

1 Guiding Philosophy for Development of Procedures Governing Shared Financial Decisions

From the Faith Partners Vision Team to the Faith Partners Cooperating Committee

After lengthy discussion and discernment, the Faith Partners Vision Team (FPVT) offers the following Guiding Christian Philosophy, Metaphors and Values to the Cooperating Committee as they seek to create a procedural framework for decisions regarding expenses shared among the three communities.

First, we want to acknowledge that no situation will fit any one model, and we know each situation will need to be considered with love and thoughtful attention. Since no one model fits all situations, we offer a set of guiding questions, instead of suggested rules, based on the FPVT's discerned understanding of our communal relationship.

1.1 Guiding Philosophy

When we think about being family and being in union with one another, we bring to mind the early church in Acts 4 and I Corinthians 12 as a model for how we are to share our resources and think about our commitments to one another:

Acts 4:32-35: ³² All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had. ³³ With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And God's grace was so powerfully at work in them all ³⁴ that there were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned land or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales ³⁵ and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone who had need.

I Corinthians 12:4-7: ⁴Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; ⁵and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; ⁶and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. ⁷To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

1.2 Guiding Metaphors

Family: We are a family with a shared home; we may have different responsibilities or means of providing, but we are all equally invested. We are more committed to the people than to the place.

Journey: We are journeying together; though we may be at various points along the road of this journey, we are seeking to find ourselves increasingly in-step with one another. We are in the process of saying "yes" to one another.

Union of Separates: As in marriage, we keep separate identities, but we are committed to one another. We give out of love and share out of need. We are "one body with many parts," with distinct functions that are all vital. We are a "threefold cord" not easily broken.

1.3 Guiding Values

When presented with a proposed expense/development, please consider these guiding values

Shared Home: In what way does this proposed purchase, and the division of cost, labor, and use, reflect a **relationship that is a shared-ownership rather than a tenant-landlord? What does it look like to share this step as a family? (How will this purchase and the division of cost/labor/use help us all feel more like this is home?)**.

1. **Doing more together:** In what way does this proposed purchase, and the division of cost, labor, and use, demonstrate our vision that we, *“the churches of Mary of Magdala Ecumenical Catholic Community, Trinity Lutheran Church, and St. Paul’s Episcopal Church,”* can **accomplish something more together, in full fellowship, than we could accomplish separately?**
2. **Strengthened commitment to one another:** In what way does this proposed purchase, and the division of cost, labor, and use, move us **toward our commitment to one another?**
3. **Respecting our unique churches:** In what way does the proposed purchase, and the division of cost, labor, and use, respect the unique needs of each church? Will it allow the respective churches to feel **fully empowered to live out their unique forms of community and ministry**, even if those look very different from the other churches?
4. **Strengthened commitment to our larger community:** In what way does this proposed purchase, and the division of costs, labor, and use, move **toward our commitment to our broader community?**

1.4 Application of Christian Philosophy

When our Faith Partnership is considering shared expenses, the hope is for the three churches within the Faith Partnership to:

1. Benefit from a proposed project, even if some have no ability to pay (or pay “equally”).
2. Function as a family: some may buy the groceries, and some may do the dishes; we do not all provide the same things or the same amounts of things, but we are all equally invested.
3. Prioritize inclusion, generosity, and love towards one another over any formula or algorithm that might overrule our values. We also keep in mind our commitments to this family; when we cannot step up financially, we find other ways to step up, and when it is simply our turn to receive, we do so knowing that our family loves us and is a living extension of God’s grace to us. We are people of grace.
4. Foster full participation of each faith community in the shared life of “family.”
5. Value and Respect the uniqueness of each church. All churches have a voice in anything which affects our sense of home and family.
6. Safeguard one another’s unique treasures while also moving closer to a state of union. We are asking the questions: “What would union look like?” “What would family look like?” “What does it mean to go farther down the road together?”

The Faith Partners Vision Team provides the Faith Partners Cooperating Committee the forementioned metaphors and values to help create a procedural framework and guidance that is both flexible and robust for making decisions.