



American Baptist Churches USA

Church Renewal & Organizational Development

The Movements within Worshipful Work

1. Framing: Identifying the heart of the matter
 - a. “Mental models” can form a foundation for the work ahead
 - b. A subject for discernment should be clearly stated and agreed upon by the entire group.
 - c. Ask: “May we consider this as a matter of group discernment?”
 - d. Example: Acts 15:1-4
2. Grounding: Identifying the underlying principles
 - a. Ask: “What is our guiding principle?”
 - b. Example: Acts 1:21-22 (replacement of Judas)
 - c. The discernmentarian should prepare a sample in advance
 - d. Come back to the guiding principle for review as needed
3. Shedding: Releasing or letting go of extraneous issues or attachments
 - a. Lay aside anything that will deter the group from discovering God’s will.
 - b. Ask: “What needs to die in us in order for God’s direction to find room here?”
 - c. Identify myths and let them go.
 - d. Even naming the difficulty helps... “I am having trouble...”
 - e. Goal of indifference: Not valuing anything as much as knowing and doing God’s will.”
 - f. Ask: “How many are indifferent to all but God’s will?”
 - g. The group can only move from “I” to “We” after everyone has expressed indifference.
4. Rooting: Identifying the biblical texts or denominational traditions pertinent to the issue
 - a. Ask: “What biblical images come to mind?”
 - b. Images need not be defended.
 - c. Include silent prayer
5. Listening: Identifying voices that need to be heard.
 - a. Ask: “What prayer needs to be prayed?”
 - b. Begin to see one another as colleagues
 - c. Ask: “What voices do we need to hear?”
 - d. Recognize distress in the group.
6. Exploring: Looking for all possibilities
 - a. Ask: “What are possible options or paths within the guiding principle?”
 - b. No option should be ignored or dismissed.

- c. Reduce the list to a manageable few.
 - d. Test each one for clarity
7. Improving: Advance each option until it is the best that it can be
- a. Ask: “How can we make each option the best that it can be?”
8. Weighing: Comparing and contrasting the options
- a. Ask: “Upon which option or path will the Spirit rest?”
 - b. Ask: “How can we come to a preference for a particular path?”
 - c. Options for weighing:
 - i. List the pros and cons for each option
 - ii. Select a symbol for each option and reflect upon them
 - iii. Trace the source of each option
 - iv. Conduct the five-way test for each option:
 - 1. Is it filled with what is good for all?
 - 2. Is it heavy with the fear of God?
 - 3. Is it genuine in the feelings that underlie it?
 - 4. Is it lightweight because of human show or because of some thrust toward novelty?
 - 5. Has the burden of vainglory lessened its merit or diminished its luster?
 - v. Place each path “near the heart” in the Jesuit tradition
 - 1. Is there consolation – a sense of peace and movement toward God?”
 - 2. Is there desolation – a sense of dis-ease and movement away from God?”
 - d. Read John 14:1-3 to see what place God is preparing for the answer
9. Closing: Which option will nourish God’s soul or advance God’s mission for our organization?
- a. Ask: “Which will most nourish God’s soul?”
 - b. Weave back and forth between dialogue and discussion until an option is reached.
 - c. Listening, exploring, and improving all fall into the dialogue category
 - d. Closing falls into the discussion category
 - e. Use levels of consensus
 - f. Try one or more of the following if the group is divided:
 - i. Reconsider the guiding principle
 - ii. Take time for further prayer and reflection
 - iii. Appoint one or more persons to decide for the group
 - iv. Vote
 - v. Count only the affirmative votes
 - vi. Drop It
10. Resting
- a. Ask if there is consolation or desolation with the decision.
 - b. Ask: “Is our decision God’s will, nothing more, nothing less, nothing else?”