



## Discernment Process for NPS Presbytery and Sequim Community Church

Adopted by NPS Presbytery on November 19, 2008

**Purpose:** To come together as one group of Christians who will seek the mind and heart of Christ for Sequim Community Church, and emerge with a joint recommendation to be made to the congregation and the presbytery. Group members will develop respect for one another. This is not mediation, arbitration or negotiation at this point although that may develop depending on the recommendation we make. Disagreement among members is expected, the group should seek to avoid an adversarial stance.

**Time Anticipated:** Present through May 2009. 8-10 Meetings. 1 intensive weekend.

### **Grounded in Scripture & Prayer**

The whole discernment process will be immersed in prayer. Each meeting will begin with prayer and reflection on Scripture, using Step 5, page 17, of *Curtiss*. The group might brainstorm a list of texts, particularly from Acts and the Epistles, that address the Church during times of direction-altering decision-making, and conflict.

**Step 1: Develop a Covenant** - The group must develop norms, values and commitments so the members feel safe in sharing their respective thoughts, feelings and ideas. [1 Meeting \(November 12, 2008\)](#)

#### Suggestions of areas that might be addressed:

- a. Confidentiality/Levels of Disclosure
- b. Communication outside the meetings - who is it okay for members to talk to about what? When and how often will whole congregation/presbytery be informed/involved.
- c. Working for consensus - "Integrity is more important than consensus." In other words, each person must freely and completely speak his or her mind, without fear of damaging the unity of the group. True consensus will only be reached if members are willing to do this.

**Note:** While negotiating a solution between parties in conflict, it is expected that teams/sides present a united front, and that team members not "break ranks." In discernment, each person is striving to listen to the Holy Spirit, so it is assumed each person will have unique feelings, knowledge and opinions. Thus it is healthy for each person to disclose both the areas of agreement and disagreement with one's own "team/side" and where each can agree with the opposing team/side.

- d. Levels of disclosure
- e. Commitment to the process
- f. Communication Norms

Communicate covenant to SCC session and NPSP Council

**Facilitation** – The group decided on 10/22/08 that we would not invite a 3<sup>rd</sup> party facilitator at this time. All are open to it later on if an individual step or the overall process begins to exhibit a need for it.

**Step 2: Clarify the Issues** - partially complete, but needs to be continued. Progress by having individuals speak personally about the issues, instead of "sides/teams" naming issues. State issues as questions to be discerned. [1-2 Meetings \(November 2008\)](#)



**Step 2: Clarify the Issues (cont.):** Some issues identified so far.

From Discernment Letter of 9/24/2008

- Why is it important to be part of a denomination; particularly a Presbyterian denomination.
- What are the strengths and concerns of the PCUSA?
- What are the options if SCC were not to be PCUSA? What are the strengths and concerns of those options?
- What is the vision and call of SCC? How does it coincide with and/or diverge from NPSP/PCUSA?

From Meeting on 10/08/2008

- “Vector” of PCUSA “official” theology
- PCUSA position on the authority of Scripture
- Actions of the 217<sup>th</sup> and 218<sup>th</sup> General Assemblies
- Role of building campaign fundraising?
- SCC relationship with NPSP, helpful, harmful, indifferent?
- Relationship with real property?
- NPSP mission strategy in Sequim area?
- Concern about SCC’s non-participation in Presbytery/PCUSA.
- Pastoral concern for Sequim members committed to PCUSA.

**Step 3: Research, Study, and Share Information** regarding issues identified above. [2-3 Meetings \(December 2008 -January 2009\)](#)

*Session and congregation involvement are high at this stage. We will design and facilitate information sharing opportunities with the SCC session and congregation.*

**Step 4: Brainstorm Options:** [1 Meeting \(February 2009\)](#)

*Session, Congregation and NPSP Council will need to be involved and know the options that are being considered.*

**Step 5: Weigh the Options:** [1 Weekend Intensive \(March 2009\)](#)

**Step 6: Choose Direction:** [1 Weekend Intensive \(March 2009\)](#)

**Step 7: Rest with the Direction:** [\(March – April 2009\)](#)

**Step 8: Recommend Direction:** Discernment group recommends direction to both SCC Session and NPSP Council. This will take time for both bodies to process before acting. [\(April 2009\)](#)

*Session, congregation, and presbytery involvement are high.*

**Step 9: Act on recommendations.** SCC session/congregation acts on recommendation. NPSP council/presbytery acts on recommendation. [\(May 2009\)](#)

**Step 10: Implementation.** Turn over to constitutionally appropriate bodies for implementation [\(Summer 2009\)](#)