

Faith Partners Vision Team Message to the Three Congregations
July 22, 2020

The Faith Partners Vision Team (FPVT) would like to start with the prayer from our commissioning, which we say at all our meetings: *Eternal Source of Creativity and Wisdom, who by the Holy Spirit guided the Apostles in all knowledge and truth: be present with us, the Faith Partners Vision Team. In the passions of debate give us a quiet spirit, in the complexities of the issues give us clear minds, and in the moments of decision give us courageous hearts. Guide us in all things to seek only your dream for you people; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Compression Planning Report

The FPVT thanks every member of our three congregations for their input in the brainstorming session, feedback at our February joint meeting, continued feedback and prayers. The Compression Planning Full Report was finalized by Laura Nelson and will serve as one of many pieces of input as we work through our vision. It was wonderful to hear from you all, thank you.

Focus: Near Term

As the team reviewed the report and the process, we had tough and inspirational discussions to discern God's call for our Faith Partnership. Though the big dreams inspired, we found a sense that God and our partnership was calling us to act now. As the pandemic broke, we continued meeting twice a month on Zoom and never lost the love, care, respect for or pace of our work. More recently, as our Fort Collins community, State, Country and World began to protest and call for justice against systemic racism, we found our focus more and more to be what we can do together today in the world we find ourselves.

Updated Norms (Operating Principles)

From the experience of the Compression Planning, we learned some things as Faith Partners and we updated our Norms (below).

Guidance on Financial Cost Sharing

The Cooperating Committee came to the FPVT requesting guidance on how the joint community should handle financial cost sharing. Our first step was to provide our updated norms. We are now working on a set of grounding metaphors and philosophies that the Cooperating Committee may use to spark conversations to help them discern each project that is proposed. We hope to have this to the cooperating committee within the month.

Invitation for Input

As we complete our “*Guidance on Financial Cost Sharing*” document, the FPVT will begin brainstorming and planning for what ministry we CAN do together at this time. What near term actions can we take for the Fort Collins or Northern Colorado Community together? How do we build our Faith Partners Community today while not being present in our physical space? We will revisit the compression planning report in our discernment, but we would love to hear from members of all three congregations about current ideas you may have for near-term projects. We invite you to contact any member of the FPVT with thoughts or ideas.

Your humble servants in Christ, Faith Partners Vision Team

Kerrie Anderson, Mary of Magdala

Alex Donovan, St Paul's

Judy Mathews, St Paul's

Lori Schmidt, Trinity Lutheran

Bill Smith, Mary of Magdala

Kate Stieben, Trinity Lutheran

Vicki Volbrecht, Trinity Lutheran

Yvonne Wootten, Mary of Magdala

John Wagner, Trinity Lutheran

John Williams, St Paul's

The Faith Partner Vision Team (FPVT) adopts the following norms:

Meeting Type: The FPVT prefers *face to face* meetings rather than email discussion or conference calls. Zoom visual technology may help but if at all possible, we need to meet in person. This norm can be adapted based on team consensus for reason including though not exclusively related to: urgent meetings, pandemics,

Meeting Minutes: Meeting minutes will be taken for each meeting and approved for the team records at the next meeting.

Meeting Format: Meetings begin and end with prayer. Typical agendas will include approval of last meetings minutes, new and old business.

Engagement: Our *general practice* during meetings will be to slow down and engage each person around the table, listening, asking or responding to clarifying questions and engaging with love, respect, emotional strength and intelligence, commitment to the common good and foregoing personal agendas. We will foster a sense of openness and candor within the team and among the members (see Communications from the Team).

Facilitation: Facilitators will ask if there are any opposing views *on every decision* and wait for a response, and also to *call on those not vocal* during issue discussions. If the facilitator prefers, they may ask for a volunteer to take the role of assuring that we are hearing from all voices during the meeting. The facilitator of the meeting is responsible to bring a copy of this document to the meeting.

Consensus Model for Decision Making: Our preferred approach is to reach a unanimous decision through building consensus as a group. To reach a decision, a quorum of 2 members from each congregation must be present (also the case if the team reaches the voting stage). Members may request to abstain from a particular decision if there are unusual circumstances such as a conflict of interest.

If the group is divided: we will:

Step 1: Yield. Stop. Pray. Listen. Try to identify how a problem emerged and the source of resistance by going around the table. Honor no cross-talk as each person responds uninterrupted. After hearing from everyone, if there is not clear consensus, the decision will be tabled until the next meeting.

Step 2: If in the next meeting consensus can still not be made, the team will use the 5-finger model:

5: I love it. I insist on it. I can't live without it.

4: I prefer it. I like it. But I can live without it and if it is the group's decision... I will support it

3: I am neutral on the question. I have no preference and if it is the group's decision... I will support it

2: I prefer not to do it/support it. I don't like it but I can live with it. If it is the group's decision... I will support it

1: I hate it. I insist against it. I can't live with it. I veto it.

We cannot move forward if 1s are present. We listen again and amend. If consensus cannot be reached, hit the pause button and postpone the decision until the next meeting.

Step 3: At the next meeting, if we still can't reach consensus we may resort to voting as we continue to listen to the minority voices (see **Discussion Norms** below). Though voting is generally by majority decision, if no member of a congregation votes in favor of a decision, then this is not considered a consensus. If consensus is blocked and no new consensus can be reached, the group may stay with whatever the previous decision was on the subject, or does nothing if that is applicable.

Step 4: If consensus is necessary, the team may opt to bring the decision to the cooperating committee for counsel.

Discussion Norms: If a decision has been reached, or is on the verge of being reached that you cannot support, there are several ways to express your objections:

- **Non-support** : "I don't see the need for this, but I'll go along."
- **Reservations:** "I think this may be a mistake but I can live with it."
- **Standing aside** : "I personally can't do this, but I won't stop others from doing it."
- **Blocking:** "I cannot support this or allow the group to support this. It is immoral." If a final decision violates someone's fundamental moral values they are obligated to block consensus.
- **Withdrawing from the group.** Obviously, if many people express non-support or reservations or stand aside or leave the group, it may not be a viable decision even if no one directly blocks it. This is what is known as a "lukewarm" consensus and it is just as desirable as a lukewarm beer or a lukewarm bath.

Communications from the Team: In order to foster open and candid discussions, meeting minutes are recorded only for the team and will not be published. To communicate to the community or congregations, the team will approve communications with the following process:

Step 1: Written communications should be submitted 24 hours before the next meeting.

Step 2: In the meeting the communication will be reviewed for any concerns, comments or edits. The communication will then be tabled until the next meeting.

Step 3: The team will then reach consensus using the **Consensus Model for Decision Making** in order to approve the communication. If consensus cannot be reached, the communication will not be shared outside the team.