

Leader's Handbook



Faith and Light International



Faith and Light International

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Introduction

Thank you for accepting to be a leader in Faith and Light. Following the way of Jesus, the Good Shepherd, you are a shepherd in Faith and Light. All the coordinators in Faith and Light work together to nourish the life of our communities, which are the very heart of our movement.

We know that there are joys, challenges and difficulties associated with a leadership role. We can only keep going because we are not alone. We know that Jesus is close and that he said: **“Come to me all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest.”**

Jesus has also given us people to support us: the community coordinating team, the Provincial Team, the International Coordinators’ Council and its Coordination Team. These are people that he has given us to share our joys and sufferings, our fears and our hopes.

Now we would like to offer you a little extra help, a sort of “shepherd’s crook”. All past experiences, both positive and negative, light a path for us to follow. This handbook is by no means complete. It is meant to be used together with Our Charter, Constitution and the Statutes of the International Association. No single document can cover all the circumstances encountered by all the communities and leaders in Faith and Light. However, we feel it can help to answer any queries you may have.

Such as it is, we pray that this document may be of use to you and help you with those you are responsible for so that they grow in unity and peace. It is really important that we build and strengthen this place of forgiveness and celebration, where all of us, whether with disabilities or not, family members or friends, can grow in our love for God and for each other.

Our vocation and our mission in the world

We see belonging to Faith and Light and accepting responsibility to lead in Faith and Light as the call of God. We believe that when God inspired Marie-Hélène Mathieu and Jean Vanier in 1968, it went well beyond simply recognising the needs and sufferings of the Profit family (Camille, Gérard, Loïc and Thaddée) and families like them. Nor was it simply to give young people the opportunity of making a commitment to a potentially life-changing movement. Nor was it solely to bring to the attention of the Christian Churches their need to find a meaningful place for all their members.

God has given Faith and Light the mission of becoming a living witness, in the world and to the world, of the values that Jesus revealed and taught: mutuality of gifts and needs, unity and harmony in diversity, the inestimable value of each and every human being and, above all, loving as we are loved by God. In our communities we strive to live, ever more fully, the truth that each and every human being is precious, needed and loved. As coordinators in Faith and Light, we have a mission within our movement to be faithful to the gift we have been given. But we also have a mission that goes beyond our little communities, our provinces, and even our whole international family. In many, perhaps most, parts of the world, Faith and Light is counter-cultural. We cannot exist just for ourselves. Echoing God's words to his servant (Isaiah 49: 6) it is not enough for us to serve members of Faith and Light. God desires that we be a "light to the nations" so that his "salvation may reach to the ends of the earth." The world needs us to live our vocation faithfully, as witness, and so do we.

I – The role of the coordinator in Faith and Light

There are several areas of responsibility in Faith and Light. At each level (community, province and international), there are coordinators who are discerned and **elected** to lead a team responsible for the organization and life of the movement at community, province or international level. There are vice-coordinators who are discerned and **appointed**¹ to support the coordinator with the priorities and community, province and international projects and to guide provinces (international vice-coordinators) or communities (province vice-coordinators).

1) The Faith and Light Coordinator, a Servant

Within Faith and Light, whether guiding or coordinating, the coordinator² is first and foremost a servant, following the footsteps of Jesus, who came to serve (John 13, 1-17). He/She is called by God to serve brothers and sisters for a specified period of time, the duration of the mandate. The coordinator spends time alone in prayer in order to be led by the Holy Spirit and to learn to be “meek and humble of heart”.

The main role of the coordinator is to love persons with an intellectual disability³ to be close to their parents and family members and to be able to invite and to encourage meeting with friends, especially young people. He/She is a disciple of Jesus in His Church. The coordinator also wants to understand and to be with and serve those for whom he/she is responsible. In order to serve others well, the coordinator recognizes his/her own needs and takes good care of him/herself.

One of the unique aspects of Faith and Light is that all of those who accept leadership roles do so as volunteers. We all have full lives, of

¹ Or sometimes elected at province level. At community level, there isn't a vice-coordinator but a coordination team

² ‘Coordinator’ is a generic term within Faith and Light. It designates a person either temporarily appointed for a coordinator role, or elected for a community, provincial or international responsibility. At each level of responsibility, the coordinator (coordinator or correspondent) is a layperson. The coordinator can be elected either individually as one person, or as a married couple. In the latter case, the couple has one vote. Both members of the couple are invited to participate in all meetings.

³ We have kept the expression “intellectual disabilities” in this text. The terminology has evolved considerably over time and in different cultures. Each country should utilize the expression commonly used, providing it conveys respect for the person.

which, Faith and Light is one special part. Because of our other concerns and responsibilities (family, job, etc.), we are not always available and we certainly cannot do everything that others might ask or expect us to do. We learn to accept our limitations, to make choices about what we can do and to rely on God and others more. The coordinator accomplishes his/her role by being a **Servant of the Vision**, a **Servant of Communion**, and a **Servant of Organization**, with an awareness of the value and gifts of all the members of Faith and Light.

As a **Servant of the Vision**, the coordinator sees the importance of persons with intellectual disabilities and their family members in God's plan and understands how much they need to be surrounded by friends and a community. In addition, the coordinator must have a real understanding of Faith and Light as expressed in the Charter and Constitution (vocation, inspiration, goals and structure of Faith and Light). He/she is guided by their inspiration and follows the path they are shown. Being a Servant of the Vision is the primary responsibility of the coordinator in Faith and Light. The coordinator has to make sure he/she is not overloaded by all the activities to be organized or even by the guidance of community members or other coordinators. Losing sight of the vision leads to demotivation and a deterioration in the quality of community life.

As a **Servant of Communion**, the coordinator carries in his/her heart and prayers the persons entrusted to him/her, allowing each one to find his/her place and the space needed for their growth and the exercise of their talents. The coordinator listens, is patient, is willing to work through difficulties, discuss conflicts that may arise, knows how to forgive and how to work with people who are different, encouraging an atmosphere of reconciliation. The leader is humble; strives to become a good shepherd, knowing each person by name and bringing them together under his/her leadership. The coordinator is an architect of unity.

As a **Servant of Organization**, the coordinator is responsible for organizing and coordinating activities that nourish community life whilst addressing the needs of each person for growth. He/she is never alone regardless of the responsibility entrusted to him/her. The coordinator is helped and supported by those who chose him/her and with whom he/she works. Together, they share responsibility: they carry the life of Faith and Light in prayer, they

plan and evaluate, they recognize and emphasise the gifts of all members, helping each member to grow and to find a place of belonging, they see needs and set priorities. Often the greatest service is to offer others the opportunity to use their gifts and talents in a constructive way that makes a contribution to the community. The coordinator is someone who knows how to delegate.

Each coordinator is confirmed, encouraged and helped to grow by the leader who guides him or her. Confronted with the importance of the responsibility entrusted to us, we can be filled with fear and doubt: we don't have all qualifications. To exercise a responsibility is a gift from God. We will request help from our brothers and sisters in our areas of weakness. God is close to those who fulfil leadership positions and strive to exercise them humbly and in a spirit of service. We can be sure of one thing, we are not alone.

a) Vision

In Faith and Light, we believe that God has given us a vision of how people, in the Spirit of Jesus, can come together, meet one another and provide support for one another in communities of friendship as described in the Charter and Constitution. The coordinator is a servant of this vision.

Serving the vision

The coordinator constantly announces the vision, not only within the Faith and Light Family but also to the Churches and society, making the world aware of the gift of persons with intellectual disabilities, their need for relationships, friendship and community. He/she emphasises the importance of Faith and Light for inclusion and integration.

The coordinator constantly reminds the Faith and Light Family (members and communities) of the vision. He/she encourages all members to look for opportunities to develop humanly and spiritually. We can be so busy with all our activities that we can forget the essential. The reality of our community life can be difficult and sometimes discouraging. This may lead us to lose our vision and impoverish the quality of community. "Without vision, people are lost." (Prov. 29:18) The coordinator reminds us of the vision and keeps the fire burning in our hearts.

Nourishing the vision

The coordinator deeply believes in the values and the necessity for a community, for him/herself and others. He/she understands that his/her most important nourishment is to participate as a member of one's own community. In community, the coordinator can experience the gifts of the persons with intellectual disabilities, their capacity for growth, and the special role they can play in bringing together people of different cultures, backgrounds and religious traditions.

The leader seeks out the wisdom of others who have been living in the spirit of Faith and Light for a longer time, tapping into their experience, willing to learn and grow in order to serve his/her people better.

To become a better servant of the vision, the coordinator in Faith and Light is constantly nourished by the Charter. He/she is someone who finds inspiration and renewal through reflection and personal prayer, alone and with his/her team and community. The coordinator feels called to work for the aims and goals of Faith and Light.

As a servant of the vision, following Jesus, the coordinator remains open and attentive to the movements and inspiration of the Holy Spirit within him/herself and within the community. The leader reads the signs of the times to be able to take on new challenges as they arise, with trust. To achieve this, the coordinator and his/her team need to stay rooted in Jesus and in His Church and to spend time in prayer and discernment. (Appendix 3, page 56).

b) Communion

Faith and Light is a community movement built on deepening the bonds between people.. Communion is being with one another in a deeper or more profound way. We “waste” time together, getting to know one another and ensuring that everyone is listened to and heard, no matter what their particular “language” is. In community, our hopes and fears, ideas and desires are received, acknowledged and understood. We are accepted as we are with the help of God's grace.

As a Servant of Communion, the coordinator has a special responsibility to be an architect of unity. He/she does this by seeking consensus, inviting his/her team to find the common ground from which they can all go forward together, in a spirit of unity for a fuller life.

The coordinator listens attentively to each person. When conflicts arise, he/she acts as mediator, not judging or taking one side against another, but trying to discover the truth and reminding all involved of the values and principles on which the community and movement are founded.

The coordinator also gives witness by example, being ready to acknowledge one's own needs and mistakes and to ask for forgiveness and help. In community, our strength is very often found in our ability to show our vulnerability to one another.

As a Servant of Communion, following Jesus, the coordinator knows each person by name and calls on all members to follow Jesus. The coordinator walks with those he/she guides, encouraging, inviting, challenging, confirming and assisting them as best he/she can.

c) Organization and coordination in Faith and Light

What is coordination?

Faith and Light is a community movement within an international family. Every community and movement needs a structure that specifies responsibilities, cooperation mechanisms and management methods.

Coordination in Faith and Light is a service based around a community, province or the international level, which allows each level to uphold the vocation and mission of Faith and Light. It relies on loving, clear, direct, timely and accurate communication.

Faith and Light believes that every member is responsible for the life of our movement according to his/her gifts and abilities. For this, every member, especially the coordinator and members of coordination teams, needs ongoing training.

Coordination in Faith and Light is a task for a specific time period. It is essential that each coordinator step down away from the coordination role after their mandate to allow others to develop and share their coordination gifts.

As a Servant of Organization, the coordinator, following the example of Jesus, delegates and entrusts tasks and responsibilities to everyone so that the community, movement and all its members live and grow.

The coordinator

With their team, they share the responsibility to coordinate the work of the community or another circle of responsibility in the spirit of Faith and Light.

Faith and Light has a specific discernment process to choose its coordinators.

Where does coordination happen?

Coordination happens in every circle of responsibility in Faith and Light: community, province, international.

The exercise of coordination in Faith and Light

Coordination in Faith and Light is shaped by the type of community movement we have. It comes from a life of prayer, listening to the Holy Spirit and discernment (See Appendix 3, page 56). It is attentive to everyone. It promotes the gifts of each member, recognizing and using them. It helps each person to grow and to find his/her place.

Coordination in Faith and Light is collegial. It encourages shared responsibilities where all members of the team participate in reflections, discussions and decision-making. After listening, reflection and dialogue, decisions are made, as much as possible, by consensus. When the team cannot arrive at consensus, a vote is carried out after listening to all points of view. On very rare occasions the coordinator may need to take a decision by him/herself, through prayer and after listening to all concerned.

- Coordination in Faith and Light fosters true community spirit among team members; each team splits the meeting time into the four community meeting sections.
- Coordination in Faith and Light encourages the development of new responsibilities.
- The coordinator invites the team to meet regularly. They agree on a place and time in advance. Respecting the start and finish time of the meeting encourages punctuality.

The loyalty of team members during the time of their commitment brings stability to the group. Team members carrying out their responsibilities make the coordination effective. Periodic change of team members is essential to the ongoing life and renewal of the community and movement.

During their meetings, the coordinator is attentive to taking time to pray, share and celebrate. There is time for training and there is time for work: evaluate, see needs, reflect, set priorities, make decisions and plan. The coordinator is particularly attentive to listening to everyone and to ensuring that everyone participates and is heard, including those who may be in a minority. The team may also get together outside formal meeting times. It is the responsibility of the team to organise the training of each member. In each circle of responsibility there is a specific role and mandate for the coordinator and for coordination.

Coordination and finances

One aspect of coordination is to oversee the financial needs related to each circle of responsibility: to see that Faith and Light has the means necessary to fulfil its mission locally and around the world, to insure the development of all its members and to use its resources in the spirit of the movement.

2) Good stewards of the gifts we have been given

a) Recognizing and developing the coordinator's gifts

Throughout the world and in all circles of responsibility, every member of Faith and Light needs to be attentive to identifying and choosing good coordinators – people who have the gift and ability to bring people together, to evoke trust, to listen and to work well together and with others. We need to provide the tools and training so that our good coordinators become better – as our Charter indicates – by becoming more competent and effective in their mission. Good will and availability are not enough. Love and prayer are essential, but the complex demands of leading very diverse groups of people require specific abilities and skills. These concrete and specific abilities and skills that are most needed in this particular situation are what we focus on when we discern and choose our coordinators. One coordinator cannot have all the qualities, but within the team, collectively, all the abilities of each member come together to make a better coordination.

Of course, the coordinators should be guided by other experienced coordinators, usually the vice-coordinators from the next level. (See the section on Guidance, Appendix 1, page 50)

b) Valuing experienced coordinators

And what of those leaders who are no longer eligible or available for leadership roles? Indeed, the most important role in Faith and Light is to be, as much as possible, a faithful member of a community. However, we need to do all we can to welcome and to continue to benefit from the gifts, experience and wisdom of those who have served us well in our communities, our provinces or our international family. Those who humbly desire to continue to serve in a less “visible” way deserve respect and consideration – for example, they could be part of the nomination committee, a project team...

c) Finances In Faith and Light

For most of us, money is a fact of life. We have needs; our families have needs; our friends and neighbours have needs. Finances are also a fact of life in Faith and Light, but they have a special character. Jean Vanier has described this character in four words: **transparency, competency, generosity and trust.**

Finances in Faith and Light differ radically from those of other organizations that are responsible for developing concrete projects for disabled people: schools, centres, homes... The mission of Faith and Light is the communion of persons, emphasizing **“To be with”** and not “to do for them”. Finances are at the service of this communion, and the management of money is a labour of untiring charity.

How to handle finances In Faith and Light

The practicalities related to financial matters can be found in the Finances handbook. Refer to this handbook for all questions relating to community, province and international finances, to solidarity and fundraising as well as the role and mandate of the Treasurer in all circles of responsibility. We will only cite a few general principles here.

Transparency, competency, generosity and trust

Faith and Light believes, and its history attests to it, that the Lord will always provide what is needed if we do our best and do what we can.

First of all, place your trust in Providence. Faith and Light has no financial security and does not let itself be unduly preoccupied with money worries. The movement lives simply, like Jesus.

This trust does not preclude the need for work. The money needed for the life of the community and of the movement is the fruit of a common labour, in which all members participate.

Two values govern finances in Faith and Light: accountability and transparency. Accountability is being accurate, keeping receipts and other financial documents. Transparency is having clear records of income and expenses open to review.

We who belong to Faith and Light are one worldwide body, where we take care of one another, near and far, with priority given to the poorest - those with the greatest need. Financial solidarity within our international family serves Faith and Light's mission to deepen and to grow, especially among those who have yet to hear the "good news" of hope that we have been given.

II – Community life and leadership

The life of Faith and Light is lived primarily in the local community. All the structure and other circles of responsibility in Faith and Light exist to nurture and support this community life and to link our communities together locally and around the world. Our community is not alone. We are a community of communities.

In this chapter you will find helpful information about the makeup of the community, community life, its stages of growth from birth into maturity, and the importance and role of the coordination team with its shepherd, the community coordinator.⁴

1) The community

a) The nature of the community

What makes a community unique and special?

Human beings are not solitary creatures. We are made to work and live together. When a group of people chooses to come together around a common vision and values for a purpose (mission) that is truly good, there is a basis for community.

The members of the community

Faith and Light communities are made up of persons with intellectual disabilities, who are in the heart of our communities, surrounded by family members (parents, brothers, sisters, etc.)

⁴ Community coordinator refers to an elected community coordinator or an appointed interim coordinator.

friends, especially young people, and a Chaplain.⁵ They meet regularly, at least once a month. The number of community members is important. Indeed, a community should not be too big to ensure that everyone can relate to each another and meet in a personal way. A community can be created from a group of about fifteen people (three families and their friends) who meet on a regular basis. When the community grows to 40 or more people, it must prepare itself to give birth to another community.

The search for a balanced membership

It is very important to work at establishing and maintaining a balance among the members of the community. It is important to have enough friends, at least one friend per disabled person; this helps their twinning with a friend. They become “buddies”, “partners”, and guide each other during the meetings and in-between. Each group of members brings its gifts, and together their presence forms the uniqueness of a Faith and Light community. Among the friends, young people have a very special role. Often, all ages mix together from babies to elders. The community is a mirror image of a family, and its richness stems from the diversity of its members. It is however sometimes better to create Communities specifically around small children, as we will see later.

The Commitment of Members

It takes time to build community. The members need time to meet one another and come to know each other. Community life is a reality when the participants attend the meetings regularly and are faithful to the “the time of loyalty”, also called “fourth time”. It is important for the community to know who is really committed as a member. When a new person has attended several community meetings, the Coordination Team may invite him/her to commit to the community’s life regularly for at least a year. Communities are also encouraged to have a prayerful and joyful celebration, once a year, of commitment, where all members commit themselves for another year of journeying together as a community.

⁵ See the memo about Chaplains in Faith and Light, available from the International Secretariat.

b) Community life

The monthly meetings

Every community meeting is a celebration. It is characterized by four parts: a time of welcoming, a time of sharing, a time of prayer, and a joyful time of celebration. These four components are like four springs of fresh water that feed the meeting. Quite often they are intermingled. It is up to the Coordination Team, using the Guidelines⁶, to determine the best way to integrate the four components during the meetings.

To fully live a meeting and allow friendships to develop, plenty of time must be set aside for the monthly gatherings (three hours, at least, is recommended).

The four parts of the monthly meetings

A Time of welcoming

The Charter reminds us that the essential thing is to form personal relationships within which we discover the suffering and the gifts of one another. How we welcome each person sets the tone for the meeting. That is why the start of each meeting is so important. We take time to share news with one another. We may work on a community project. Through a song and a game or two, we create an atmosphere that allows the heart to open. Because of this, the time set aside for welcoming can sometimes be fairly long.

A time of sharing

The welcome is followed by a sharing on the theme of the month presented in the Guidelines: this is food for the heart and the soul. A brief word prepared and presented by the community Coordinator, a member of the Coordination Team or the Chaplain prepares hearts to receive the Message of Jesus.

⁶ The Guidelines are proposed as a tool for nourishment and growth. It is a tool that unites all Faith and Light Communities around the same annual theme and the same journey. The use of the Guidelines is encouraged, but it is also a free invitation, a proposal. Besides the monthly theme and meditation, the Guidelines propose activities that can be used, adapted or replaced by other activities. The use of the Guidelines should not hinder the imagination and creativity of the members.

A time of celebration

There are a variety of ways to celebrate this Message. The Guidelines propose means such as a procession, a mime “to relive the Gospel”, symbols (water, light, colours, an object or drawing, a specific gesture...), hymns and songs, musical instruments, using the richness of local cultures and religious and social traditions.

Sometimes, but not necessarily always, parents may want to meet separately while their children and friends have their own sharing activities.

“Reliving the Gospel”

“Reliving the Gospel” in Faith and Light is particularly important. It is an especially good means of expression for persons with intellectual disabilities. They understand in their being things that words cannot convey. It has the format of a Mime but it is much more, because it places the person into the situation described in Scriptures. Yet it is not a role play nor putting on a show. It is simply reliving the Sacred Scriptures as a true story happening in the here and now, and a true story addressed to each one today. For example, by reliving the wedding at Cana, our hearts understand that even today Jesus and Mary are present in our life’s smallest details. It is desirable that those who relive the Scripture be picked from all the community’s groups of membership: persons with intellectual disabilities, family members, friends, Chaplain. Ideally, everyone is involved, and each person “lives” a character in the Mime, so nobody is left as “the audience”.

The Mime can unfold either in silence while a Biblical text is read, or with some words, keeping just a few key phrases from the reading. Then altogether or in small groups of five to eight members led by a well-prepared person, everyone can share and explain what touched him/her in the message. Sometimes, the sharing is done through words, other times through non-verbal activities like drawing, body language, clay sculptures, collages....

A Time of Prayer

The community comes together again and turns itself toward the Lord. It is good to have a “Prayer Corner”. A carefully prepared and decorated environment creates an ambiance favouring contemplation. The prayer must be easily understood by all members with no need for explanation. It is a symbol by itself that invites us to be open to God. Appropriate music also has an important role in creating a prayerful atmosphere. The community may at times prefer to go to a chapel.

The time of prayer is the community’s opportunity to bring to the Lord what is in people’s hearts and what has been shared in the small groups. It is the time to give thanks and for each member to be placed in God’s tender care. We will pay special attention, as

creatively as possible, to ensure that each person participates, especially the ones suffering the most.

Some communities, whose members all belong to the same denomination, meet on a Sunday, attend the parish Mass late in the morning, and then hold their gathering. This is ideal because Faith and Light's vocation is to ensure that disabled people and their families find their place in their own ecclesial community. When the community has a special celebration together (the Eucharist, the Last Supper, Worship, Liturgical or Para-liturgical celebrations), it should be well prepared (hymns, gestures, offerings...) and characterized by simplicity, contemplation and joy, whilst respecting the Church's traditions.

Interdenominational communities prefer to meet in the week, in order to allow each member to participate in their own Church's Sunday liturgy or worship. These Communities prepare and live a nourishing and significant time of prayer together during their meetings.

A Time of Celebration

Our meetings are characterized by moments of joy when we have fun together in a simple and respectful way: we play games, sing, dance or share a meal. The time of celebration is often called "the fiesta".

Through the meal or snack and the "fiesta", we celebrate our friendship. It is good to sit together around the same table, especially if it is prepared with care and well decorated. Even if we only have a little fruit to share, it is a time to blend the joy of eating with the joy of sharing.

Our communities like to celebrate birthdays. It is a way of recognising the unique value of each person, their special place in the community and the special gift they bring to us. The communities also celebrate the anniversary of the day they answered God's call and began as a community, and other important events where God's hand is especially evident. We thank Him and celebrate His kindness to us.

A time of friendship and loyalty

The Charter recognizes that if relationships have been established and strengthened during the monthly meetings, the community quite naturally will live the time of loyalty (also known as the "fourth time"). Friendship deepens through time and being in each other's

company. Between the monthly gatherings the members of the community may choose to spend time together in smaller groups or just meeting one-to-one (“buddies”, “partners”, “friends”). They share their stories, fears, dreams, hopes, prayer, joy, a meal...

Pilgrimages, retreats, summer camps and weekends that allow the community to become a “share a common life” for a few days are also part of the time of loyalty. These are important activities that allow for deeper mutual relationships and bind the community more closely together.

This time of loyalty nourishes community life. It is vital. Some communities, after having abandoned their monthly meetings, started meeting again because they had never let the time of loyalty die.

The Small friendship groups

The small friendship groups strongly recommended by the Guidelines, meet between the monthly meetings, and are a natural way of encouraging people to get to know one another better and deepening their friendships.

Frequently these small groups will prepare something for the next community gathering or will deepen something experienced in the previous one through sharing, reflection, activities, prayer or service to others...

Faith and Light Spirituality In Everyday Life⁷

Some have described our Faith and Light Communities as a “school of holiness”. Many of our members speak about how their lives have changed through participating in the life of their community. Because of Faith and Light, and the people we have come to know here, we will never be the same again.

Usually this transformation happens gradually over a period of time. By developing relationships with one another our eyes and minds are opened. We see people differently, not in terms of differences, but in terms of what we all share in common. We see the world differently through the experience of our new friends. We begin to change the way we see and treat others and even ourselves. Things that used to seem so important to us now are not so important. We journey together, sharing joy and pain. In time we discover the power of guidance in moments of suffering taking the example of Mary and John at the foot of the cross, we stop trying to change,

⁷ See also the book “Letters to my brothers and sisters in Faith and Light” by Father Joseph Larsen, available from the International Secretariat.

wanting to get rid of and attempting to improve what cannot be. We meditate on these things and we pray.

We are growing in understanding, acceptance and love. We see gifts and signs of hope where before we only saw tragedy and limitations. We accept our gifts with gratitude, humility as opportunities to serve. We are making different choices and doing things in a way that reflects what we are learning. We now have a better and deeper relationship with Jesus.

The need for presence in the bigger community

Our Charter states our belief that the persons in the heart of our Communities play an essential role in the human community, society and Churches. In order to exercise their gifts and to grow as persons, they need to be fully included, to belong to, and to participate in society and the Churches, with opportunities for giving and receiving.

In order to be witnesses of our unique gifts, it is important that our Communities look for opportunities to participate in the life of the local churches and of society (prayer services, spiritual training activities, service to others, community celebrations and pilgrimages, leisure activities...).

Twinning with a religious community

It is good for each community to establish, wherever possible, links with a religious community. The twinning will consist of regularly exchanging news, confiding prayer intentions and visiting (once a year) this community for a time of meeting and friendship.

Our ecumenical vocation and mission

Over the years, Communities have developed in different Christian denominations. The movement has been increasingly aware of its specific vocation within the Churches and in society, and of its ecumenical mission. This involves two facets: communion of hearts and the search for unity between Churches.

Communion of hearts

This mission is essentially in the communion of hearts. The communion of hearts is expressed in the prayer which is the soul of the ecumenical movement: "Father, make us one, so that the world believes in your love".

The need to listen to each other

Through this communion of hearts, people belonging to different Churches become friends, listen to one another, admire the work of the Holy Spirit in others, and refrain from judging one another. This communion of hearts implies that we emphasises the essential – what unites us and not what divides us.

The need to take root in our own Church

This communion of hearts also implies that we each love our own Church, that we deepen the fundamental ideals of our faith, and that we grow in the love of our own Church.

The search for unity between Churches

The second facet is to desire, to search for and to pray for unity among the Churches sharing a common faith. The journey toward unity will take much time because there are a number of elements and traditions and, in many cases, a painful history that divides us. To face this task, Faith and Light is called to inform priests and pastors of what is experienced within the movement, its sufferings and joys.

With regard to ecumenism, there are three types of communities:

- A community that is rooted in one Church, and whose members belong to this Church. Ecumenism is then experienced through prayer for Christian unity and the desire that we all become one.
- A community having a majority of members belonging to one Church and welcoming members belonging to other Churches.
- An interdenominational community, welcoming members from several Christian denominations (in more or less equal numbers) and having a prayer that is common to all the traditions represented.

On the road to ecumenism, Faith and Light believes that disabled persons can be a source of unity. To truly live this ecumenical mission, Faith and Light wishes to help the Communities and offers them booklets on Ecumenism in Faith and Light, which provide both inspiration and practical advice⁸.

Community links with their Church

The Communities maintain links with their Church through the regular participation of their members and through communication

⁸ Available from the International Secretariat.

and visits between the communities and their Church's authorities. The community Chaplain plays an important role to help all the members to settle and to belong to their own Church. (See paragraph "Chaplains in Faith and Light", page 35.)

c) Communities around young children

Why have a community around families with young children?

In the beginning, Faith and Light encouraged welcoming persons with intellectual disabilities of all ages into the same community. This diversity can bring much richness. But as time went on, we noticed that most parents of very young children were better served in communities bringing together other families with young children. The practical needs of very young children are quite different from the needs of the school-aged children, adolescents or adults. They need a different sort of rhythm in the gatherings. It might be very difficult to plan a meeting that meets the requirements of all ages. Thus, little by little, communities were formed around very young children and their parents. Often brothers and sisters attended as well.

Nowadays, there is another reason why we encourage this type of community. The life of the young child with disabilities is threatened before and even after birth. In some countries, there are also pressures put on parents to abandon their child. In the face of this terrible anguish and doubt, Faith and Light wishes to bring a ray of hope to these families. By being welcomed, they can be made to understand that they "are not alone". Other families have known this indescribable hardship and offer to walk with you. They can testify that this little one's life is worth living that he asks only to be loved and to love in return. He attracts friends, he is the heart of these Communities that have sprung up with and for him, and when we learn that, suffering and joy can co-exist.

Members

This type of community can be formed with three or four families, each accompanied by a friend. Frequently, the whole family will participate, and brothers and sisters are an integral part of this community.

It is good to have families with children who do not have a disability as well as friends who are teenagers or young adults (who are balanced and motivated)...

One or two older couples can be the reassuring presence of “grandparents” and so maintain the family structure of the community. Moreover, they appear to be very valuable to the families. It is very important to have a Chaplain from the beginning of the Community. He/she can be a major support for the parents in their pain and their journey toward acceptance.

A special mission around young friends

The communities with young children also have a mission around young people. Giving them responsibility and letting them organise and lead activities are excellent ways of inviting young people to discover the gift of persons with intellectual disabilities through Faith and Light. Young people want to serve and here they can feel they are really needed and their own gifts are appreciated. This also allows them to receive the Good News of Jesus and welcome their own littleness, discover that they are loved by God as they are, with their imperfections and gifts. It therefore opens them up to a whole new vision of life.

Activities

It is necessary to specifically plan activities for the children, which can also be based on the monthly theme from the Guidelines. These activities can be led by the friends (especially the teenagers and youngsters). The parents, meanwhile, can break into small groups that allow them to share their difficulties and suffering, their joys and their hope, looking together for signs of God’s faithful love.

Special Guidelines for each child

Each year, a small team proposes an adaptation of the Guidelines for the communities of young children. It has illustrations as well as questions for the sharing time more suited to parents. It is available from the International Secretariat. Also, each month, one or two pages can be put together made up of a simple sentence and a drawing or space for the child to draw. The child will be asked to colour it or draw something during the meeting, or during the month, before the next gathering. He/she can also be helped to make a collage, or a “scrap book” with objects, photos and pictures from the meeting.

d) The growth of a community

A community is a living being, which has its rhythm of growth, its spurts of energy, its vitality, its maturation and also its periods of difficulties, challenges, its worries and its illnesses.

On this road of growth that goes from its birth to its recognition, the community needs to be guided by a witness who has an objective outlook and who will support, confirm, recall the directives of the Charter and Constitution and instil new hope. This will be the role of the Vice-Coordinator or his/her delegate. There is no need to hurry through the stages of community growth, each one will find its own rhythm.

Stages of growth: from birth to recognition

First “Contact”

A Faith and Light guide (usually a member from the Provincial Team) contacts one or two persons who have expressed a desire to start a Community. They are given the necessary documents: Charter, Constitution, “Our first Guidelines”... In turn, those wishing to start a community contact families, friends, a priest, a Church community... A small group of interested persons gathers together and begins to learn more about Faith and Light, and to pray together about starting a new Community.

Community in Formation

During this phase, a small group of people meets with the purpose of starting Faith and Light. It is very important to seek a balance of membership including young friends, from the beginning. After at least two gatherings in the Spirit of Faith and Light, they may become a community “in formation”. This community is accompanied, encouraged and guided on how to proceed by the Vice-Coordinator designated by the Provincial Team or the International Coordination Team. The guide will appoint a correspondent, who will be the link between the group and the Faith and Light family.

Community in probation

When the members (people with an intellectual disability, family members, friends and Chaplain) are present, when the community is living the three times of Faith and Light during the monthly gatherings, when the community is making efforts to live the “time of loyalty”, when it wants to live according to the Charter and Constitution of Faith and Light, then the community in formation can, after four meetings, express their desire to become a Faith and Light community to the person guiding them. If the guide approves

this decision, he/she names an Interim community Coordinator and the community starts its probation period. At this stage, the community usually chooses a name for itself, if it has not already done so.

Recognised community

In order to enter the Faith and Light family, the community in probation must meet the criteria for recognition and must submit a request for recognition to the Provincial Coordinator or the International Coordinator if the community is not linked to a Province.

What are the criteria for recognition of a community?

- The community has a good knowledge of the Charter and Constitution, accepts them, and wishes to live in accordance with their standards. The community is using the Guidelines to prepare for the community gatherings and using the “Leader’s Handbook”.
- The community is interested in knowing more about Faith and Light and makes use of the other Faith and Light documents to help them in their journey.
- The local bishop (or the appropriate ecclesiastical authority) is informed of the project.
- The Coordination Team is stable and works as a team with the interim community coordinator.
- The community is made up of at least fifteen people who regularly attend the meetings: persons with intellectual disabilities, family members and friends, in a balanced membership, and a Chaplain.
- The community is living the times of Faith and Light: the four times of the monthly gatherings, welcoming, sharing, prayer, celebration, and the time of loyalty between the monthly gatherings.
- The community tries to be close to a parish or local ecclesial community and to integrate itself into it.
- The community has been in probation for at least one year.
- The community has been visited, at least twice, by the designated guide, or by his/her delegate. At least one of the visits has been with the community Coordination Team and another with the whole community.

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- The community wishes to belong to the international family and has requested recognition in writing, sending all the information required about the life of the community to the person guiding them. There isn't a typical format for this request, which must reflect this wish for recognition as best as possible.

Who recognizes the community?

The Provincial Team determines if a community can be recognized as a Faith and Light community. If the community is not linked to a Province, recognition comes through the International Coordination Team

What are the steps that must be taken to be recognised?

- The whole community evaluates its community life using the questionnaire "To better know ourselves". (Appendix 2, page 54.)
- A request for recognition, stating the reasons why the community wishes to join the Faith and Light family, is sent in a letter to the Provincial or International Coordinator, together with the questionnaire "To better know ourselves".
- After evaluation, the Provincial Team or International Coordination Team decides if the community can be recognized.
- The recognition, announced through a letter of welcome, is cause for celebration in the community and other communities and the Coordinator (and if possible, the Team members) who recognized it will join in.

To better know ourselves questionnaire

In order to assist the community to self-evaluate and the Vice-Coordination teams to accompany and guide when they visit the communities or when they meet the community coordination teams to perform an evaluation, we have introduced a questionnaire. In addition to reflection on the Charter of Faith and Light, the questionnaire provides the community with benchmarks to guide its efforts and establish priorities on its way to recognition. It can also indicate what needs to be deepened, and to help the community Coordinator to prepare his/her report for the Provincial Team when necessary. The questionnaire can be found in Appendix 2, page 54.

Community Coordinator Election

Once the community is recognized, either the whole community or the community Coordination Team proceeds to the election of its Coordinator if no election was previously held. (See the memo on discernments and elections in Faith and Light.⁹)

What happens if the community is not ready or does not wish to join the Faith and Light movement?

It is essential that the community coordinators know what Faith and Light really is before they start to meet as a community. If the community does not base its meetings on the Charter and Constitution, it will be very difficult to make subsequent alterations (e.g. if they start to meet without young people, or without family members, from the very beginning; or if their aim is to do something “for” people with intellectual disabilities rather than “with” them; or if they do not value belonging to the international family...).

It is important that the team granting recognition, and the community itself, understand that a group or community can do excellent work without being called to be part of Faith and Light. For example, if a community feels called to meet only with people with a physical disability, and not with persons with intellectual disabilities, or if it does not feel called to meet with family members, this can be a sign that God is calling them to a different form of community. In these circumstances, the role of the Provincial Team, or guide is to help the community, if it so wishes, to find out in which direction Jesus is calling them and not to pressure them to conform to the Faith and Light standards, if this does not seem to be their vocation.

If the community does wish to belong to the Faith and Light movement but is experiencing difficulties in doing so, the role of the Provincial Team or the guide is to continue to work with them so as to support them and help them to satisfy the criteria. For example, to try to help them to involve friends or family members, if these are the areas of difficulty, or help them meet regularly...

In these cases it might be necessary to ask the community to make another evaluation and request for recognition in a year or so. Such a response requires the Provincial Team or guide to make every effort to help the community. The answer must be formulated in

⁹ Available from the International Secretariat.

such a way that it can be seen as a call to growth and a commitment to work together.

e) Giving birth to a new community

Preparing to multiply a community

To give life to a new community is a sign of fruitfulness. It isn't something to be feared but to be hoped for.

When a community's membership surpasses forty people, it is necessary to consider multiplying. It is quite normal and understandable to encounter some resistance among members of the community, deep relationships have been built. There might be difficulties in forming a second community Coordination Team, finding a local Church that welcomes the new community and another Chaplain. The community Coordinator and the Coordination Team will have to instil in the community, with patience and perseverance, the desire to create another community. The guide can help. It is basically a question of leading people to understand "why" we need to do this. This is a lot easier when the community has prayed, from its beginning, for the grace to grow and multiply itself.

Why give life to a new community?

The communities should remain a certain size so that each person is known by name and can share his or her gifts. This becomes impossible when there are more than fifty members. The community must remain open and welcome new people. There are so many more people who can benefit from belonging to a Faith and Light community! A Faith and Light community does not want to withdraw into itself.

Faith and Light is the trustee and not the owner of the treasure it has received. It is through the multiplication of communities that the movement has spread throughout the world. This is not without difficulties, but when the seed falls to the ground and dies, it bears much fruit. The multiplication of communities is one answer to our call to be missionaries and to spread the Good News. Multiplication of the communities provides a new impetus and an opportunity of renewal for both communities.

The process

Multiplication can be done either by splitting the community into two, or by sending a group of six to twelve persons as missionaries who will be the nucleus of the new community. In the first instance, both communities may be recognized if both are well formed and have a balanced membership. If not, the new community should continue to grow and have a probation period of a year.

The guide will help with the discernment and/or appointment of a coordinator with the new Coordination Team(s).

Multiplication day is a day of thanksgiving and celebration like the day a child is born. It is the sending forth of the new community on its mission. For a period of time, the two communities are in a privileged relationship. They remain in close contact while trying to establish its own identity. They can celebrate the Festival of Light together, hold summer camps together, experience a retreat or a renewal session together...

Other aspects to be considered on how to multiply a community

- We'll want to insure a good geographical distribution that will facilitate travel and encourage relationships among members.
- We will, of course, ask each person their preference and take into account established friendships, whilst always reminding people that this new step is a mission, a service.
- We will take into consideration people's religious affiliation to insure better inclusion and integration in each member's Church.
- We will look for a welcoming local Church.
- We will form two Coordination Teams.

f) Aging communities

What happens when the Community no longer has the energy to participate fully? "Aging" is a normal phase in life, whether the aging of the community is due to the age of its members, an inability to attract new members, or quite simply due to exhaustion after years without renewal.

If it is a crisis, the community Coordination Team and the guide will do everything in their power to infuse this community with new life, by sending three or four members from another community to them on a mission; by arranging meetings with a dynamic community in the region for a while; by assisting with the recruitment of new members; by encouraging the community to take part in a summer camp or a Provincial retreat, etc.

However, when we have an aging community because of its members' ages, and the community cannot welcome new members for various reasons, the Provincial Team will guide the community to acknowledge and accept this new phase of its life. They will help it to find its new vocation within Faith and Light, to discover what it can contribute and to live this new phase in hope and confidence, aware that so many parents fear dying and leaving their child alone. The community Coordinator will encourage loyalty among the members, and will help them to choose the appropriate rhythm of meetings. He/She will not forget to keep the bond between this community and the life of Province. The community will then always feel that it belongs to the Faith and Light family and is supported by it even if, because of its circumstances, it is less often present in the Provincial meetings and its organizational structure is more relaxed. The aging community is called to discover, in a special way, its mission of prayer for Faith and Light throughout the world and for the birth of new communities, especially the birth of communities around the parents of young children. This new rhythm in the life of the community will be embraced with the support of the Provincial Team and will be celebrated as a new sending forth of the whole community.

The closure of a community

A community might need to close for various reasons: aging, the state of health of its members life changes such as moving away... all these reasons make it impossible to maintain community life. Some communities have found it helpful to have a celebration of prayer and thanksgiving for the life of the community, where each person can express the joys they experienced together and entrust each other to God. This can give the members who stay, usually the disabled members, a sense of not having been abandoned and an opportunity for grieving whilst receiving the comfort of prayer. Friendship among members is encouraged to continue in all ways, especially through prayer.

g) Community finances

The daily life of the Community does not require much money. Expenses are limited because of the simplicity of the means required. Most often, the members cover the costs. However, as in every family, there are expenses that it is important to anticipate and, as in every family, the members are invited to

make a contribution and to help each other by their common effort. Each person contributes within their means.

How to contribute financially

Beyond the community, the large Faith and Light family basically survives on the contributions from the communities. Faith and Light asks its members to participate through two types of financial contribution:

Personal contribution (or personal commitment)

Each person is asked to give a personal contribution (also called “personal commitment”). As an indicator, this contribution, the amount of which is set by the provincial team, should allow community projects to be successfully completed and support the life of the large international family. This contribution should never prevent participation in community life. It is generally advised to adjust it for families as follows:

- Single participation: amount 1 (or a)
- Family participation, however many members: amount 2 or b).

In some countries, it is traditional to make a contribution that is calculated on the basis of that person’s income (for example, the equivalent of a half a day’s salary).

Announcement and Sharing Day

Funds can also be raised through certain activities that can be organised by the whole community (cake sale, raffle, fiesta, meal served at the Church after the service, sale of vegetables raised in a communal garden, etc.) provided that the means used remain simple and allow for the real participation of community members. Some communities call these activities “Fundraisers”. These activities are directed toward people outside of Faith and Light. At these events, we take the opportunity to give information about Faith and Light to the people outside the community who come and help us financially.

When does this financial participation begin?

As a concrete sign of its desire to belong to Faith and Light, a community that has been on probation for a year is asked to begin to support the mission of the international movement through the financial contribution of its members.

Where does the money go?

The Community keeps a small part of the money it receives to meet its needs and gives the rest to the Province, who then give a part to the International level. It is one concrete way of saying we are all important and our contribution can make a difference to the life of this big family spread around the world. We call this Solidarity. It is another way in which we are missionaries helping others to receive the Good News of Jesus through Faith and Light.

Will a Community member be left out because he/she cannot make a financial contribution?

No. Nothing must prevent anyone from participating in the community meetings. Each person brings what he/she can, and the community will do its best to provide or raise the personal contribution of each member. Solidarity in Faith and Light begins with solidarity within the community.

The Importance of a Treasurer

It is recommended to appoint a Treasurer. He/she is a Faith and Light coordination team member, but not the community coordinator. The community coordinator keeps the Treasurer informed of all financial matters. His/her function is described in detail in the “Finances in Faith and Light” handbook¹⁰.

Management of Community finances

The Community Treasurer manages the assets of the community as cash with a cash box, or through a bank account. The method is not important given that the Treasurer is reliable and trustworthy. The Community’s assets should never greater than what is needed for the life of the community for the current year. The Treasurer keeps the books, which he/she frequently presents to the Coordination Team for review and submits them at least once a year, to the Provincial Treasurer.

The treasurer will receive from the Provincial Team information concerning the management and presentation of the accounts, as well as the rules and regulations required by the Provincial legal association.

¹⁰ Available from the International Secretariat.

2) Community coordination

a) The community coordination team

The need for a Coordination Team

The role of a Coordination Team in a Faith and Light community is to ensure that our brothers and sisters with an intellectual disability and their families are surrounded by a community of love and peace supported by friends, where everyone can grow.

Running a Faith and Light community is a team effort. No one person has the gifts, time, energy and wisdom to accomplish this mission alone. It is necessary to have a group of people working together for the good of the community.

The makeup of the Coordination Team

The community Coordination Team is made up of four to eight persons, including at least one parent, one friend, a Chaplain and, as much as possible, a person with an intellectual disability¹¹. It is led by the community coordinator. The various responsibilities are shared between the team members (secretary, treasurer...).

How are the members of the Coordination Team chosen?

The Coordination Team members are chosen because of their spirit of service and their talents, complementary if at all possible and finally for their wisdom and good judgment.

It is advisable to regularly renew the coordination team to insure a flow of new energy into the movement. Faith and Light asks that team members commit for at least one year. It is important that the team be stable and faithful in order for it to truly invest itself, with the coordinator, in the service of the community.

A special member: the Chaplain

The presence of a Chaplain within the coordination team is invaluable. He/she represents Jesus, who shows the Community the light of the Gospel. The Chaplain usually presides over the liturgical, worship and prayer services at Faith and Light meetings. He/she is the link with the Churches. The Chaplain's main role differs from that of the Coordinator (who has a coordination role)

¹¹ Within Faith and Light, it is important to include and to encourage the participation of **all members** in all activities, delegations and meetings, as much as possible, either directly or through representation.

and is described in the memo “Chaplains in Faith and Light”¹². The Chaplain is chosen by the whole coordination team or the community itself. The Chaplain’s mandate is for three years renewable¹³.

The responsibilities of the Coordination Team

- To guide each and every member of the community, listening to them and being attentive to their needs. To make sure the meetings are lively, interesting, pleasant and nourishing by ensuring the quality of the times of prayer, sharing and celebration and encouraging members to meet up between community gatherings.
- To insure that the community is faithful to its vocation by establishing priorities for growth.
- To increase the awareness of community members to the reality of the large Faith and Light family beyond the community.
- To reflect on the Charter and Constitution.
- To create a climate of peace and unity conducive to each person’s growth, encouraging each person to reveal their gifts and to help each person to grow by giving them a place in the community.
- To facilitate and encourage communion between all members of the community, between the community and the larger Faith and Light family and to encourage the integration and inclusion of the members in the larger community (Church and society).
- To ensure that the community and all members are integrated in their own churches.
- To initiate activities that infuse new life in the community: holiday camps, retreats, pilgrimages... Occasionally, these activities can be done with other communities.
- To create a community directory the details of each member, to keep it updated and to send a copy to the Provincial Coordinator every year.
- To oversee the collection of the personal contribution of each member to Faith and Light each year, to send the designated

¹² Available from the International Secretariat.

¹³ Wherever there is a Coordinator and a Chaplain in Faith and Light (community, province, international...), it is very important that they work closely together respecting each other’s specific responsibilities (coordinator: leadership, guidance... Chaplain: spiritual life).

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- portion of this contribution to the treasurer and to check that the community's accounts are clear and correct.
- To organise the Announcement and Sharing Day and send the money collected for solidarity to the Provincial Treasurer.

How does the Coordination Team work?

Coordination Team meeting between community monthly gatherings

The Coordination Team reflects continuously and deeply on the life of the community. This is the reason we meet between meetings. During each team meeting, it is important to live the three times of community life:

A Time of Prayer and Renewal

To deepen its training, at each meeting the team will read and reflect on the theme from the Guidelines. It will periodically also read from the Charter, the Constitution, the various handbooks and guides, "Ombres et Lumière" issues, Jean Vanier's books, especially "The Community, a place of forgiveness and celebration"... The more the team is united in the essentials, the more it will be able to enrich the life of its community. The team also carries each community member in its prayers...

A Time of celebration

This is when the team relaxes and has fun together. The team members sing, dance, play a game and share refreshments.

A Time to Reflect and to Share: the evaluation

The Team reviews the last community meeting. What was good and what was not so good? How can we be better prepared for the next meeting? How can we improve the life and the atmosphere in the community?

They also reflect on their members' personal growth. Does each person have a sense of belonging to the community? Are there persons that are alone, not at ease? How can we encourage members to meet up with each other between meetings?

Preparing the next meeting

The monthly meeting is the special time where the community and each person can live, nourish and grow in communion and unity and

where everyone can share what they have and what they are. For this reason, the coordination team needs to prepare the meeting carefully.

To prepare is to have an overall perspective, and to share responsibilities, making sure that the other members of the community, each according to his/her gifts is included. The coordination team is not there to do everything, to prepare everything and to take on all the tasks. The team delegates, as much as possible, tasks such as decorating, prayer intentions, getting a birthday cake, etc.

The Guidelines

The Community Coordination Team's main resource for the planning of the monthly meetings, is the annual Guidelines. Each month carries a meditation on a theme and suggestions, on how to live the four community times. It is mainly prepared by teams from different countries. These are suggestions. It is up to the coordination team to adapt, as it wants, what is presented to the specific culture and Christian tradition of the community members. Coordination Teams are strongly urged to read the Guidelines each month and to decide together, after careful reflection and prayer, on what to keep, what to change, and how best to adapt the suggestions to the makeup and needs of their community.

Coordination Team's role at the monthly meetings

On the day of the community meeting, the team members and those with specific responsibilities need to arrive early to prepare an attractive and welcoming environment and to take care of any "last minute" details. They will do what they planned. They are also there to listen to all members and ensure that each person finds their place in the community.

A special time together

No Coordination Team has either the time or the ability to do everything for each meeting. That is why, more and more, teams get together for a day or a weekend at the beginning or the end of the year for a "retreat", in order to live the four "times" in peace and in a relaxed atmosphere (perhaps in the religious community that the community is twinned with). The team will have a sort of balance sheet of the year, will plan for the year to come and review the life of the community. It will be an opportunity for strengthening bonds, for extended time to pray and to rejoice and have fun together.

The team is essentially required to be united in order to create unity in the community: “See how they love one another” The team strives to grow together and to lead the community forward. The team feels a sense of urgency to share the gift entrusted to it: Faith and Light cannot be content as long as some parents and family members remain isolated, persons with intellectual disabilities are still rejected and so many young people have not yet found the gift of disabled people and the love of God. Every team must have the desire to give birth to a new community.

Where can the members of the Coordination Team find training and support?

The Coordination Team invites the guide to attend one of their meetings. This is an opportunity for open dialogue, receiving training and getting support.

Faith and Light offers other training opportunities and materials through which the members of the Coordination Teams can renew themselves and deepen their commitment and their understanding of the goals and objectives of the movement.

The most important ones are:

- The Provincial Meetings and Assemblies
- Retreats
- Training Sessions
- Pilgrimages
- Faith and Light documents
- Jean Vanier’s and Marie Hélène Mathieu’s articles, books, tapes and videos

b) The specific role of the community coordinator¹⁴

You might perhaps ask yourself the following question: if we have a strong Coordination Team, do we really need a Community coordinator? The answer is “yes”!

The need for a coordinator

Every team and every community needs a shepherd who brings its members together in unity. The community coordinator is like a shepherd who is attentive to each of his flock.

¹⁴ The role of the coordinator in a general way is described on page 6 and onwards.

As a shepherd, at the service of the community members

The community coordinator reminds everyone that the community essentially exists to welcome and foster the growth of persons with an intellectual disability, their family members and their friends, in the spirit of the Beatitudes. He/She works with the Coordination Team to see that all the community lives in accordance with the vision of Faith and Light.

As a good shepherd, the coordinator knows each member of the community by name. The community coordinator listens and is attentive to the input, desires and needs of each person, especially those whose voice is not easily heard or who are on the margins of the community. The coordinator spends time with the loners and builds bridges in times of dispute.

The community coordinator seeks

- To foster unity, to guide, encourage, and nourish the Coordination Team.
- To lead the coordination team meetings. He/She and the Coordination Team learn to work together, supporting each other.
- To seek future coordinators and to promote the development of their coordination gifts by means of training and encouragement necessary so that the life of the community can continue after his/her mandate is completed.
- To communicate to the coordination team, and with them, to the community, Faith and Light 'events' in the area, in the Province, and across the world, and to give news of the community to the larger Faith and Light family.
- To keep in contact with their guide (or delegate).
- To encourage members of his/her community to participate in the various activities proposed and organized by Faith and Light: meetings, training sessions, retreats...
- To take the delegation from the community to the Provincial Assembly.
- To increase community awareness of solidarity within the International family.

c) Where to Find Support and Confirmation

While fulfilling these responsibilities, the community coordinator acknowledges his/her gifts and weaknesses in all simplicity. It is natural that one can experience difficult times. He/She can get discouraged or suffer from criticism, conflicts, or the community's

stagnation. The Community coordinator can also feel overburdened. These moments of crisis cannot be avoided and he/she must not flee from them.

At times like these, it is helpful to remind yourself that the community chose you for this service and that you are not alone. The Holy Spirit will always come to aid you in your moment of weakness. You have also been given people you can trust and call on for help.

As a Community coordinator in Faith and Light, you have many solid support mechanisms to rely on, in addition to the ones already listed above (for the coordination team):

- The community members
- The Coordination Team
- The Community Chaplain
- The Provincial Team,
- The vice-coordinator who guides the community.

III - Province and International

The wider circles of responsibility¹⁵ - Provincial and International - are to facilitate the exchange and communication between members of the larger family, the training of community members in the mission of Faith and Light with specific emphasis on deepening the vocation, aims, activities and spirituality of Faith and Light, the development of leadership, to give support to those bearing the responsibility, to see that each community and each member grows; and with the strength that comes from being an international community, to be a witness to the Churches and to the world.

1) The Province

a) The nature of a Province

What is a Province?

Faith and Light communities are not isolated islands - they belong to a “body”, a “family”, to a “community of communities”. A

¹⁵ Refer to the Constitution for all details related to Provincial and International structures.

Province brings together about 15 to 40 communities that walk side by side. Each Province constitutes a “branch” of the International Faith and Light family.

What is the function of a Province?

The Province has the responsibility to unite and to serve the communities, especially through the guidance of each community and by organising enriching activities for all members (Assemblies, Meetings, Retreats, Training Sessions, Summer Camps...). It also links the communities within the Province with each other and with the international family.

In order to better serve its communities and represent them, the Province sets up a legal association. When there are several Provinces within the same geographical country, it might be helpful or necessary to have a legal association for the whole of the country.

When the Province is made up of communities in several countries, it might be helpful or necessary for the communities in each country to create a legal association in their own country.

Who establishes a Province?

The Board of Directors of the International Association sets up the Province.

How is a Province organised?

There is no one predetermined way to organize the Province. Each Province has the freedom to organize itself as it wishes to respond to the specific characteristics of each, working this out in communion with their guiding Vice-International Coordinator.

If there are communities from various cultural, linguistic or geographic environments within the Province, it might choose to have specific meetings for a group of communities and/or create provincial vice Coordinators to guide the communities grouped by cultural, linguistic or geographic environment. However, this grouping of communities has the sole purpose of facilitating communication, training and guidance, with no other circle of responsibility between the communities and the Province. All communities are an integral part of the Provincial Assemblies and Meetings.

b) The life of the provincial organisation

The Provincial Assembly

The Provincial Assembly is the representative body of the Province. Its role is to represent all the members of all the communities in the Province. It sets the goals and major strategic orientations for the following four years.

The Provincial Assembly takes place every four years with the participation of delegations from all communities in the Province.

The major responsibilities of the Provincial Assembly are:

- to establish strategic orientations for the Province
- to elect the Provincial Coordinator
- to approve the names for the provincial Nomination Committee (Appendix 4, page 57).

The Provincial Meeting

The goal of the Provincial Meeting is to give life to the movement in the Province. The Provincial Meeting is primarily a place of sharing, reflection and training of the community coordinators in the Province. It is an opportunity to create a provincial community.

If possible, members of the communities are also invited to the Provincial Meetings.

Other Provincial Activities

- 2) The Province might choose to organize other activities for all community members, or for a particular group of members, according to needs and priorities, but in accordance with the orientations determined by the General Assembly. There are a number of activities that can be organized, inspired by our Charter (retreats, pilgrimages, training sessions, Summer Camps...).**Provincial Coordination**

a) The Provincial Team

The Provincial Team is the governing body of the Province. It also nourishes and oversees the life of Faith and Light in the Province. The Provincial Team takes care of all that needs to be done between Provincial Assemblies, but it does not need to organize and lead every activity: it can create Project Teams to carry out specific projects. (Appendix 4, page 54.)

Members of the Provincial Team are: the Provincial Coordinator, the Vice-Provincial Coordinators and the Provincial Chaplain. The

treasurer participates in the team meetings without right to vote. Some Provinces have communities from several countries, with different linguistic and cultural environments, or have communities with greatly differing needs. The Provincial Team will be sensitive to these different situations and will take them into account when choosing Vice-Provincial Coordinators so that they can better guide these groups of communities. The Provincial Team works very closely with the guiding Vice-International Coordinator, so as to remain in communion with the international family.

The main responsibilities of the Provincial Team

- to coordinate and implement the orientations decided by the Provincial Assembly for the life and well-being of Faith and Light in the Province,
- to support and guide community coordinators,
- to ensure that community coordinators are chosen in accordance with the spirit of the movement,
- to maintain links with the international family,
- to create communion among communities in the Province,
- to plan and run the Provincial Assembly,
- to plan and run the Provincial Meeting,
- to assist communities in their choice of coordinators through a process of discernment and election,
- to ensure that leaders and future leaders receive appropriate training to accomplish their role,
- to propose names of members of the Nomination Committee to the Assembly for approval,
- to choose the Provincial Chaplain,
- to appoint Project Teams as needed,
- to encourage financial solidarity,
- to oversee the legal structure of the association and the finances in the Province.

b) The Provincial Coordinator¹⁶

The Provincial Coordinator is the main link between the communities and the international family. He/she receives and sends information and communicates with the guiding Vice-International Coordinator.

¹⁶ The role of the coordinator in general way is described from page 6 onwards.

The main responsibilities of the Provincial Coordinator

- to lead the Provincial Team, and with them, to support the life of Faith and Light in the Province,
- to establish links with other Provincial Coordinators,
- to maintain close links with the guiding International Vice Coordinator,
- to take the provincial delegation to the General Assembly,
- to participate in the Coordinators' Council.

c) The Vice-Provincial Coordinator

The Vice-Provincial Coordinator plays an essential role in the guidance of the communities. (See Appendix 1, page 50.)

The main responsibilities of the Vice-Provincial Coordinator

- to guide, encourage and assist community coordinators and Interim Coordinators in their responsibilities,
- to create links between communities through inter-community gatherings and activities (e.g., retreats, summer camps, training sessions...),
- carry out the objectives and orientations set by the Provincial Assembly with all of the province team

How to choose him/her

The provincial Nomination Committee or the guiding Vice-International Coordinator consults the communities and prepares a list of names of people who have the gifts, experience and availability to serve as Vice-provincial Coordinator. Through a process of discernment, with the help of the Vice-International Coordinator, the Provincial Team appoints the Vice-Provincial Coordinators or the Provincial Assembly elects them.

d) Finances of the Provincial organisation

The Provincial Team is responsible for the finances in the Province. It will encourage Announcement and Sharing Days, annual personal contributions (personal commitment) and other means of fund-raising to cover expenses from the Provincial Assemblies, Provincial Meetings, and other provincial and community activities, as well as the participation of the Province in international activities.

The Provincial Team will ensure that the Province gives its annual contribution to the maintenance of the International Association and that the contributions for international solidarity from members,

communities and outside donors are sent on to the International Treasurer.

3) International coordination

At the service of the whole international family is the Board of Directors for the International Association, the Coordinators' Council and the International Coordination Team. Together and in communion, they oversee the whole Faith and Light Movement throughout the whole world, deepen its spirituality, stay in contact with the officials from the different Churches, set up international Project Teams, edit and publish Faith and Light documents, manage all matters related to the Association, plan and lead the International Meetings and the General Assembly.

a) The General Assembly

The General Assembly is the representative body of the International Movement. Each Province discerns and chooses its delegation, according to the parameters decided by the Board of Directors, to represent the needs and desires of the members of the communities within the Province. The General Assembly determines the priorities for the International Association for the next five years. This is what we call the Mandate. The General Assembly chooses the people who will oversee the management of the Association and of the Movement and the accomplishment of the Mandate during this five year period. The General Assembly also approves the members of the International Nomination Committee. The other very important task of the General Assembly is to make any necessary amendments to the Charter and Constitution.

b) The Board of Directors

The members of the Board of Directors are the President, Vice-President, International Treasurer, International Coordinator, International Chaplain and two qualified members. This Board carries legal responsibility for the International Association. It is our international governing body and its principle role is to make the practical decisions for Faith and Light as a whole, especially in the areas of law, finances and administration. The Board of Directors also oversees and delegates the carrying out of the Mandate decided by the General Assembly; it approves and publishes Faith and Light International documents and approves the appointment of Vice-International Coordinators. It is the Board of Directors that

plans and calls the General Assembly. The President leads the Board and has the right to decide any question on which the Board cannot come to consensus.

The two qualified members have no other responsibility in Faith and Light. They are chosen because their gifts and experience and ensure the cultural and geographic diversity in the makeup of the Board.

c) The Coordinators' Council

The Coordinators' Council meets at least once between International Meetings. This Council is led by the International Coordinator. It is made up of the Provincial Coordinators, the guiding Vice-International Coordinators and the International Chaplain, who offers spiritual guidance and support. Together they are responsible for animating – giving life to the Movement throughout the world. The Members of the Coordinators' Council come together to form an international community, living the “four times” of Faith and Light. They pray together, share their experiences, reflect on their actual situation and seek the Will of God for the Movement together. They are at the service of people with intellectual disabilities and Faith and Light communities in the spirit of the Charter. The Coordinators' Council is a place of mutual support and training for Provincial Coordinators. The meetings are a time of reflection where the coordinators have the opportunity to deepen their understanding of the aims of Faith and Light and the way it works.

d) The International Coordination Team

The primary objective of the international Coordination Team is to give life. It maintains close links with the Provinces through the Vice-International Coordinators who guide them. The international Coordination Team has a global picture of the growth, development and challenges that Faith and Light is experiencing around the world. This helps them to identify the priorities and expectations of the Movement. This team is primarily responsible for the coordination of the life of the movement throughout the world. They pay particular attention to the “management” teams within Faith and Light. They work as a team to ensure that coordinators are chosen in accordance with the spirit of the movement and that they have suitable training to be able to truly exercise their role and so that they are supported and guided in the accomplishment of their mission. (See Appendix 1 on Guidance.)

is the international coordination team is made up of the International Coordinator, the International Chaplain and the International Vice Coordinators, and meets at least once a year. The international Coordination Team receives directives from, and answers to the Board of Directors, in particular regarding the mandate from the General Assembly. It is the international Coordination Team that serves as liaison between Faith and Light and the Churches. The Team keeps the various religious authorities informed about Faith and Light developments and activities, and receives from them their wisdom and guidance to help the leaders of Faith and Light around the world.

e) The International Coordinator¹⁷

The international family, its life, growth and wellbeing, in all the Provinces and Communities of Faith and Light are the principle concerns of the International Coordinator.

The main responsibilities of the International Coordinator

- to lead the the Coordinators' Council and the International Coordinating Team, carrying out the mandate defined by the General Assembly,
- to belong to the Board of Directors, bringing to them a global view of the life of Faith and Light, its development, needs and the difficulties faced by the movement,
- to serve as liaison between the Board, the International Coordination Team and the Coordinators' Council
- to establish lines of communication and guidance between the Vice-International Coordinators,
- to choose Vice-International Coordinators from the names discerned and submitted by members of the General Assembly and the International Nomination Committee and then to present their choice to the Board of Directors for their appointment.
- To draft, submit to the Board of directors and ensure the monitoring of the coordination-solidarity budget.

f) Finances of the international organisation

With the Board of Directors, the International Coordination Team oversees the financial matters of the International Association and

¹⁷ The role of the coordinator in general is described on page 6 and onwards.

Movement. They educate coordinators with regard to financial management, ensure that the finances are correctly managed in all the Provinces and organize Solidarity among the Provinces so that resources are fairly distributed for the life and growth of Faith and Light throughout the world.

Appendices

I – Guidance In Faith and Light

To guide Coordinators in their leadership role

We need one another. This is one of the first lessons we learn by belonging to Faith and Light. No one is meant to travel through life alone. Others have gone before us, who share their experiences with us so that we might live better, learn and grow. We call these people by various names: teachers, guides, elders...

In Faith and Light, we have people to help us to live better, to learn and to grow, coordinators who are ready to walk with us, to listen to us and to share what they have learned. We call this relationship and process “guidance”. Experience has shown us that the process of good guidance is mutual, both parties benefit. Vice-Coordinators in Faith and Light are appointed for and primarily entrusted with this service.

In the Gospel of Luke (Ch. 24) we see a very good example of what guidance is, and why it is necessary. On the road to Emmaus Jesus walked with two disciples. Jesus took the initiative and became their companion. He walked with them, asked them questions, listened to their pains, talked with them in a way that the fire of love burnt in their hearts. He interpreted their reality, challenged them and reminded them of the way things needed to be done. Jesus kept some distance and gave them the opportunity to invite Him to stay. He stayed with them when night was falling, and broke bread with them. Jesus truly nourished the disciples, their faith was strengthened and they were filled with joy. Jesus left them so they could carry on the mission for which they were called.

The disciples were free to express themselves, did not feel judged, they heard what Jesus had to say, and became aware of the fire burning in their hearts. Those who were once afraid, running away from their vocation, were able to go back to their brothers and sisters and announce the Good News.

Just like these two disciples, you are not left alone as a coordinator. Someone will be walking with you, asking questions, challenging, interpreting, listening, staying with you when darkness comes and you feel tired. Someone will journey with you and be your companion.

And in your turn, as a coordinator, you will also be the one to walk with others, be their companion in such a way that you reveal to them their inner fire of love for Faith and Light.

The types of guidance Faith and Light provides

There are different types of guidance: spiritual, personal and functional. It is the responsibility of each individual to seek and to find those who are able and trained to provide spiritual and personal guidance. Coordinators in Faith and Light are called to receive and to provide functional guidance to other coordinators and teams.

Functional guidance in Faith and Light is focused on the role (function).

“How am I living this role? How am I doing in this role?” “How am I fulfilling this responsibility? How am I helping others fulfil their role?” It is not a “work relationship”, nor a supervisory relationship, but a personal relationship focused on this role, which does not belong to us, but was entrusted to us.

The goal of the guidance process is to allow each person to grow and become a better coordinator and to help Faith and Light realize its vocation and its goals.

Guidance is a journey toward communion. It is important in this guidance relationship to work at creating bonds of trust, which will allow us to be real and transparent and to be able to simply express our needs and our concerns, to share our experience, to recognize our strengths, to be open about our weaknesses, to listen to each other and to ask each other questions, to pray, and to laugh together. It is also a matter of keeping one another informed.

Fundamental choices

Some fundamental choices must be made for a successful guidance process to occur within Faith and Light:

- To love the persons to whom the mission has been entrusted. In Faith and Light, we do not choose those people we guide or those who guide us, yet we are called to love them. How do we love them, especially when there may be differences and problems? We try to get to know them, we are going to forge ahead to discover and acknowledge their gifts, what is good in them and the love that is there. We pray for and, when possible, with them.
- To be faithful to the vision of Faith and Light. The coordinator is concerned about the growth of the leader and teams that guide him/her. However, the broader goal is the growth of the communities and their members, as expressed in the Charter and Constitution.
- To journey in humility and truth. Authority is service, following the example of Jesus. We do not need to be afraid of “authority” when giving or receiving guidance. Authority is not authoritarianism. Authority is always rooted in truth, the truth about Faith and Light, the truth about the needs that we see, the truth about the role that we have, the truth about the persons involved as well as the truth about gifts and limitations. Part of guidance in Faith and Light is always seeking the truth together. Truth liberates us.

Who guides?

Guidance in Faith and Light is generally the responsibility of the Vice Coordinator, both at Provincial and International level.

Where and When to guide?

To guide means to assist leaders in their daily tasks, to walk side by side when all is well, to help coordinators to deepen their roots in Faith and Light. It is also to assist in special situations: when the coordinator is newly discerned (transition period) or when the coordinator faces problems, when the team does not work well together, etc.

Person to person guidance can happen during informal or formal one to one meetings. The guide and the guided person agree to meet and spend time together. They can use other events to spend time together (during

meetings, training sessions, retreats, discernments...). Between meetings, they maintain contact through other means (phone, fax, letters, e-mail...). Group guidance happens when the guide comes to visit the community, attends team sessions or on the occasion of a Provincial or International Meeting. This provides an opportunity to guide the group (community, team or assembly) as a whole.

Mid-mandate review

It is useful for the guide to lead the team in this process, in order to see how the coordinator and his/her team are doing, in light of the mandate that the coordinator was entrusted with at the time of election. This is can be done by looking at and acknowledging where the coordinator is doing well whilst making suggestions for areas in need of improvement and inviting the team members to re-commit themselves to support and to assist each other in the mission that is still before them; blending their gifts with those of the coordinator.

How to guide

Who makes the first move?

Either person may initiate a contact or visit between the guide and the persons he/she is guiding. The establishment of a mutually agreed upon schedule of contacts (a phone call every fortnight, weekly e-mails...) can be most helpful. It is good to schedule those meetings that require the guide's presence in advance, as described in the Charter and Constitution (discernments, meetings...).

How to 'be'?

The guide knows how to be present when needed, humble and discreet. The guide knows how to be close but also how to keep some distance so he/she can have an outside and global perspective.

The guide needs to be free of any preconceived idea of the person he/she is guiding, and of what needs to be done. The one guiding is careful not to project his/her own needs or views and keeps the focus on the particular reality facing them.

True listening leads the guide to a better knowledge and understanding of the person, the circumstances, the group and its culture. He/she is a person of discretion and knows how to keep matters in confidence when required. The guide prays for the coordinators, teams and communities that he/she is guiding.

What to do?

- Interpret the situation and reality. Because he/she is an outsider, the guide can stand back and clarify or defuse a situation. The guide can even help some to see the hidden beauty in others in the community or team.
- Help evaluate: to review the strengths, the weaknesses, and challenges in relation to the team, or in relation to the life of Faith and Light in the different circles of responsibility (Community, Province,

-
- International). Such an evaluation allows for the redefining of the true priorities.
- Announce and remind of the vision, inspire: every day, life and its problems tend to make us forget what we have been chosen to do. We need to be reminded of the goals and vocation of Faith and Light.
 - Challenge: the guide can subtly and gently ask questions that foster reflection and positive action. He/she encourages people to explore new and perhaps unfamiliar, paths.
 - Encourage: the guide encourages (literally gives “courage” to) members to move forward, after they are reminded of the vision
 - Confirm: showing the road travelled and the progress made. It is to encourage, thank and to reinforce each person’s self-confidence. It is the opportunity to point out once more to the coordinators the trust the team that elected them has in them; it is also the chance to remind those being guided of their gifts and expertise. This is not flattery.
 - Show the truth: there are times when it is necessary for the guide to help the coordinator to see the truth, both the positives and the negatives, especially in difficult or controversial situations and to invite change where necessary.
 - Advise: the guide gives advice from his/her own experience. This may relate to general questions or to concrete situations, such as the planning of a training session or Council meeting, the guidance of another coordinator...
 - Pray: the guide prays with the coordinators, teams and communities that he/she guides. We all need God’s guidance and mercy.
 - Lend a helping hand: when needed, the guide may assist the coordinator in a new or delicate task such as how to welcome a religious authority, how to be present at a difficult meeting, how to prepare a training session....

Provide the support needed by the Leader:

- Suggest relevant documents
- Invite and encourage their participation in training sessions, retreats...
- Help the coordinator to seek others who can provide help as needed, who can offer spiritual and personal guidance, who have the same kind of responsibilities, who are experts in specific areas (conflict management, difficult elections, running a workshop, ecumenism, maturation and growth of persons with intellectual disabilities, the grieving process of parents...)

II – To get to know ourselves better

Community Name:

Foundation Date:

Province:

Coordinator’s Name and Address:

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1. When does the Community meet?
How often do we meet?
 2. How many disabled persons do we have?
How many family members?
How many friends?
Young friends?
Is the membership balanced?
 3. Do we have a stable coordination team that prepares and evaluates the meetings?
Who are the members of our Coordination Team?
How long have they been serving on the team?
 4. Do we have a chaplain who participates in our community?
How?
Who is he/she?
He/she is from which denomination?
 5. Do the members of our Community strengthen their friendship between meetings? How?
 6. How do we pray for/contribute to the unity of all Christians?
 7. Are our Community members all from of the same Christian denomination?
Which one?
Or are most of our members from the same Christian denomination (which one?), welcoming a few members from another Christian denomination (which one)?
Or is the Community interdenominational (it brings together persons from different Christian denominations in a more or less equal numbers)? Which ones?
 8. How is our Community and its members part of the local Church?
 9. How would we describe the atmosphere within our Community?
 10. Do we use the Guidelines to prepare our meetings? How?
 11. Do we have a Community Directory?
Do we have a Community Photo Album?
Do we have any special projects this year outside of our community meetings? If yes, what are they?
 12. Does the Provincial Council help us? If yes, how? If not, what help do we need?
 13. How do we experience our belonging to the Provincial and International family of Faith and Light and how do we express this belonging?
 14. Do we have any projects or initiatives that could help or be useful for other Communities? If yes, what are they?

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15. Often, a community has a special talent that it can share with other communities. In our opinion, what is our community's gift?
 16. Do we have, as a community, any specific difficulties or challenges?
 17. Are there other topics that we would like to cover here in more depth? Which ones?
 18. Are we willing to participate financially in the Faith and Light family? How?
 19. From these questions, what would we consider:
Two strengths of our Community?
Two areas of growth, upon which to concentrate our efforts?
Two priorities?
 20. How would we describe one of our meetings?

III - Discernment

Discernment is an ongoing process by which we, individually and together, seek to make choices that are more closely in harmony with God's loving

desires. Most importantly, Jesus left us the gift of the Holy Spirit and one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is discernment.

In Faith and Light, most of the time we speak of discernment in connection with the process for choosing our coordinators. In fact, we discern nearly everything we choose to do. Whenever we ask for God's help and guidance in the choices that we have to make for ourselves, our community, our team and for all of the Faith and Light family, we are seeking to discern God's Will. Which way is the way of greater truth, unity and love? Which way will bring more life, true joy and deeper peace?

Discernment is a life-long task. It is about seeing, knowing and choosing what God wants. It is not about seeking what might be the "perfect" or the "ideal" choice; it is not about the theoretical (what if...) or the hypothetical (given certain conditions...). Discernment is seeking what might be the better choice, the choice that is closer to the mind and heart of Jesus, at this time, in this place, with these people and these actual, concrete circumstances. Discernment is saying, "I (We) truly want what you want, O God. Help me (help us) to see what this is and to choose it."

IV - Nomination Committee and Project Teams

Nomination Committees

There is an international Nomination Committee and there is a Nomination Committee in each Province.

The Nomination Committee searches for persons who have the qualities, gifts, experience and ability to serve competently in the various roles of responsibility in Faith and Light, according to the profiles established by the Board of Directors.

The appropriate Nomination Committee asks for and gathers the names given by the communities, requests additional information if necessary, and after reflection and discernment on all this information, it submits the names of the most suitable people:

- to the General Assembly for election of the members of the Board
- to the Provincial Assembly for the election of the Provincial Coordinator
- to the International Coordinator, for the choice of International Vice Coordinators (who will be appointed by the Board of Directors)
- to the Provincial Team (or Provincial Assembly) for the choice of Provincial Vice Coordinators

The General Assembly or the Provincial Assembly, upon presentation by the Board of Directors or the Provincial Team, respectively, appoints the members of the Nomination Teams, after reflection and discernment, and following the profile established by the Board of Directors.

Project Teams

Both in the international and provincial circles of responsibility there are Project Teams appointed by the Board of Directors or by the Provincial Team.

The Board of Directors or Provincial Team will call persons who are competent and with different areas of expertise to take responsibility for specific projects (planning, organisation, running).

Each Project Team has a very specific, limited duration, which is the duration of the specific project. For example, there is no “Project Team in charge of training”, but specific Project Teams are set up for the varied training sessions.

The Project Team receives a mandate of well-defined objectives, an explanation of the means available, and set deadlines for accomplishment of its mission. It is under the authority of the Provincial Team or the Board of Directors.

The idea is to delegate, share responsibilities and integrate people into the projects according to their gifts, enriching the experience and life in the Province and avoiding the “burn out” of coordinators.

**“You do not need to know everything or be perfect.
What you do need, is to be humble
and to know how to ask for help...
For Faith and Light is truly a gift from God.
Each of us has been called by Jesus
and received a mission.**

**We must be open, become more aware,
wiser, more mature, but also more humble,
and support one another,
for at the four corners of the Earth,
we have good news to announce:
we can reveal the true face of Jesus
and the true face of the Church.”**

Jean Vanier

