

A Season of Innovation Discernment

Notes for the Pastor and NLI Team for the

Monday after the Weekend to the Final Church Conference Vote and Beyond

Congratulations on completing your Innovations Weekend! We thank everyone for their hard work in making such a detailed and extensive church-wide event happen. We have some advice going forward into the season of prayerful discernment, town hall meetings and the final church conference vote.

1. **Pray, Pray, Pray.**

- a. Celebrate that the Holy Spirit was heard in the process! Prayers have brought your church to this point in the process and will continue to be essential moving forward.
- b. Acknowledge and make part of the prayerful process any fears, grief over loss or change, or uncertainty.
- c. Consider sharing a particular prayer for your church over the next several weeks – before meetings, in worship, in Sunday school classes. If you need a copy of the communal Wesleyan Covenant Prayer we use frequently in NLI let us know and we will send it to you.

2. **Communication, Communication, Communication:** Over the next several weeks, some people are going to be anxious and have questions, and some people will know nothing about what has happened while they were out of town – and everything in between!

- a. I.R.A. – Information Reduces Anxiety. The Innovations Report should be easily accessible on the website, should be in printed copy in meeting rooms, on bulletin boards, in newsletters – however your church communicates - the report should be available. All groups & meetings held should reference “Hey, have you read the Innovations Report?” and/or “Would you pray with me for discernment on the upcoming vote?”
- b. You will receive with this information a “Frequently Asked Questions” document that may help with some questions – please feel free to publish it and to train the NLI team and other leadership with those answers.
- c. As the FAQ states - the Innovations are intentionally vague in some areas that need to be worked out, and specific in areas there seemed to be common agreement on. Keep the report in front of people, and keep referring them back to the report.
 - i. If it isn’t designated specifically – that is for the church to do.
 - ii. If it is designated – then the team heard the church and the Spirit moving in a specific direction and shared that as a more specific Innovation.
- d. Remind people – the Innovations came from them, not from an outside consultant’s opinion or from the District or Conference. The Innovations report came from prayer, from interviews of the clergy, staff and lay leaders, from interviews of newcomers to the church, from interviews done at the all-day retreat, from the church self-study, from the Discipleship Survey and from mystery worshippers.

3. **Stay calm. Stay connected even to the hard people.** Recognize that all the particular anxiety points of your congregation will probably be raised up and attached to the Innovations. Lift up and celebrate those who are leaders in moving through the process in a healthy way. Remind people to read the Innovations before listening to the latest rumor on what it might say.

4. For the **Town Halls** in particular:
- a. Goal of the Town Hall: To allow questions to be answered, feedback to be given, concerns to be heard and prayer and listening regarding the Innovations Report to continue as part of the whole post-weekend discernment process.
 - b. Provide child care for these meetings please! It means your families will be able to participate. And, if necessary, translation for non-English speakers.
 - c. Before the meeting:
 - i. See Communicate, Communicate, Communicate above!
 - ii. Open up your website and/or a physical question-box for questions to be addressed at the meeting. Since the Weekend Innovations Team will not be attending the Town Halls, it would be helpful for the one who runs the town hall to have the questions ahead of time so answers can be found before the meeting and then shared at the meeting. Send the questions you can't answer to the at SarahCalvert@vaumc.org or text to Sarah's phone and we will get answers back to you by your town hall.
 - d. During the meeting:
 - i. As people come in have them sign up to speak; this kind of commitment helps reduce some of the longer, more effusive speeches. Give a time limit based on the amount of time available – such as 5 minutes for each person. This will form the agenda.
 - ii. Ground the Innovations in the prayer and scripture as a key part of the Town Hall – start with Biblical understandings of times change, like stories from Exodus about a community in new formation, or from Nehemiah about building the wall, or Jesus sending his disciples out, or stories from Acts. Make sure people understand how rooted in scripture and prayer the process of community change should be.
 - e. Information for the process:
 - i. The Innovations Report is voted on as a whole, yes or no for the entire report, by the members present and voting. No proxies are allowed in the vote.
 1. If the vote is for the innovations 70% of those present and voting or above, the work will begin almost immediately and the District and your Mentor will begin training, teams will be formed and movement will begin into the Innovations.
 2. If the vote is negative, we wish the church well, and the District and Mentor resources will be redeployed to other NLI churches that approve their Innovations.
 - ii. Remind them of the dates of all remaining town hall meetings and the called Church Conference date and time.
 - iii. Make sure everyone has had a copy of the Innovations Report – consider reading at least the key headlines in summary.
 - f. Moderator at the Town Hall:
 - i. We suggest the Pastor should NOT be the moderator, but should attend to answer questions and listen to the feedback.
 - ii. How to be a good moderator: Ideally, the moderator should have some familiarity with the issue, but that knowledge may be secondary to his or her skills in keeping a meeting moving and on point. People need to be heard and order needs to be kept –

it's a balance. The moderator should thoroughly understand the goals of the meeting as noted above.

- iii. The moderator should ensure adherence to the time schedule, should not allow the agenda to be hijacked members, should be able to insert questions or topics to keep the meeting moving as necessary, and should be skilled enough to help move toward consensus on discernment after one or two meetings on the same topic.
- g. Suggested Agenda:
 - i. Start on time!
 - ii. Devotion, prayer
 - iii. Answering of Questions – from the web page or questions box, Moderator should read the questions and answers obtained. If helpful, pass out the FAQ we sent you.
 - iv. Speakers – Speakers should be given their time to speak, no more and less only if they stop early! Consider covenanting to be kind and gentle to each other, not to interrupt each speaker, and to allow a certain number of questions to the speaker and/or moderator after each speaker.
 - v. If there are questions that remain unanswered at the end, keep track of those and answer them either at the next town meeting or at the church conference.
 - vi. Close with prayer, and on time to value people's contribution of their time to the process.

5. Called Church Conference

- a. Make sure the Church conference date time and place is communicated in at least two worship services prior to the meeting.
- b. Communicate, communicate, and communicate as above.
 - i. Have the FAQ report and any additional questions that needed answering available on an ongoing basis in all communication sites as questions are formed and answered.
- c. The DS will usually run the Called Church Conference.
- d. Only those who are members and present may vote at the meeting – no proxy votes are allowed
- e. Start and end on time.
- f. Vote by ballots, yes or no, with the name of the person voting (to assure they are a member).
 - i. Have them counted by at least two people and have them write down the result and announce it to everyone. With a big group, this can be a long process – make sure you have enough counters, and probably some ushers to help.
 - ii. During the wait – sing some hymns! Say some prayers!
- g. Open and close with prayer and devotion.
- h. Immediately after the vote if it is positive – see #6

6. After the Church Conference

- a. Please send an email to SarahCalvert@vaumc.org and let us know the vote tallies (if we weren't in attendance). It is a piece of the feedback for the NLI process.
- b. If the vote is negative, you have the report, self-study, Real Discipleship Survey and mystery worshipper reports already – good luck and God bless! The Mentor, and the priority on the District resources will not be available going forward.

- c. If the vote is positive, please be prepared to move immediately into the Innovations process. The pastor can prepare ahead of time by speaking to potential leaders with gifts in the areas where teams are being set up – “IF the vote is positive, will you serve as a leader in this team?”
 - i. Those leaders should be standing at the door after the positive vote to recruit people with gifts and skills that can begin to fill their teams.
 - ii. For classes, etc. that the District, Mentor or others are leading – have sign ups available immediately after the vote.
- d. The more actions taken within 48 hours of a positive vote, the more energy and optimism the Innovations can accrue and take into the next 18 months or so of work.

