerning the will of Christ is a group project
- Discernment in church meetings is an exercise in discipleship
- Discernment is a spiritual exercise

### Conclusion

- Consensus discernment
  - builds up the Christian character of a group
  - fosters Christian behavior
  - Is grounded in confidence that God is present

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## Lesson 3: How to change to discernment

### Outcomes

You will

- have six ways to generate interest in change
- know how to position your organization for continuous improvement

### Lead from Positions of Strength

- Learn about consensus discernment
- Teach in your church about discernment – in sermons and studies
- Recommend books on community based discernment
- Introduce groups to elements of this process
- Church Board retreats
- Run a workshop

### Create a Culture of Improvement

- Conduct a performance review of your governance body or meetings
- Make a study of group dynamics and understanding of purpose
- Case studies or critical incident reviews
- Undertake a Values-Alignment Process

### Identify Who Wants to Change

- Who doesn't attend meetings any longer?
- Which parts of the congregation find it hard to participate?
- Where are the people who hope for better things from the church?

### Conclusion

- Changing the culture of an organization doesn't happen by accident – it needs a plan
- There are simple ways to start people thinking positively about consensus discernment
- There are people who want a different way

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## Lesson 4: How to prepare people to be good at Discernment

### Outcomes

You will

- remove undercurrents of discontent in meetings
- be a better spiritual leader by knowing how to develop the capacity of people for group discernment

### Agree on the Purpose of the Discernment Meeting

- A source of power
- A necessary evil
- Like a Parliament
- To gain compliance
- A support group
- Community based discernment

### Talk about Discerning God's Will

- The anointed leader showing the way
- Mystic experiences
- Scripture
- Tradition
- Prayer and other means of grace
- Reason and experience
- In community through sharing insights based on all the above

### Build Capacity

- Help people to grow in confidence as they gather to make decisions
- Assist people to work with different opinions and conflict
- Establish agreed ways to make decisions
- Involve people who know how to discern God's will for their own life

### Conclusion

- Prepare people to be good at discernment by
  - agreeing on the purpose of a meeting
  - understanding how different people find God's will
  - building capacity in the skills and practices of discernment

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## Lesson 5: Overcoming objections

### Outcomes

You will

- will be able to pastorally respond to people who are resistant to discernment and reduce the risk of conflict
- know how to respond to objections to consensus based discernment

### Main Resistance Points

- Understand the power of culture to address it
- The process takes too much time!
- It's too messy - emotions, rambling speeches and no clear direction
- Emotions take over – rather than reasoning. It dumbs down the debate
- Consensus leads to lowest common denominator decisions
- The church will lose its prophetic voice
- A small fringe group can impose a veto on taking action
- Can we trust this process?
- We've always done it this way

### Conclusion

- There are many objections to consensus based discernment
- There are respectful and persuasive responses to them all
- It is possible to show respect but not cave in

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Contact us for more information about our services.

Julia Kuhn Wallace



Terence Corkin



Web: [makingchurchdecisions.com](http://makingchurchdecisions.com)

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