

Discernment Process at CPMC's Annual Meeting 2022

Session 1: Welcoming guests, friends, and relatives to the table.

Establishing who we are and where we've been—seeing who has come to the table, recognizing and valuing our differences

1. Childhood sayings:
 - a. Take two minutes to think about your childhood, what are some sayings, words or phrases that you often heard adults say?
 - b. Get into pairs (or threes), share your childhood sayings and some of the context surrounding them. (Who said this? What setting? What values do you think you learned from hearing this? Do you still hold those values or beliefs?)
 - c. Take 5 minutes to discuss the differences and similarities between the sayings you each heard: did you and your partner hear different kinds of cultural messages growing up? How might these differences and similarities influence your communication with each other?
2. Bible study:
 - a. Look up:
 - i. Luke 5:27-32
 - ii. Luke 11:37-52
 - iii. Luke 22:14-38
 - iv. Luke 7:36-50
 - v. Luke 14:1-24
 - vi. Luke 10:38-42
 - vii. Luke 19:1-10
 - b. Individually notice—Who is Jesus eating with in each passage? What do you notice about them?
 - c. Group-Make a list of everyone at the table. Talk about the people on the list. What do you see (social location, socio-economic level, education, politics, etc.)?
 - d. What are the similarities amongst the people at the table? Differences?
 - e. What can we learn from the list that we created? (JESUS IS AT THE CENTER)
3. Bring it all together around the table:
 - a. Thinking back to your childhood sayings, what influence have they had on your values and beliefs?
 - b. What are the cultural values and beliefs that have shaped us in different ways around the table?
 - c. Given our shared identity in Jesus and all of the cultural influences on our lives, how does this affect how we come to discussions about the church/the Bible?

Session 2: Who are we, and how are we setting the table?

Individually connecting, importance of US, emphasizing shared identity, reestablishing connections, finding value in our differences

1. Discussion:
 - a. Who makes up your congregation?

- b. What do you value about your congregation?
 - c. What do you/what does your congregation value about your relationship to Conference?
2. Sharing our stories:
- a. Break into pairs (or threes), answer the question “What is the story of your relationship to the church?
 - i. How has it formed you?
 - ii. What is or has brought you joy?
 - iii. What is or has been difficult?
3. Bible study:
- a. Look up:
 - i. Luke 6:1-11
 - ii. Luke 13:10-17
 - iii. John 8:1-11
 - iv. Matthew 20:20-28
 - b. What is the law/cultural construct or norm that is influencing the people coming to Jesus?
 - c. What seems to be important to the people who are coming to see Jesus?
 - d. How does Jesus respond to these situations?
 - e. What does Jesus prioritize? What seems to be important to Jesus?
 - f. What do you notice about what Jesus is doing?
4. Bring it all together: When/Where/How have you seen the church respond like Jesus?

Session 3: Where do we sit? What is the main course? Why are we here?

We have differences, but we are held together and supported by a broader group—what does it look like for us to move forward?

- 1. Discussion: Who are we?
 - a. Recall conversations from yesterday—what seemed important?
 - b. What similarities among us need emphasis?
- 2. Bible Study -Transformation
 - a. Look up:
 - i. Luke 19:1-10
 - ii. Acts 9:1-19
 - iii. Acts 2: 38-47
 - iv. Acts 10
 - b. How is space made for Jesus in these stories?
 - c. What happens when space is made for Jesus?
- 3. Bringing it all together:
 - a. What is important to us?
 - i. What are the differences that have been the cause of negative tension?
 - ii. What are differences that have energy (tension) for positive transformation?
 - iii. What are the differences that move us towards transformational change in Jesus?

- b. How do we connect?
 - i. What is important in our congregational connections?
 - ii. What role can conference play in facilitating our connections?
 - iii. What role can conference play in fostering transformational change that helps us to engage the world around us?
 - iv. How can congregations (and the conference) help to make space for Jesus so that people can encounter Jesus and be transformed in these encounters?

Session 4: Dessert—lingering at the table and getting ready to go

What do we carry as we leave the table?

1. What will you take home from this meeting?
2. Given our center in Jesus:
 - a. What are the differences/similarities that give you creative energy that can help move you forward into what God is doing in your midst?
 - b. What are the differences/similarities that give your congregation energy that can help move you forward into what God is doing in your midst?
 - c. What are the points of difference/similarity that give our conference creative energy that can help move us forward into what God is doing in our midst?
 - i. In what ways can Conference staff, committees, etc. support your congregation in moving forward?