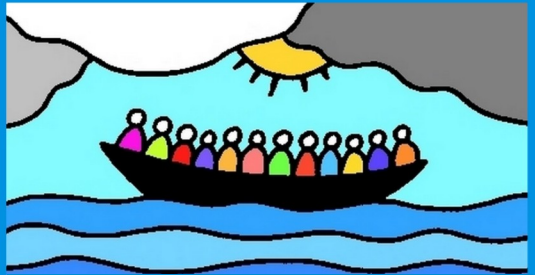




Our first guidelines



Faith and Light international



Summary

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Introduction

This booklet aims to be a “nourishing” aid for the very first meetings that you will organise with some families, whose children have an intellectual disability¹, some friends and a chaplain. In the “Leader’s pack” document, that you received with this first set of guidelines, you will find some points of reference for starting up a Faith and Light community (see page 25, “*The growth of a community*”). The group does not need to have many members to begin with. A community can be created from a dozen or so people. The main thing required is that from the first meeting, there should be a roughly equal number of people with a disability, families and friends, especially young people, and a chaplain. If this balance is not achieved at the start, it will be more difficult to do so later on. It is therefore preferable to delay the birth of a community rather than to create it while these minimum requirements are unfulfilled.

Use this booklet wisely! These are only **suggestions**: it is up to you, the little coordination team, to imagine and invent what will create the climate of peace and joy that is characteristic of a Faith and Light community. Adapt the ideas that have been offered to the needs and wishes of the people in your community, and to the specific culture of your country. Choose hymns and traditions that everybody knows.

Be flexible regarding the order that has been suggested to you. You will see that no reference is made to the religious calendar in this booklet, as a community may be born at very different times during the year. It is essential for our Christian faith to nourish our community meetings with the richness of liturgical occasions. You can choose the theme according to the calendar. For example, the fifth meeting, “*The community at the heart of the Church*”, approaching ecumenism, could be used in January, during which the week of prayer for Christian unity takes place. The seventh meeting with the washing of feet could take place during Lent, and so on. Ask the chaplain who accompanies you to help you bring the liturgical occasions to life. Coordination teams from Catholic, Anglican, Protestant or Orthodox communities will bring elements peculiar to their denomination and will celebrate festivals that are specific to them. They will leave aside some elements in this booklet that do not seem to correspond to their own traditions.

¹ Each time the expression person with a disability is mentioned, it always means the person with an intellectual disability. There may be changes in a language according to different periods and cultures. Each country should adopt a term that is generally acceptable as long as it means to show respect for the person.

The different parts of each meeting

Our community meeting is like a celebration. It is characterized by three aspects. We live **sharing**, we share our links and our friendship. We share the Word of God by which we are nourished together but which touches each of us in a different way. We live **prayer** and **liturgy**. We live **feast**, one aspect of which is the meal.

Experience shows that these three parts are a little like three springs that will feed our meeting. We have clearly indicated them for each meeting, and suggested an order for them. This order is not systematic, and very often in a meeting, these 3 elements merge. For your meetings, choose the sequence that will seem the most natural to you, in the knowledge that **the welcome** is a special moment, to which particular attention should be paid.

In order to bring the meeting fully to life and to allow links to be forged and strengthened, sufficient time, at least three hours, should be scheduled.



■ **Welcome**

« Each meeting includes a time of getting together to talk and to listen to one another. The essential thing is to form personal relationships within which we discover the suffering and the gifts on one another, where we learn to know someone else by name. » (Charter I, 1)

The welcome, at the beginning of each meeting, is a very important moment, when sharing and celebration, already included in the joy of reunion, come together again.

We say hello to everyone, we exchange news, it's the "weather forecast" moment.

Arrivals often take up a bit of time. While striving for punctuality, you could wait for latecomers by starting with a hymn, or one or two games. We would often suggest a game that allows everyone's names to be known and remembered (see first meeting, page 18). We also mention the names of absentees (the list of members will help not to forget anyone), events of the month that have stood out, etc.

■ **Sharing**

"Sharing enables each person to express him/herself through words or other forms of communication (drawings, modelling, mimes or gestures) (...) Through friendship, made up of tenderness and fidelity, we become signs of the love of God for one another." (Charter I, 1)

Sharing together



After the welcome, we have scheduled a time where we share an experience together, based on the theme of the month: this is essentially food for our hearts and our souls. A “**word**” is given by the community official, a member of the coordination team or the chaplain. It opens our hearts to Jesus' message.

In order to celebrate this message, it is good to use such means as **mime**, **symbols** (water, light...), songs, musical instruments, procession... Riches of our own culture and tradition.

The **mime** of the Gospel is a particularly accessible form of expression for our brothers and sisters who have a disability. They can grasp through mime what by words they cannot understand. The mime helps to give life to the Gospel. Mime is not acting, we are not actors. We simply **wish to relive the Gospel all together** as a story that is real for today. Sometimes, we know the texts very well. But they have not really penetrated our hearts. We do not feel that they were addressed to us here and now. For example, by reliving the call of the disciples, we also feel called to follow Jesus ourselves.

It is good if those who “act out” a mime are chosen from all those that make up the community: person with a disability, parents, friends, chaplain. The ideal thing is if everyone can be involved so that no one remains a “spectator”. We can either mime in silence while someone reads the text, or use words during the mime, even if we do not use the exact words of the text.

Sharing in small groups

Together, we received a word that unites us. Now, in small groups of five to eight people, normally organised by a member of the coordination team, each person can explain and say how they were affected by the message. We will suggest one or two very simple questions. For those who cannot speak, we will make provision for other forms of expression: drawing, modelling clay, gestures etc.

Sometimes, but not as a matter of course, parents like to be in the same little group with (or without) friends, while the people with a disability and some other friends are in other discussion groups together.

You can give substance to what has been said through an activity: colouring, scrapbooking, modelling, gluing...as suggested by the “artist’s workshop”.

Everyone can leave with what they have made. This will remind them of the theme of the meeting.



■ **Prayer and liturgy**

“Jesus came to announce the Good News to the poor. They are loved by the Father. Jesus gave His life for his flock. He feeds them with his Body. Jesus is present in our gathering and in our celebration. He helps us to live community life with love and fidelity. We meet him in a special way in prayer, in the celebration of the Eucharist and/or in other forms of worship.” (Charter I, 3)

The community comes together again and, by a song, prepares to turn to the Lord. We will have prepared a “prayer corner” or we will even go to the chapel, if there is one nearby.

Prayer is the time when we offer to God all that has been expressed in the small groups. We give him thanks. We praise Him, we give thanks to Him, we call upon Him for help. We entrust our community and each one of its members to His tenderness. Let us be attentive and creative so that each person, especially the most wounded, can participate.

When we have the opportunity to celebrate **the Eucharist or The Last Supper**, this must be prepared with care: hymns, gestures, offerings etc. May we mark the liturgy with simplicity and joy, as we are asked by our Churches.

Some communities (whose members are all of the same denomination) come together on a Sunday morning to take part in **the parish mass or worship**, and then share their meal. In the afternoon, they explore the theme of the guidelines and celebrate together. This is excellent, as our deep desire is that disabled people and their families fully take their place in their Church.

The **interdenominational** communities come together just for the lunch or meet on a day other than Sunday, so that each member may take part in the Sunday liturgy of their Church. These communities prepare and experience a nourishing time of prayer and celebration during the meeting.

■ **Meal and fiesta**

“From faithful friendship springs the joy characteristic of the Faith and Light community. It is God who calls us together and enables us to discover the covenant that unites us: we are no longer alone. Meetings are characterized by moments of joy when we sing or dance or share a meal.” (Charter I, 2)



At the fiesta that ends our meeting (some communities start by this), we celebrate our friendship.

It is good **to sit around one table**, especially if it is carefully laid out and decorated: it's the time when the joy of eating and drinking and the joy of being together becomes one. In some countries, some fruits will be shared or what makes up the basis of a normal meal: rice, beans, sweet potatoes etc.

Communities like to celebrate each person's **birthday**: we recognise their unique personality, their special place in the group and their gift. They also celebrate the anniversary of a blessed moment for the community: its birth or a particular event when the hand of God clearly protected them. We thank God and celebrate his goodness. *"The fiesta is a time of celebration that reminds us that God is always present, watching over his people and his community like a Father who loves his children."* (Jean Vanier)

The time of faithfulness



*"Friendship deepens through time and presence. Between the monthly gatherings the members of the community choose to spend time together in smaller groups or just meeting one-to-one : it is '**the time of fidelity**'.(Charter I, 4)*

Even if bonds are made during our meetings, we live naturally the time of fidelity, this refers to all that goes on between meetings and that builds up friendship : a phone call, an unexpected visit... This "little things" may seem to be insignificant but they can change everything: we know that we are not alone.

Communities also like pilgrimages, holidays camps, that enable the community to become for a few days a community that **live together**.

The community coordinator and the coordinating team

Upon the birth of the community, an “interim community coordinator” is appointed. Later on, when the community is recognised, the coordinator will be elected.

In the “Leader’s handbook”, you can read about the role of the coordination team in detail (page 34). Yet here is some advice in any case.

The community is supported by a coordinating team made up of four to eight people: parents, friends, a person with a disability if possible and a chaplain, under the responsibility of the community coordinator. Indeed, if a community is based solely on one person, it remains fragile. If he/she is absent, the community will disappear. In any case, one person alone hasn’t got all the necessary qualities to create and animate a community. The interim community coordinator shares the responsibilities with the members of this team. The coordinating team is a formation ground for the future coordinator. It is there that the heart and soul are formed, through being available to serve Faith and Light.

The coordination team meets between each community meeting. They will invite the provincial vice-coordinator who accompanies the community to one or other of their meetings.

The coordinating team must be very conscious of **the aims and the vocation of Faith and Light**. In order to further their formation at each meeting, they can read and meditate on a passage from the Charter, the Constitution, Faith and Light booklets¹, inform themselves on the life of the movement throughout the world through “Up Sails!”², the Faith and Light International Letter.

At each meeting, the team made **an evaluation of the last community meeting**; Look at what was good and what was not so good. Was the meeting supported and organised by the whole coordination team? How could the next meeting be better prepared? We also reflect on people’s growth. Does each person feel good in the community? Do some people remain isolated, or seem uncomfortable? How can we help them?

¹ List of available documents page 99.

² To download from the site : <http://www.faithandlight.org/rubriques/haut/publications/Up%20sails>

The coordination team is responsible for **preparing the next community meeting**. Preparing means having a group vision. It also means asking different people to take charge of one of the parts of the meeting, according to their gifts.

It is important to take care of **the meeting room**: chairs should be arranged in a circle, you could plan to have posters, flowers, a prayer corner with an icon, a statue or a cross... The atmosphere is better in a well-prepared room. We are all very sensitive to this.

Let's not forget that **the meal is a communal feast**. Can we entrust three or four people with the responsibility of preparing the tables and arranging what each person should bring in a communal way?

Finally, it is important to draw up a "balance sheet", to evaluate the life of the community at the end of the year (see page 98).

One big worldwide family

"Faith and Light communities across the world form the branches of one big international family (...) carry one another's burdens, sufferings and joys. Solidarity is expressed by sharing financial support for the life of Faith and Light but also by sharing the benefits of their particular gifts, their friendship, the wisdom of their experience, and their faithfulness in prayer. As members of a single family, communities seek to live in love and unity." (Charter III, 4)

Faith and Light is a one big worldwide family that lives at the same rhythm in its heart and in its prayer. At the beginning, all communities use this first set of guidelines, translated into their different languages. At the end of one year, they receive the annual guidelines, a little sign of our unity over five continents.

By progressing through community life at the heart of Faith and Light, little by little we discover the structures of the movement through the Charter and Constitution. They have been developed over the years in order to support each community and to keep them all unified, throughout the world. **The provincial coordinator or vice-coordinator, who acts as your contact, will accompany you** via telephone or email, according to the situation. They will do their best to visit you and encourage you. They will bring you all the support you need during these first stages of community life. **Do not hesitate to ask them for advice and support.**

Within this great family, **each community has a name**. What will your name be? You will choose it when the time comes with the help of the Holy Spirit, and you will think about the name that will express the essence of what the community is, or its gift, or its expectations. Choosing a name sometimes also means welcoming a mission... The name is a sign that the community makes up just one body, one single family, whose members are very different. You can start by praying to the Holy Spirit, then letting each person give a name that, in their opinion, seems to reflect the identity of the community, or that places the community under the special protection of a friend of Jesus or his Mother. Finally, you choose the name that attracts you the most from among the names given. You may also choose an emblem for your community, making **a banner** of it (see page 89), that corresponds to the name that you have chosen. It will accompany you over the course of provincial meetings, pilgrimages...

After a **probation period** (of at least one year), you will prepare, with the vice-coordinator who accompanies you, for your community to be **recognised**. This will mark your entry into this great Faith and Light family. The vice-coordinator will then proceed to **the election of the community coordinator**, who will accompany you for three years. You will find these stages of growth of a community and its recognition in the "Leader's pack" (page 25). The main thing is to take the time to put down roots and to grow together, by exploring the spirit of Faith and Light to an ever greater depth, all inspired by the spirit of Jesus.

Finally, in order to strengthen our unity, we find ourselves united by prayer. It is suggested that Wednesday should be the day of the week when we turn to one another, throughout the whole world.

Taking place at the heart of the Church

« Persons with an intellectual disability 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 fully belong to and to participate in these, giving and receiving.(...) Faith and Light takes great care in integrating its communities and their members in the activities of the wider Faith and Light family, society, their respective Churches, Christian communities, parishes, etc. (Charter I, 5)

The love of Jesus that is conveyed by the Church responds to the need to love and be loved, which is what the person with a disability needs most. They need the Church, and the Church needs them.

From before its birth, the Faith and Light community seeks to **integrate itself into a parish or an ecclesiastic community** to which some of its members

belong. It would be good if the future chaplain is a member of the parish team.

In an interdenominational community, one is anxious to give each member the opportunity to be nourished in the tradition of their Church, by the sacraments and the liturgy.

An ecumenical vocation

« Faith and Light believes that the person who is weak and disabled can become a source of unity in society and in each Church and also between Churches and nations. » (Charter I, 5)

Jesus is hurt by the division between Christians of different Churches or within a single Church. He prays that all Christians, Catholics, Protestants, Anglicans and Orthodox, may be **as one**, as He and His Father are one.

Today, communities grow within different Christian Churches. Usually, each community brings together members from the same tradition. Communities are sometimes interdenominational. Each member is therefore encouraged to experience and explore the richness of their own Christian tradition. By learning to have a better acceptance of ourselves, we discover that what unites is more important than what divides us. In this way, we journey towards this unity to which we all aspire, the littlest of our communities even more so. Each community has a duty to pray that we may all, as children of a single father, grow in the love of Jesus and therefore in unity. If there is a community near ours whose members belong to another Church, we can find little ways of showing friendship at the time of their festivals, or invite them for a friendly meeting (see fifth meeting, page 34).

“In the Faith and Light communities, we have the experience of devoting ourselves to something, through our call to move from fear to openness, as well as the experience of welcoming the other every day (each time that you mention the other, the brother, the weak person, try to replace them with words such as: another Church, another rite, Orthodox, Catholic, Anglican etc).

In our communities, we learn to say to the other: you are loved, you are welcome, you are beautiful. We learn not to force others to become like us in order to love them. We learn not to push them towards change, but to accept them as they are. We also learn how to make differences become a source of joy and richness, rather than of suffering and discord. Our communities form a mosaic made of wood, ivory and reed, but the reed is the most beautiful element as it is the weakest.

In our communities, we learn to say: you are loved even though you are different to me, even though the colour of your skin and your Church are different. You are loved in spite of your different rites and traditions, culture and language, strength and weakness, sickness and health, success and failure and in spite of

the special nature of the relationship that links you to your bishop. You are my joy, just your presence is enough for me.”

† Father Georges Chehwaro (Syria)

The booklet “*Ecumenism within Faith and Light*” will help us. Our chaplains will be able to guide us on this path.

Finances

In order for Faith and Light to live, announce and shine throughout the world, we need your financial contribution.

When we start a community, we do not need a lot of money. But already, there are some expenses: a bit of equipment, some decorations, and some biscuits for the meeting... In order to understand the finances of Faith and Light, it is important to remember that you are part of a community, that this community is itself part of a province, which itself is part of the large international Faith and Light family. There are Faith and Light communities all over the world...

Our movement exists on simple means but however there are important expenses to coordinate a movement which spread all over the world. Faith and Light is concerned about financial solidarity for communities that struggle so that they too are able to carry out their mission. The majority of our communities are situated in countries with economic difficulties. They need our support to live. **Faith and Light helps the poorest** in countries that are quite often **amongst the poorest in the world**, where social services are inadequate or non-existent.

This is why your contribution is vital. This is why each member is invited to make a contribution, one part of which serves the life of the community, another the province and another is used at international level. This is why a Sharing and Announcing Day is organised to benefit solidarity (see page 88).

The Faith and Light finances should respond to a service for fairness, with transparency and generosity – let us know how to be generous if we believe in what we live and let us help others to be the same.

A treasurer is responsible for the good management of the accounts.

The Coordination Team will carefully read the document “*General Rules for Financial Management in Faith and Light*”. The Gospel invites us to live in the trust of God, in this area as well as in the others.

Have a good journey in your new community! You are gradually going to discover the extraordinary gift that the Lord has given to you in entrusting the Faith and Light community to you. You are going to know the friendship of its weakest members. You are going to encounter difficulties and exhaustion... but keep the faith, **you are not all alone, a large family is always there with you!**

To you, members of the coordinating team

Here is some practical information to get you on track to preparing the best possible community meetings.

- **The word of the month**, as suggested by Jean Vanier, is the foundation of the whole meeting. **The zoom-in on the theme of the month** will help you to draw out its essential parts, by clarifying the central idea of the meditation in a few sentences, helping you to link and unify the whole community meeting to this theme.

- **Prayer time**

The proposal that follows is not to be taken literally. It isn't a question of "ready to use" celebrations but guidelines, which should be adapted to your community with imagination and creativity every time. It is necessary to consider it as a canvas to be worked on and to be padded out by the coordination team.

It is proposed, so far as possible, to keep the same outline, a same frame of reference for each prayer time. It is good for the participants to know what is going to happen. And the times when you get sidetracked will only be more outlined!

Typical outline

- To start praying, begin by making the sign of the cross and sing.
 - Introduction from the celebrant or leader.
 - Bible reading(s) or other.
 - Symbolic gesture, mime, and so on.
 - Time of meditation and internalisation, in silence or with background music.
 - Ideas, shared prayer: each person is encouraged to say a prayer if he/she wants to.
 - "Our Father" (gestures) said together (see page 80).
 - Concluding prayer, said by the celebrant: this prayer can be inspired by the proposal in the guidelines or any other text, but it will have to have been prepared beforehand.
 - Song and sign of the cross.
- **An « accordion leaflet »**
Easy to make "the accordion leaflet" will guide us throughout the year (see page 90). Each month, we will draw or write on it what has touched us most during the meeting. On returning home, we will hang it in a chosen place, for example, our prayer corner, to keep our experience fresh in our heart and to give thanks to the Lord every day for this gift that is the community.

First meeting

The community, a place of celebration and feast





The word of the month

In order to understand Faith and Light, it is necessary to return to its roots : how did the movement come about? During the 60s, persons with an intellectual disability and their parents were still (and had been for a long time) the great outcasts.

The parents felt lost with their child, sometimes ashamed. Parishes were not very welcoming to persons with an intellectual disability, they refused them communion deeming “*that they would not be able to understand*”. Persons affected by an intellectual disability were often hidden at home or placed in large institutions (asylums, psychiatric hospitals). The pilgrimage to Lourdes, organised for Easter 1971, had as a basic goal the integration of disabled persons into national and diocese pilgrimages and, from that, into the Church. The distressing pilgrimage of Camille and Gérard Proffit to Lourdes some years previously, forbidding them to take their children into hotels, had been a triggering event. It was necessary to do something.

It was necessary for persons with an intellectual disability and their parents, as well as their brothers and sisters, to find a place in the Church and in society. But for that, it was necessary for them to leave their solitude and meet together in communities where they learnt to get to know each other, support themselves and give mutual support. Thus in order to prepare for the Easter 1971 pilgrimage, it was necessary to make preparations together, at least during the few months preceding the event. The 1971 pilgrimage brought together 12000 people (4000 parents, 4000 disabled persons, 4000 friends of whom many were young people). **This was like a great song of joy.** Lourdes became the place of immense celebration. **The persons with a disability were at the heart of the celebrations, young people began to make a commitment to them, the parents were no longer ashamed.**

Lourdes is a great place of pilgrimage, which is visited by poor and sick people as well as those seeking God from all over the world. This place of pilgrimage began with the appearance of the Mother of Jesus to a young and simple, uneducated girl from a most unassuming family. Lourdes has become a place of an expression of God’s love, of God’s forgiveness for all men and for all poor people. Faith and Light was born in this place. The leaders of each group or small community on the last day insisted: “*We want to carry on*”. Thus the groups already formed continued to meet, to celebrate. Little by little, new communities of about thirty people were formed. Faith and Light, born at Lourdes, has become a community movement across the world, inspired by Jesus and the Holy Spirit, where you meet in a community, discover the loving heart of the frail person and feel called to join with him/her in their modesty, to make a commitment to him/her in order to celebrate life and better live the Gospel.

Jesus was the inspiration for the birth of Faith and Light. It is Jesus who guides Faith and Light through time and space. It is He who is the true founder of Faith and Light, who used Marie-Hélène Mathieu and Jean Vanier as instruments for causing the birth **as He uses each of us as instruments to make it matter and grow.**



Focus on the theme of the month

- God has given us the gift of life.
- Let us give thanks for the life received and for the gift of Faith and Light.

Possible biblical references

Gn 1, 1-2,4	The story of creation
Ps 104 (103)	The splendours of creation
Ps 8	The human being's place in creation
Dn 3, 52-90 (LXX)	Canticle of creation
Francis of Assisi	Canticle of Brother Sun (see page 74)

Welcome and reunion



When everyone (or almost everyone) has arrived, we sit in a circle. Throughout the year, we will be able to mark the start of each meeting with a song with gesture... Inviting the whole community to sing this song can be a responsibility happily entrusted to a person with a disability.

We could begin each meeting by going around the table where each person gives a “weather forecast” of the past month: *“how are you, has anything important happened to you in the past month? What do you want to share with the community (a joy, a difficulty)?”*

Sharing

Together



Chalk circles are drawn on the floor (or cut out of newspaper). Each person goes into a circle, we are all isolated from one another. The leader and the chaplain fetch the first person: *“(Name), Jesus is calling you into the community”.*

While holding hands, we fetch the second person... until we have formed a large circle. We are all called, we are no longer alone. We burst into a song of thanksgiving.

The leader can tell the story of the birth of Faith and Light and give each person the small cartoon history¹.

In small groups

- How did I come to be in the community? I tell of my first contacts.
- Why do I want to be part of a Faith and Light community?
- How do I feel in my community? What do I like?

Praying



*God our Father,
You who is the life of any being,
You make shine forth the light
which clears away the darkness,
You dress the flowers of the field,
You give birds to fly in the sky,
You created man in your image,
And you invited him to enter into a union of love,
We praise you for the origin of our community,
We thank you for the friends who surround us.
May your spirit guide and strengthen us
On the road we are travelling together,
By Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.*

Prayer of a poor person ²

“Jesus remain always with Faith and Light, remain always with us.”

Throughout the year, we could end prayer time by making **the sign of the cross (gestures)**:

In the name of God, our Father,

(the right hand placed on the forehead, as the beginning of the sign of the cross)

In the name of the Son, our Brother,

(the right hand placed on the heart)

In the name of the Spirit who loves us,

(Cross arms across chest)

¹ Download from the website : <http://www.faithandlight.org/rubriques/haut/about-us/history>

² See page 81.

Be praised,

(open arms wide, turn palms upwards)

Be adored,

(Bring arms back to centre, open hands facing upwards)

Lord.

(Raise arms to sky, at eye level, hands open)

Or “**Our Father**” (**gestures**) (see page 80).

Celebrating



To relive the birth of Faith and Light, we can **mime** the 1971 Lourdes pilgrimage¹. Then, we can do a great farandole outside or all around the room whilst singing: “*Friends, let’s sing all our joy*”. Let us imagine community dances to celebrate the gift of life!

Artist’s workshop

- Finger puppets representing Loïc, Thaddée, Marie-Hélène and Jean ... (see page 91).
- Musical instruments for the celebration time that we will use throughout the year (see pages 91).

Games

▪ The name circle

We are in a circle. Each person receives a little card with their name written on it (with a string that is long enough to go around their neck).

Taking turns, each person says their name and goes to place their badge in a basket in the middle of the circle. While the person is moving, everyone claps and chants their name “*Henri! Henri! Henri!*”.

When everyone has introduced themselves and all the badges are in the basket, it gets tricky! Someone goes first to draw a badge and they have to guess who it belongs to. If they find them, while everyone chants the chosen name, they slip the badge around the owner's neck, whose turn it is to draw a card.

If they fail, they draw another card... If they fail again, the owner reveals himself and it is his turn to play.

¹See page 82.

▪ Introducing your neighbour

We sit in a circle and each person takes turns to introduce their neighbour by matching an adjective to their first name, starting with the same letter, for example: “*Marvellous Monique, Beautiful Bernard, Mischievous Martin*” etc. In the second round, we try to make up a short sentence that rhymes, for example: “*Monique is a comic especially at a picnic, Simon keeps timing by rhyming, Dawn in the morning likes yawning*” etc. Of course, everyone can help to find the funny rhyme...

Accordion leaflet

On the page for the first meeting, we draw or stick the Faith and Light boat, we write, “*Thank you Jesus*”. At home, we will be able to hang our accordion leaflet in our prayer corner or give it a chosen place... Don't forget to bring it to the next meeting!

The Charter

Faith and Light was born of a desire to help people with an intellectual disability and their families to find their place within the Church and society. This was the main purpose of the organized pilgrimage to Lourdes at Easter 1971. Twenty or thirty people from the Protestant Church were among those who participated in this Catholic event.

In order that the gifts of this pilgrimage would not be lost, it was necessary for the participants to be members of a community that brought together people with an intellectual disability, their parents and friends, especially young people. Following this event, which was a time of great blessings, a large number of communities maintained and deepened the links that had been created between their members. Over the years, other communities were created throughout the world, developing in different Christian denominations. (Introduction)

Remaining in communion

If possible, we can read some passages from Marie-Hélène Mathieu's book “No longer alone” or watch her DVD¹ together, telling the story of the birth and history of Faith and Light. Let's invite some new friends to join us so that they, too, can discover our treasure.



Throughout the month, let us, like Francis of Assisi, keep giving thanks in our hearts for the miracles that God performs in our lives, for all the miracles of His creation. The meditation proposed for the first meeting: “*Canticle of Brother Sun*” can nourish our prayer (see page 74).

1 Available at the international secretariat

Second meeting

The community, founded on the person with a disability





The word of the month

There is an air of mystery around the person with an intellectual disability. For many parents, giving birth to a disabled child is a suffering, at times a drama. Often the parents have little help. They are at a loss to know what to do. They are often ashamed. Their child is a source of great disappointment. And the disabled person suffers in their body and mind. It is hard, very hard to feel that they are letting down their parents. The persons with a disability find it hard to express themselves, to understand what is expected of them... They are often hindered by their body, clumsy...

Nevertheless, the Gospel reveals that they are the first to enter the banquet of love that the Kingdom of God represents. Jesus tells a parable: a master of a house gives a great feast. When everything is ready, he sends his servant to invite people who are well integrated into society, but they all refuse because they are too busy, they have more important and immediate projects. The master is angry and sends his servant into all the streets of the town to invite society's outcasts: the poor, the cripples, the sick, the blind (Lk 14, 10). I imagine they came running: a feast of love!

Saint Paul took up the same theme: God has chosen to have madness and frailty in the world to confuse the powerful and wise of this world. God chose the most despised (I Co 1, 27).

Does this mean that God only loves the frail? No! God loves each person. But often, **the powerful and the wise of this world are filled with their power and property.** It is power that interests them. **The outcasts, above all, are looking for the relationship, the friendship. God is the relationship. He wants to meet us heart to heart.** Faith and Light is not just a movement for solidarity and justice where each person, whatever their abilities, is important. **Faith and Light is a movement inspired by God so that disabled people are able to discover the love of God and their place in the Church.**

By discovering the love of God for their child, the parents also discover the importance of their child's vocation and their own vocation. Friends discover the importance of their commitment to Faith and Light.

Focus on the theme of the month

- Any person, however disabled, is loved by God.
- Discover the Gospel recovery to which Jesus invites us : what are the real values ?
- Discover values other than those proposed by the society around us.

Possible biblical references

Lk 14, 15-24:	The poor and outcasts invited to the banquet
Mk 10, 13-16:	Jesus and the little children
Lk 14, 7-11:	How to choose your place
1 Co 1, 27-30:	There is foolishness in the world...
Lk 22, 24-27:	Who is the greatest?

Welcome and reunion



After the song or gesture chosen last month, which announces the start of the meeting, it is time for the “weather forecast”, taking it in turns, we talk about what has happened in our lives during the past month, how we feel...

After the introduction of the theme, we, if able, cut some fruit in half and admire its beauty and astonishing interior: the core of the apple in the shape of a star; the watermelon, so austere and rigid on the outside, showing a red flesh and very juicy; the kiwi fruit revealing a striking green behind its dreary covering; the fresh almond, so difficult to open and peel, offers a white and tender heart...

With all these fruits, we can make a delicious salad for tea or the meal.

Or then, each person can receive an envelope in which there is a decorated heart with a name on it. Until the next meeting, he/she can pray for this person, invite them over or visit them, telephone them...

Sharing

Together



We relive this passage from the Gospel of Luke (14, 15-24): “*The poor and outcasts invited to the banquet*”, by organising a real meal: all the community takes part. We finish with songs accompanied by our musical instruments, dancing ...

In small groups

- Are there things that we can't manage to do or understand? Is it serious?
- My way of living has already transformed the life of some people... How? Why?
- As a community, we live a little differently from each other. Is this sometimes better? And sometimes less so? Why?

Praying



*Lord Jesus,
You, friend of the poor and small,
You love neither gold nor money,
You alone chose some friends,
It is You who brings us together such as we are,
It is You who invites us to share our joy and pain.
Help us to be more welcoming to each other,
May each of us find his/her place,
Because we are a community gathered in Your name,
You who lives and reigns with the Father and the Holy Spirit,
forever and ever. Amen.*

Prayer of a poor person

"Jesus, open my eyes so that I can see the beauty of my brother."



Celebrating

We are going to nominate a "reporter" who will take a photo of the face of each member of the community. The photos will be used in the third meeting.

Artist's workshop

- Let us admire the paper flower which opens up by itself in water. Yes, it works very well! (See page 92)
- A chain of little paper men, between each person, the arms form hearts. (See page 92)

Games

▪ Recognise someone when you are blind-folded

A member of the community is blind-folded. He/she has to recognise the person in front of them just by touching their face.

▪ **Guess who is this member of the community**

He is blond, brown, she is a woman, a man, he talks a lot, she likes birthdays, she wears glasses, he has a beard, moustache... Who is it?

▪ **Guess what it is**

An object is hidden in a box. A hole is cut into the side that is just big enough to put your hands into. You have to guess what the hidden object is (a stuffed toy, a cap, a pencil...)

Accordion leaflet

We write: *"I am precious to you, Jesus"* and we draw our self-portrait.

The Charter

Faith and Light is founded on the belief that each person with an intellectual disability is a complete person with all the rights of a human being: above all the right to be loved, recognized and respected for himself or herself and in the choices he/she makes: the right also to receive whatever help is necessary in order to grow at every level, spiritual and human. Faith and Light also believes that every person, able bodied or disabled, is equally loved by God and that Jesus lives in them, even if the person concerned can barely express this. Faith and Light believes that every person, even the most severely disabled, is called to deepen his or her life in Jesus, to receive all the spiritual richness from his/her Church, sacraments, liturgical tradition,... He/she is called to be a source of grace and peace for the whole community, and also for the Churches and for all humanity. (II, 1)



Remaining in communion

If possible, this month, the parents should meet to have fun or go for a meal together, whilst the disabled people and the friends meet up to go to the cinema, watch a video together or listen to music...

The meditation proposed for the second meeting: *"The gift of compassion" can nourish our prayer* (see page 75).

Third meeting

**The community,
everyone is important, everyone is a gift**





The word of the month

We are all very different from one another: age differences, differences between men and women, differences in our strengths and our weaknesses. Saint Paul in his epistle to the Corinthians compares the Church, which is the body of Christ, to the human body: *“The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ”* (1 Co 12, 12). The human body is made up of feet, hands, eyes. Each part is necessary and important.

Saint Paul continues: *“On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem weaker are indispensable ... God has arranged the body so as to give more honour to what is lacking.”* (1 Co 12, 22)

Jesus came to transform the pyramid structure that is the model of our societies where the more powerful are at the top and the poorer and outcasts are at the bottom. **Each person, whatever his strengths and weaknesses, is necessary, indispensable.**

A Faith and Light community is constructed not as a hierarchy of powers but as **a body where the most frail are important. Their presence, their gift to others is necessary to form the body.**

An essential factor in creating a community is to tell each person his or her gift, encourage them to respect and practice it and to help each person to find their place in the meetings. A community dies when only two people do everything. A community **becomes alive when each person can live and demonstrate his/her gift.**

Focus on the theme of the month

- No-one has the same face, the same hair, the same voice, the same character, and so on. Recognise the differences between us, each person with his/her gift.
- Discover that each person has a unique place within the community.
- Each person should be able to say to themselves: *“If I weren't there, someone would be missed”*.

Possible biblical references

Jn 14, 1-4:	There are many rooms in my Father's house
1 P 4, 7-11:	Each person according to the grace received
1 P 2, 4-10:	Living stones to construct the house of God
1 Co 12, 12-24:	We are parts of the same body



Welcome and reunion

After the song or gesture chosen to mark the beginning of the meeting and the 'weather forecast', everyone receives a piece of the puzzle of the silhouette of Jesus (see page 92). We put it together in the middle of our circle. We want to show that together, we are the body of Christ. Everyone is needed to form this body, everyone is an important part of this body. We can stick our photo between the open arms of Jesus.

Sharing



Together

Magazines, scissors and glue will have been brought. In silence (suitable background music can create ambiance): we will take a personal time to find photos and/or words, sentences which will allow each person to introduce themselves (who I am, my tastes, my gifts, what gets me going, what is difficult...).

Then, each person is invited to glue what they have found onto a large sheet of white paper and to show the others what they have produced. The leader will ensure that each person's gifts are brought out. Then each person is entrusted with a responsibility, which serves the community.

In small groups

- Do I have gifts? What are they? How do I know?
- Do I agree to make my gifts available to others? When? How?
- How can others be helped to find confidence in themselves?
- What is the gift of my right neighbour?

Praying



*Lord our God,
Together, we make the Faith and Light community,
Each of us has a place within it,
a unique and irreplaceable place,
Make me appreciate the gifts that I have received,
Help me to discover the gifts of my brothers and sisters,
Enable me to encourage each person to show his/her gifts.
We pray to You our Father,
source of all that is good and all that is,
Now and forever.
Amen.*

Prayer of a poor person

“Jesus, I love You as You are. I know that You love me as I am.”



Celebrating

Artist’s workshop

Make crowns (see page 92). On our crown, we write our gift. Thus, all crowned, we organise a dance with lively music.

For example: face to face, we form two rows making a bridge by holding hands. The last two make up a couple of dancers and “skip” under the arms. At the end, they rejoin the line face to face and so on.

Games

▪ **Guess who it is**

A player moves away. The community chooses someone that everyone knows. The player who has left is called back. He/she must ask questions about the gifts of the chosen person until he/she guesses who it is.

▪ **Football**

Equipment: two balls (not too heavy or too light), and two bowls that are large enough to hold a ball.

The participants are divided into two teams, everyone sits down, one team facing the other. Hands, pressed on the sides of the chairs, must not be used. Legs are stretched out to the front. At the start, two leaders (one per team), put the ball on or between the feet of the first player who has to pass it on their feet or between their feet to the second player and so on until the last player who has to put the ball in the bowl.

It is a really fun game. It causes everyone to laugh and be enthusiastic. We have seen it played by a whole range of people: old ladies, little children and even a bishop!

Accordion leaflet

We write our gift, illustrate it with a drawing or stick on the photo selected during the sharing time.

Charter

In order to live his/her faith, everyone, even the person with the most severe disability, needs to meet real friends in order to create together a warm environment in which each one may grow in faith and love. Those who come

to Faith and Light to meet people with intellectual disabilities must come in a spirit of receiving from them their specific gifts while sharing their own gifts with them. (II, 2)



Remaining in communion

We can prepare small gifts to give out at the next meeting...
Let's invite new friends to join us.

The meditation proposed for the third meeting: "*If the note said...*" can nourish our prayer (see page 75).

Fourth meeting

The community, place of sharing





The word of the month

The community is the place where we learn to open our hearts to others, to love them. This implies we know ourselves. That is why we want to share our joy and our suffering, our difficulties in our daily lives.

A place where we can also share our faith. Today we can read a passage from the Gospel, for example, the Visitation (Luke 1, 39-56) where Mary goes to visit Elizabeth.

Each of us can then share our feelings on this moment with two mothers: Mary and Elizabeth and the small child that they carry within them have such an intimate exchange. This kind of sharing allows us to deliver a deep part of our heart and to listen to others with respect.

It is important that these more personal times take place in a quiet space. This allows the keeping of a sacred aspect. **By delivering personal things to each other, we are in some way in the presence of God.** *“When two or three are gathered in my name, I am present”* Jesus said.

We want to remind ourselves that Jesus came to free us from all the sorts of selfishness with which we surround ourselves.

Focus on the theme of the month

- Mary and Elizabeth are examples of the welcoming of the unexpected, of real sharing, of the presence of God in all our meetings.
- God welcomes us as we are and, through His son Jesus, He is welcomed by us.

Possible biblical reference

Lk 1, 39-56: The visit of Mary to Elisabeth and the Magnificat.



Welcome and reunion

We bring a small and very simple present which we put into a basket on arrival. After the song or gesture chosen to mark the beginning of the meeting, we give a “weather forecast”.

Sharing



Together

Let's perform a mime with two scenes: the Visitation and the Magnificat. We discover the depth and intensity of the communion between Mary and Elisabeth, this meeting is a real sharing.

After the mime, each person is invited to note down the word or passage that touches him/her the most and to explain how this passage speaks to him/her in their own life today.

In small groups

The experience of the wealth of a received visit can be recalled or a time when we ourselves have been welcomed.

During this time of sharing, those who want to, can do a beautiful drawing on this theme: "I welcome Jesus into my heart". All the drawings will then be shown to the community at prayer time.

Praying

*Magnificent is the Lord,
I want to sing for Him.
He has been mindful of me, who is so lowly.
Yes, from now on,
The whole world will call me blessed.
God has done great things for me,
Holy is His name!
His mercy extends to all good men,
He has lifted the humble.
He has silenced the proud,
And overthrown the oppressors,
But has raised the poor;
He fills the hungry with good things,
He empties the hands of the rich.
What our fathers hoped for, he has given to us
And what he has promised, he has done.
Yes, God has shown his kindness, today and for always.
Blessed is His Name!*



Paraphrase of the Magnificat, Luke's 1, 46-55.

Prayer of a poor person

"You Jesus, come and stay in my heart".

Celebrating



Let us be attentive to those who keep to one side, enclosed in their sadness or their fears. Very gently and slowly, let's try to create links so that, little by little, they too know joy in their hearts. It is often our disabled brothers who have the greatest delicacy and simplicity in winning them over. You could perhaps ask someone like this to look after the person who is still closed up.

We exchange the small gifts that everyone has brought, offer them to our guests...

Artist's workshop

Make a little model that looks like you out of clay or salt dough (recipe on page 92). We can swap our models and take our friend's one home. In this way, we can keep them in our heart and our prayers until the next meeting.

Accordion leaflet

We can write: "*I welcome Jesus into my heart*", colour and stick the drawing of the Visitation on it (see page 93).

The Charter

Each meeting includes a time of getting together to talk and to listen to one another. The essential thing is to form personal relationships within which we discover the suffering and the gifts of one another, where we learn to know someone else by name. Sharing in small groups enables each person to express him/herself through words or other forms of communication, e.g. drawings, modeling, mimes or gestures. In this way we seek to be with carrying one another's burdens, to encourage and support each other and to respond to the needs of each one. Through friendship, made up of tenderness and fidelity, we become signs of the love of God for one another.
(I, 1)



Remaining in communion

We will come together to prepare the crosses of the different Christian Churches (see page 93) which will be handed out to each person at the beginning of the fifth meeting.

The meditation suggested for the fourth meeting, "*The need for a community*" can sustain our prayer (see page 76).

The community, at the heart of the Church





The word of the month

A community is never all alone. We commune with other members of the Church where we were baptised or we started to get to know Jesus and the Word of God. Certainly, Faith and Light has a particular identity and charisma. We form a community with persons with an intellectual disability.

However, it is important, where possible, to be linked to a parish. Thus, we can be nourished by parish life as well as being able to reveal to others the human and spiritual beauty of disabled people. This is part of our mission.

Let us remember this text from Paul where he said that **frail persons are necessary to the Church** (I Co 12, 22-23). By being linked to a parish, we are offering a gift to that parish.

Sometimes, members of our community come from different Churches. We are therefore not just linked to a single parish. Everyone takes part in the life of their respective Church. That can be a suffering but it also allows us, in our own church, to bear witness to our search for unity between all Christians.

Faith and Light wants to answer the prayer of Jesus: *“May they be one, as You and I Father, we are one”*. Jean-Paul II said that searching for unity with other Christians is at the heart of our life of faith. **Therefore let us be artisans and witnesses of unity.**

The chaplains have a very important role. In a visible way, they link us to our Church, they help us to discover Jesus in a more profound way, they announce the Word of God, they give us the sacraments of Jesus. They invite us to pray from a single heart: *“Father, unite us all so that the world grows”*.



Focus on the theme of the month

We suggest praying in the spirit of Taizé¹. We know numerous Taizé songs. The Christian and ecumenical sensitivity of this community corresponds on a number of points to that of Faith and Light. In a lot of countries, the communities are integrated into their different churches and it is disabled people who create the paths of unity between our communities and Churches. Let us insist that each person carries this desire for unity in prayer.

¹www.taize.fr/en

Possible biblical references

Mt 18, 19-20: Jesus is amongst disciples gathered in His name

1 Jn 4, 9-15: God remains in us

Jn 17, 20-26: May they be one so that the world believes



Welcome and reunion

After the song or gesture to mark the beginning of the meeting, we have the “weather forecast”. This month, we reflect on the Christian unity. Each person receives a cross (see page 93) that we are going to place in a beautiful basket placed in the centre of our circle.

Sharing



Together

At Faith and Light, our mission is to walk together, as Christians of different denominations, and to discover the riches that we can bring to one another. We can take certain passages from the letter by Ghislain du Chéné (see page 85) and reflect on the way in which we can put some suggestions into practice.

In small groups

- What helps me to welcome someone who is different to me?
- Is the word of Jesus: “*May they be one as my Father and I are one,*” important to me?
- How can I be an artisan of unity even if I am not directly involved?

Praying

*God, our Father,
You call upon us to become the body of Christ
Thanks to the same faith and by a single baptism;
Despite the scandal of our divisions,
We plead with you with the same voice:
Grant us faith and courage when we are overwhelmed,
Distance us from despair,
When faced with the great suffering in our world,
AIDS, cancer, malaria, the trauma of war.
May your spirit live in our heart,
May he continue to guide our Churches.
May we be able to proclaim the power of Your love together*



*And announce the joy of Your salvation.
In the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.*

For this meeting, we can choose to be inspired by the prayer plan suggested by the Taizé community¹, which is well suited to our ecumenical steps forward.

Prayer of a poor person

“Guide Your Church towards unity. Keep Faith and Light at the heart of the Church.”

Celebrating



The coordination team will have asked each person to bring part of the meal. We form five groups separate from each other. Each group has a part of the meal or tea: one has the bread, the other the salad, or yet another the water... The importance of sharing our wealth is discovered. Everything is brought together!

Artist’s workshop

- Make some bread using a recipe of our country and share it in memory of Jesus who is present in each of us and is a source of unity.
- Make a large chain whose different parts fit into each other as a sign of our desire for unity (see page 93).

Games

▪ The woollen thread

Everyone is linked by a woollen thread which enters by a sleeve and leaves by the other going behind the nape of the neck (attach a wooden spoon to make it easier to thread the wool through the sleeves); when we are all linked, dance in a circle...

▪ The knot

You split up into groups of seven to ten persons. In each group, you form a circle close enough to each other that you can touch the hand of the person opposite. Then close your eyes and with your two hands in front of you, grab the first hand you find. All the hands must be grabbed. Open your eyes: you will see a fantastic knot of hands. The challenge is to undo this knot without letting go of the hands, by movements and shifting of the body. Up until now, we have always succeeded in leaving...

¹The Taizé community website has texts in several languages: www.taize.fr/en, Heading, “Prayer and songs”, “Praying together”

Accordion leaflet

We stick on the cross we received when we arrived, you can write: *“Father, unite us all”* and decorate the page for the month with what inspires us.

The Charter

Faith and Light takes great care in integrating its communities and their members into the activities of society, their Churches, Christian communities, parishes...

This vocation for taking root, which lies with every person and every community, leads us to also discover our ecumenical vocation and mission.

(1, 5)



Remaining in communion

We can take part together in one of the ecumenical services in our parish or join for a liturgy organized in a sister Church.

The meditation proposed for the fifth meeting: *“I am learning day after day”* can nourish our prayer (see page 77).

Sixth meeting

Jesus, Light of the world, at the heart of Faith and Light





The word of the month

“Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” (Jn 8, 12).

We are anguished when we are lost in the night. We risk falling and hurting ourselves. We don't know which direction to take. Jesus says that he is the light of the world. Once we see a light in the night we are no longer lost ; we see a path that leads to salvation. Jesus is the light because he gives meaning to life and to history. The danger for humanity is division, rivalry and competition that lead to the refusal to communicate, to violence, to conflict and to war. And in wars there are so many losers and victims. **Jesus came to show us the only way that leads to peace and happiness : love, compassion, kindness, welcome, community.**

We, human beings, are so self-centred, closed up in ourselves and in our group. We seem to be unable to open up to others who are different by their way of life, or their Church, their culture or their religion or by their disabilities and their difficulties. We build walls around our hearts.

Jesus came not only to show us the way but also **to give us the means to live this way. He promises to send us the Holy Spirit**, the Spirit of Love, to change our hearts of stone into hearts of flesh. Only the Holy Spirit enables us to love those who are different and to forgive when we have been hurt.

Jesus is the Bread of Life, the Water of Life, the Light of Life. In his person, there is the peace, the water, the light that give us the very life of God. Through his presence in our hearts, we can love as he loves.

Jesus also says : *“If you make my word your home, you are truly my disciples and you will come to know the truth, and the truth will set you free”* (Jn 8,31). When we welcome Jesus' message of love, when we hold the word of God like a treasure in our hearts, we are truly his disciples ; we know the reality of God, of the world and of history. We no longer remain enclosed in our ideas, our plans or our illusions. The danger for each one of us is to be afraid of reality, to run away from reality : the reality of God, the reality of our world with all its sufferings and divisions, the reality of our community and of others. So quickly, we seek distractions, we seek to escape into our plans. Reality so often disturbs us. But **Jesus wants us to look at reality as he sees it, with his eyes, with his goodness.** Then we are no longer slaves of what others think of us, slaves of our fears, our anxieties, our need to seem better than others, slaves of our depression and of our sadness.

Faith and Light has been given as a light in our societies and in each one of our Churches, **to reveal the beauty and the truth of persons who are weak, to show the value, the heart and the love of eachone.** Faith and Light has been given to us by Jesus to show us a way that helps us to know and love them better.



Focus on the theme of the month

- It is Jesus who guides Faith and Light through time and space. It is he who is the true founder of Faith and Light, who used Marie-Hélène Mathieu and Jean Vanier as tools to bring it to life, as he uses each one of us as tools for it to exist and grow.
- This theme could be used in February, the month of the Festival of Light that is celebrated by all communities throughout the world. The celebration of this festival could be the opportunity to invite many new people. Perhaps each person could come with a friend?

Possible biblical references

John 15, 9-17

Jesus chose us

Matthew 4, 18-22

Jesus calls us together

John 9, 1-13

Jesus heals



Welcome and reunion

The community and its guests meet for Eucharist or a worship service in the local church or parish, preferably in the evening.

At the end of the celebration, the welcoming team presents each one a lit candle and, if possible, all go in procession to the place where the gathering is to be held.

Sharing



Together

We will have asked three members of the community (parent, person with a disability, friend) to prepare a case study on the theme *“How Faith and Light has transformed my heart, and brought me a light”*. The speaker will bring an object that symbolises their case study.

We are in a circle. A large candle is lit in the middle. After speaking, each person places their symbol at the foot of the candle whilst we sing a hymn about the light.

These testimonies (or fioretti) invite us to get deeper into the message of Faith and Light. They can also act as light for our guests to join us as members.

In small groups

- Was I ever in the dark? What did I do about it?
- Did the community help bring me some light?
- What light do I have that I can share?
- Is there a person, famous or not well known, who is a bearer of light to me? Who?
- How could our community be a light for the world, for our Churches, our parish, our neighbourhood...?

Praying



We are seated in a circle around the large lit candle. Together, we relive the Gospel of Luke 2:25-32 through a performance.

The leader explains Simeon's words about light, then each person receives a little candle. The chaplain goes to light the first candle, saying "*Receive the light of Jesus*". Then we light our neighbour's candle, saying the same phrase to them, until everyone has received the light.

We can then say a universal prayer and recite the prayer below for those who are in the darkness of suffering. We finish with a joyful hymn about light.

Give me the light

*O God, give light to my heart and light to my tomb,
light to my hearing and light to my eyesight,
light to my flesh,
light to my blood and light to my bones,
light ahead of me, light behind me,
light to my right, light to my left,
light above me, light beneath me.*

*O God, increase light and give me the greatest of all lights.
Give me the light coming from your grace, O All-merciful.*

(Al-Ghazali, Muslim prayer)

Prayer of a poor person

We sit in a circle holding in our open hands the small candle we have just been given. We repeat our word of love: "*Jesus, my light*".

Celebrating



Artist's workshop

- Make a bookmark for each person (see page 93).
- Make candles in nutshells (see page 93).

These little gifts could be given to our guests.

In order to celebrate light, we could have a meal in the evening around the candles. A lit candle glows much better in the dark than in broad daylight. Isn't this fragile candle a symbol of the presence of Faith and Light in the world ?

The bookmark made during the workshop is placed by the side of each plate. We can then sing or play games that everybody knows, adapted to our guests. Everyone will enjoy songs with gestures and refrain that are easy to learn.

Accordion leaflet

We can draw little candles all over it... and write: *"When you are there, Jesus, everything becomes light"*.

The Charter

From faithful friendship springs the joy characteristic of the Faith and Light community. It is God who calls us together and enables us to discover the covenant that unites us: we are no longer alone. Meetings are characterized by moments of joy when we sing or dance or share a meal. From time to time, a day of celebration enables us to invite guests who are moved by the discovery of the capacity of someone with an intellectual disability to create this joyful atmosphere. When it comes to celebration the person with an intellectual disability is often less disabled than others, because he/she is not imprisoned by convention, worried about efficiency or fear of what others may think. People with disabilities live more simply in the present moment: their humility and transparency make them naturally disposed towards community festivity. (1, 2)



Remaining in communion

We prepare the next meeting by collecting pebbles and shells that we will paint white.

We meditate the Faith and Light prayer together (see back cover).

- What is the sentence that you like most? Why ?

Seventh meeting

**The community,
place where we learn to forgive**



The word of the month



On the eve of his death, Jesus knelt before his disciples and washed their feet. **Washing the feet is a gesture of service, of communion and also of forgiveness.** Jesus came to teach us the basis of his message: to be at the service of our brothers and sisters. The danger for us, human beings, is looking for power, controlling others. The path of Jesus is quite different: to serve and forgive.

Jesus came to forgive us, to free us from all the powers of the anguish that inhabits us, from our arrogance, from our desires to be, from appearing at the centre of everything. When he washes our feet, he is washing away all that is rotten in us. He is forgiving us because he loves us and he calls on us to love our brothers and sisters.

As he forgives us, so Jesus wants us to forgive one another.

Easter is the celebration where Jesus was given as a sacrifice. He gave His life so that we live in love and give life to others. The great suffering for God and for us all are any divisions, hatreds, everything that separates us from each other, the refusal to welcome anyone who is different to us. **Forgiving is welcoming the other person as a human loved by God.** Forgiving is making contact again. God forgives us, He calls on us to mutually forgive each other.



Focus on the theme of the month

Every time that we experience a moment of forgiveness and reconciliation, the kindness of God is manifested. Together, we ask forgiveness because a relationship of friendship, listening and forgiveness liberates us.

Possible biblical references

- Lk 15, 11-32: The prodigal son
- Ez 36, 23-28: "I will give you a new heart"
- Ps 51 (50): The Prayer of David ("Have mercy on me, Lord")
- Mt 18, 21-22: Forgive our trespasses



Welcome and reunion

After the gesture or song marking the beginning of our meeting, we have the “weather forecast”.

The leader explains what will happen during the day. We have prepared a bag full of white pebbles that we will use during the meeting. This bag is heavy. Each person is going to feel the weight of it and walk a few steps carrying it. The leader explains that only the others, only Jesus can help us lighten the load.

Sharing



Together

We relive by a mime, the story of the prodigal child.

Then, we reflect and evaluate what we experience in community life:

- Who hasn't felt, at some time or other, feelings of anger, said hurtful words or hurt someone?
- What is stopping us becoming a real community? (Quote constraints, obstacles...)
- What is helping us to become a real and beautiful community?

In small groups

- One group writes on one or several white pebbles (or ones painted white) one or more of the beautiful things that make us a real community.
- The other group writes on a sheet of paper the constraints, obstacles which stop us being a real community.

Get back together. In the background, Taizé music. In silence, wrap the pebbles with these sheets which will hide from us anything beautiful.

Praying



The chaplain displays the pebbles to update the desire of all: to make more of a community.

Taking turns, each person comes to place a pebble in front of the cross in the prayer corner, and could say a prayer starting with “Jesus, help me to... So that our community may be more beautiful and more loving”.

In this spirit of serving others, we can relive **the washing of the feet** together (see explanation, page 87).

Or

We can receive the **sacrament of forgiveness or meet a pastor**. The community meeting during this month is a favourite moment to suggest to those who want it and in particular to the persons with a disability, that they receive the sacrament of forgiveness which is sometimes difficult for them during parish celebrations.

Make me an instrument of Your peace!

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace!

Where there is hatred, let me show love.

Where there is injury, let me show forgiveness.

Where there is doubt, let me show faith.

Where there is despair, let me show hope.

Where there is sadness, let me show joy.

Where there is darkness, let me show light.

*Grant that I may not so much seek
to be consoled as to console,
to be understood as to understand,
to be loved as to love,
for it is in the giving that I will receive,
in the forgiving that I will be forgiven,
and in dying that I will be born to eternal life.*

Francis of Assisi

Prayer of a poor person

“Jesus, may you forgive me! Jesus, son of David, you pitied me, a sinner.”

Celebrating



With lively music, we organise a dance around the prodigal son to show him our joy. Form a circle around him, approach him raising your hands above his head, move away lowering your hands, move towards him... Turn twice to the left, twice to the right... You can also perform a large farandole.

Artist's workshop

Make a cross with two sticks of wood. We join the two parts with a coloured ribbon. We write our name on the ribbon.

At the end of the meeting, we exchange them, keeping in our prayers the person who has given us his/her cross.

Games

▪ **Being carried**

A member of the community lies on the ground (bring a carpet or cover) or on a table. Six people place themselves alongside him/her to the right and left, slide their hands under his/her body to grab the hands of the person opposite. Together, they lift. The person who is going to be lifted must brace themselves and remain still. The six 'carriers' then begin to gently and carefully, centimetre by centimetre, to raise the person. When he/she is put back down, ask him/her what he/she felt at having been carried in such a way.

▪ **What am I carrying?**

We are in a circle. The host of the game designate one person who is going to go into the middle. Attach a drawing or an image representing an object, animal... on to his/her back. We have to explain to them, using actions not words, what they are carrying on their back and he/she must guess what it is. Every time he/she turns, everyone except him/her can see what he/she is carrying!

Accordion leaflet

We draw a pebble and we write: *"Come Jesus and forgive me"*.

At the end of the meeting, each person receives a small "aide-memoire" shell. It can be kept in his/ her pocket. In this way, without anyone noticing, in the street, whilst shopping, waiting for the bus... we can turn the shell over in the fingers, remembering the process that we experienced during this month: that my heart of stone is changing into a heart of flesh by believing the Good News.

The Charter

In front of a severely disfigured person whose words and gestures are often difficult to understand or even nonexistent, the spontaneous reaction is often to look the other way and flee. This reaction emerges often out of misunderstanding and fear but it can also reveal egoism and hardness of the heart. To create a real and liberating relationship with people with intellectual disabilities, "our hearts of stone must be changed into hearts of flesh". Jesus and his Holy Spirit can transform our hearts to enable us to welcome the poor and rejected person and to recognize them in all their human reality and spiritual depth. This transformation of love will lead us to recognize the face of Jesus in ourselves and in the other. (II, 2)

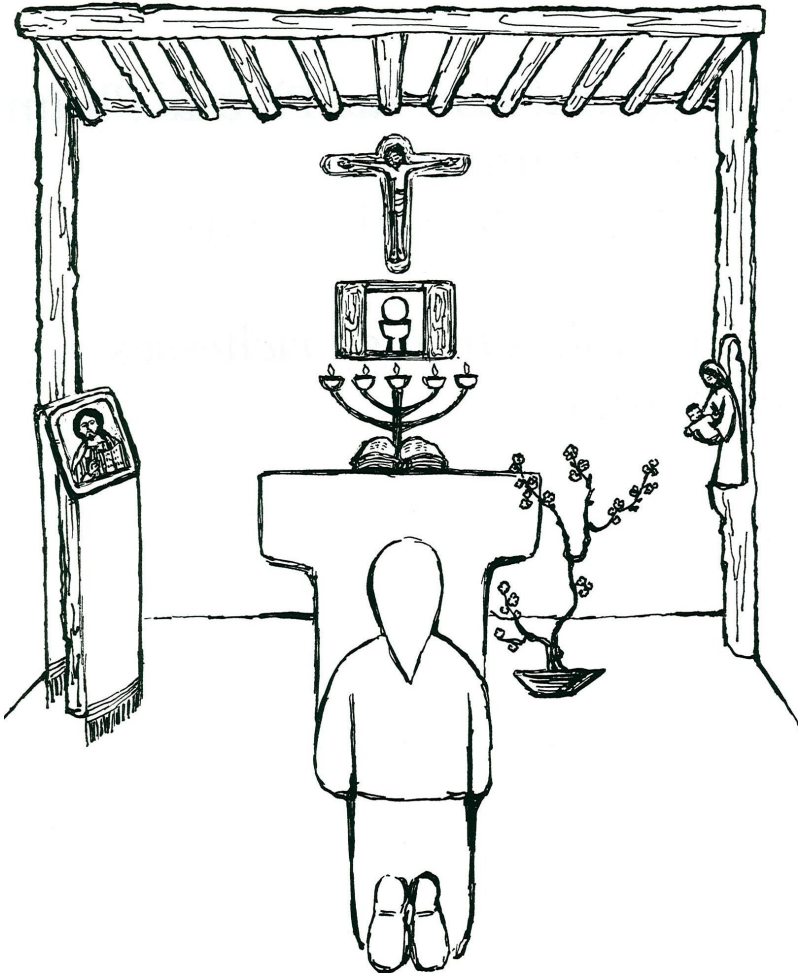


Remaining in communion

We can study in depth the Jean Vanier text: *“The community, place of forgiveness”* (see page 77).

Eighth meeting

**The community,
founded on prayer**





The word of the month

Jesus, through His life and message of love, has an immense desire to help everyone to be more happy, alive, joyful and open. He came to free us from our selfishness and to open our hearts to others and especially to the most unwell. Our community is a school of love. For that, we need a new strength, which comes from God: *“I will change his heart of stone into a heart of flesh and I will put my spirit in you”*. The prayer meekly puts you in the presence of God. It is recognised that it is God who calls us to grow in love.

The prayer, it is to say thank you to Jesus for the gift of His love, it is **to say thank you** for our community. The prayer, it is **to say sorry** to God when we have been unfaithful to Him and when we have shut Him out of our lives or when we have caused hurt to others ... The prayer, it is to **ask for His help**, to intercede on behalf of those who are suffering and who are in need. Jesus has promised to send us His Holy Spirit to help us to do what appears difficult, even impossible to us: *“Come, Holy Spirit, change our hearts of stone into hearts of flesh”*. The three stages of prayer: **thanks, forgiveness, come to help us**, are important in our community life.



Focus on the theme of the month

- Praying together is recognising the presence of Jesus in our lives, in our community, talking with Him and tuning into Him.
- Importance of prayer in community life.

Possible biblical references

Mat 6, 5-13: Praying in secret and Our Father
1 R 19, 4-9a and 11-15a: The prophet Elijah meets God on Mount Sinai
Jn 20, 11-18: Mary-Magdalene and the gardener of the New Life



Welcome and reunion

After the gesture or song marking the beginning of our meeting, we have the “weather forecast”. We have brought an object, an icon representing a friend of Jesus or a verse from the Bible... Something which helps us, which nourishes our prayer. The object is presented in silence, placed in the centre of our circle. These objects will be used for support at the time of sharing.



Sharing

Together

We each have our own way of praying:

- How do I pray at home?
- In my every day life?
- What are our differences in our way of praying?

In small groups

Whilst showing the object we have brought, we can explain why it touches us, how it helps collect our thoughts.

- What prevents me from praying or is an obstacle to my prayer?
- Am I happy with the way we pray together in the community?
- When can I say “thank you”, “sorry”, “come and help me”?

Praying



We can light a candle in the prayer corner in front of each of the objects that help us to pray.

To emphasise prayer time, we can begin with a blessing of the water in which, taking it in turns, we are going to dampen our hand to make a Sign of the Cross, or the chaplain will trace this sign on our foreheads with the water, reminiscent of our baptism.

Using living scenes, we can act out these words: *Thank you, Sorry, Come and help us, Yes* (adoration and praise).

*Risen Jesus,
May the clarity of your face illuminate us,
You who has gone through rejection, suffering and death,
You join us where we are.
Stay with us when it is late,
So that the bad clouds do not assail us,
Light in us the happiness that marks your passing,
And may the light of your resurrection transform our whole life.
Amen*

Prayer of a poor person

“I speak with you because I love you.”

Celebrating



Praise God, sing, dance...

Artist's workshop

- Make a finger rosary.
- Produce an icon.
- Cut out small paper doilies to decorate the prayer corner, the meal table... (See pages 94 and 95.)

Accordion leaflet

We draw the risen Jesus and we write: *"Thank you, sorry, come and help us"*.

The Charter

Jesus came to announce the Good News to the poor. They are loved by the Father. Jesus gave His life for his flock. He feeds them with his Body. Jesus is present in our gathering and in our celebration. He helps us to live community life with love and fidelity. We meet him in a special way in prayer, in the celebration of the Eucharist and/or in other forms of worship. (I, 63)

Remaining in communion



We can meet together in one or other family to simply pray together. We can also allocate the work required to make 'the name tree' which will be used in the next meeting (see page 95).

The meditation proposed for eighth meeting: *"Secret resurrection"* can nourish our prayer (see page 78).

The community, a single spirit, a single body





The word of the month

The Faith and Light communities have the same spirit: the Gospel spirit where disabled and fragile persons have a favoured place, where **all members are called upon to find their place and to commit to one another with love.** The spirit of Faith and Light is written in our Charter.

However, a community also has a skeleton and bones. The framework of a community is the way in which it is organised. This is detailed in the Constitution of Faith and Light. The latter, as well as the Charter, had been proposed to representatives from each country where Faith and Light was in existence in 1980, reworked and then adopted by them at the 1982 General Assembly. The Constitution was studied and adopted again in 2008. It explains the method of running a community, it details who represents the authority, how the latter is nominated and put into practice. These structures are necessary to avoid the communities closing in on themselves within a rigid authority or, alternatively, disintegrating.

It is never easy to exercise authority with clarity and compassion, helping each person to grow and to demonstrate his or her gifts whilst keeping unity. **All the community must keep the vision of the goals written in the Charter.**

It is never easy for a person to take on his role and not take that of another, as it isn't easy to accept authority, even when exercised with kindness on the part of another.

Focus on the theme of the month

We are able to recognise ourselves in the group of first Christians who received the Holy Spirit at the Pentecost celebration and allow ourselves to be inspired by the Jerusalem community. They *“were one in heart and mind”* (Ac 4, 32). They formed a single body.

Reference

The Faith and Light Charter, chapter II, paragraphs 2 and 3 (see page 76).

Possible biblical references

Ac 2,42-47: The first Christian community
Mt 18,19-20: Praying together
1 Co 12,12-27: Our body forms a whole
Eph 4,1-6: Call to unity



Welcome and reunion

After the gesture or song marking the beginning of our meeting, we have the 'weather forecast'. Each person receives a small piece of coloured card in the shape of a leaf from a tree (see page 95). He/she writes their name on it and then puts it into a basket. These leaves will be used to make "the name tree" during the feast time. We are thus able to visualise that we are all parts of one body.

As real as each person having an unique name, we form a single community, gathered in the name of Jesus, in the Church. A large tree whose sap is the Holy Spirit; the ground where we are planted: our history; the trunk, the Faith and Light Charter...

Sharing



Together

If possible, each person receives a part of the text from the Charter or a drawing which symbolises an aspect of this passage.

You will have asked three people if possible: a parent, a friend and a person with a disability to prepare a short testimony (more or less five minutes): an example of a real-life situation where one (or more) person from the community has been important to me.

After having listened to the testimonies, the leader invites each member to reflect on the same question for a few minutes.

In small groups

- In the Charter, What is the sentence or word that touches me most?
- Why?

Praying



*God our Father,
In the Faith and Light community,
we are linked to each other.*

We pray:

*Help us to see others as you see us
And through the strength of Your Holy Spirit,
make us build a real community,
A community where each person is able to find their place.
Through Jesus Christ, our Lord.
Amen.*

Prayer of a poor person

“Jesus, bless our coordinators. Give them wisdom and love.”



Celebrating

Artist's workshop

Name tree

We have prepared a tree big enough for everyone to be able to see it (see page 95). We draw it on a large, quite wide roll of paper or use a real branch found in the forest and planted in a pot of sand. The trunk is our Charter: the roots, our history; the branches, the different provinces¹...

In a basket, the names of each person are written on a small piece of coloured card. One person takes a card and reads the name written on it. The person called is going to attach their leaf to the tree. Gradually, We see the tree take colour and life. Together, we will make this magnificent tree. We can plant small lentils, wheat, sun flowers, chick peas... to make them grow. We will bring them backhome, and everyday we will watch them grow. Thus we get ready for the tenth meeting witch deals with growth.

Game: Conductor

We are sat in a circle, members of an orchestra. A first player leaves. A conductor is nominated: he is the one who makes the actions or dance steps that we must all copy. The player returns, the orchestra or dance begins. Who is the conductor?

Accordion leaflet

We draw a tree and write a sentence or word from the Charter that we like.



Remaining in communion

If we can meet someone again, we can pick up some passage or other from the Charter again to study it.

We pray together with the Faith and Light prayer (see back cover).

The meditation proposed for the ninth meeting: *“He prefers to rely on you”* can nourish our prayer (see page 79).

¹ See the map of the provinces on the website: www.faithandlight.org.

The community, a path of growth





The word of the month

For a start, we are all in a state of growth from childhood to adulthood. Then, little by little, we get to know the stages of decline until our death. It is a physical and biological reality, written in our genes. However, there is also a human and spiritual growth: welcoming yourself with your own story and welcoming others with more attention, respect and love.

Becoming more human during our life is to become more loving and less selfish.

Community life is a real school of love. Learn to get to know yourself better and learn to get to know others better, help them to live more happily, at least from time to time. It is so easy in community life to take refuge around those with whom you have an affinity, to move away from those with whom you have more difficulty. If **we truly want a living community, each person is called upon to make an effort with goodness, kindness, tenderness and understanding.** Some persons with a disability can cry or have gestures and attitudes that are difficult to put up with. It is necessary to reflect together to understand their needs, to make an effort to come to their aid. Sometimes, certain people can also seem apathetic to us. It is natural that in a community there are sometimes inhibitions between different sensitivities. It is essential for us to endeavour not to follow these tendencies and to ask the Holy Spirit to purify and trim the slightly warped branches in our being.

And then a community changes with new people arriving whilst others leave, new leaders are elected... Events mean life changes, it is necessary to change yourself in order to adapt to new realities. Yes, community life is a true school of love. It is necessary to learn, to adapt to the biological growth and decline, it is necessary to be well nourished. It is the same for growth in love and wisdom: it is necessary to nourish oneself spiritually in order to advance along the path to love.

At the start of community life, the enthusiasm is there. Then, bit by bit, difficulties arise. Some annoying people, habits form, you are no longer creative. From the enthusiasm, you can sink into a form of depression. You lose the taste for community life. How can you make it return, not the enthusiasm from the beginning but a form of life wisdom which respects the initial momentum? Yes, **it is necessary to be vigilant, nourish yourself humanly, intellectually and spiritually in order to travel towards this wisdom of love.** It is also necessary to know how to work on yourself and look to eradicate certain flaws which push us to reject and judge others.

This growth implies for some a more and more loving and living commitment in relation to the community. Discovering in people with a disability messages

from God which lead us to God can necessitate, for parents, a certain relinquishment in relation to their child, with the help of friends the latter will be prompted to take more autonomy and to find a new inner freedom.



Focus on the theme of the month

The community is a path of growth for each of its members.

- How do you make a community live and grow?
- We evaluate the year lived together (see page 98).

Possible biblical reference

Ephesians 4:11-16



Welcome and reunion

After the gesture or song marking the beginning of our meeting, we have the “weather forecast”. You will have brought the small seeds planted since the last meeting. Look at the differences according to species, date of planting...

Sharing



Together

We can do a review of the past year together: review the history of the community during the year referring to the ‘accordion leaflet’ which has guided us over the months. Let’s look at the path taken and give thanks...

In small groups

- What have I liked during the year?
- What have I liked less?
- What is it that I would like to experience?
- What are my suggestions for the year to come?
- And myself, in all that, how do I feel at this end of year?
- Has the community helped me grow? to bear fruit?
- What efforts have I made this year?
- Am I ready to recommit next year?
- Do I want to give of myself to the community?
- What am I going to do, in practice, to invite new friends to join us? So that our community is more lively, to announce Faith and Light to those around me...

Upturn for all the community from the exchanges in small groups.

A member of the coordination team takes notes on everything that is said. The clear leads will serve as a starting point for the appraisal of the coordinating team.

Praying



*Lord our God,
At the end of this year, we want to thank you.
Thank you for having been with us every day;
Thank you for having given us the opportunity
to share so many good times.
We have also had uneventful times and difficult times.
We want to place them close to You so that Your love
transforms them.
We pray also for the holiday time that is now approaching,
May it not be a forgetful time, a selfish digression,
But a time of returning to roots,
An opportunity to remain close to You and not forget others.
May your love guide us. Amen.*

Prayer of a poor person

“Take my hand Jesus and walk with me.”

Celebrating



We organise a celebratory tea, we dance to celebrate all the treasures received and shared throughout the year. Take the time to laugh. We relax together and take advantage of the beautiful weather if possible! As always, we celebrate birthdays by being aware of the beauty and growth of each person...

Artist’s workshop

Prepare small treasure chests (see page 95). On coloured paper, write the treasures discovered during the year. Elaborately arrange them in our box.

Games

▪ **Danse of the flowers**

All together or in two groups, we make ourselves small and when we hear a beautiful piece of music, like Vivaldi's 'Spring', we grow slowly, blossom, extend our arms, hold hands and dance...

▪ **Pass the parcel**

We sit in a circle. A parcel holds a small treasure. It is wrapped in several sheets of wrapping paper and is passed from hand to hand while music is playing. When the music suddenly stops, the person holding the parcel takes off the first layer of paper. You carry on like this until a player takes off the final layer of paper. The present is then his/hers. He/she can share it, offer it... This game can be played for a birthday celebration and, with the help of the musician, the present will stop at the birthday boy/girl!

Accordion leaflet

Each person writes what his/her treasure of the year is and decorates the page.

The Charter

In order to live his/her faith, everyone, even the person with the most severe disability, needs to meet real friends in order to create together a warm environment in which each one may grow in faith and love. Those who come to Faith and Light to meet people with intellectual disabilities must come in a spirit of receiving from them their specific gifts while sharing their own gifts with them. (II, 2)



Remaining in communion

We prepare our hearts for the eleventh meeting by making use of the international newsletter, "Up Sails!"¹. We pray in particular for those communities who live in war-torn countries, or in great poverty or victims of natural disaster.

The meditation proposed for the eighth meeting: "Live in thanksgiving" can nourish our prayer (see page 79).

¹ Available for download : <http://www.faithandlight.org/rubriques/haut/publications/Up%20sails>

Faith and Light, a large family across the world



The word of the month



Our community wasn't spontaneously born. It has been "begotten" by another community which, itself has been "begotten" by another and so on until we have gone back to Easter 1971 when Faith and Light was born. Perhaps our community has also been created by parents, a friend, a priest... who discovered the gift of Faith and Light and talked about it to those around. This is how the Good News has travelled from person to person. This is how Faith and Light has spread across the world.

All our communities live by the same Charter and Constitution. In a country, the communities or their representatives meet in order to share, celebrate, develop and pray together. **The same spirit unites us all. It is the spirit of the Gospel.**

Faith and Light is the answer given by Jesus to the suffering of parents and their disabled children. It is a gift from God. Getting to know communities in different parts of the world helps us to realise that all the men and women on Earth are part of a large family. We discover that in our differences, we are all children of the same Father and that in each heart there are the same desires for peace and unity.

This awareness of our large family encourages us to pray for the communities in different parts of the world, to enter into a great solidarity movement, to share our property and more especially our qualities and cultural richness.



Focus on the theme of the month

- We belong to a large international family. The same spirit unites us: the Gospel spirit.
- Let us try to be more aware of this reality, to discover how other communities live and what they need. Let our hearts grow larger.

Possible biblical references

Mt 13, 32: Parable of the mustard seed
Acts of the Apostles 2, 1-13 or 2, 43-47



Welcome and reunion

After the gesture or song marking the beginning of our meeting, we have the 'weather forecast. On a map of the world, we mark out countries where Faith and Light is present using stickers. We look for our community.

Sharing



Together

Since 1971, Faith and Light, small as a mustard seed, has become a large tree: more than 1500 small communities exist and are growing in 80 countries across the world.

We can give a brief account of the history of the creation of Faith and Light in our country, that of our community and our own personal story with Faith and Light.

Or, in "Up Sails!", we can choose a particular country and build our sharing time around the testimony given.

In small groups

- Do we know the other Faith and Light communities in our province?
- Why is Faith and Light a large family?
- What is it that unites us?
- How can I be part of this family?



Praying

We spread the map of the world out on the ground. Each person is invited to pray for a province, particularly for those experiencing a war, poverty or natural disaster: "Lord, I entrust to you the ... communities..." and we place a small candle on the location of the country. We also pray for the provincial leaders and chaplains from all over the world.

*Lord Jesus,
You have called upon us to follow you in a Faith and Light community.
We pray for the members of our community.
We also pray for the other communities
spread over different parts of the world
[and especially for...]
We pray for communities in both rich and poor countries.
We pray for old communities and for those recently created,*

*We pray for the communities from other denominations.
Make us open up our hearts to the large Faith and Light family.
May Your Spirit guide and unite us in prayer and sharing,
Now and forever.
Amen.*

Prayer of a poor person

"I open my heart, Lord, I open my heart to all my Faith and Light brothers and sisters."

Celebrating



- We are organising a **small treasure hunt** across the world. With the help of clues, we are looking for little boxes on which there are drawings of clothes, tools, objects, names of typical dishes... We have to discover which provinces they are from.
- On the **name tree** that we made during the ninth meeting, we attach real fruits or small balls in various colours. It is a sign of the richness of Faith and Light throughout the world. We can also attach the names of other provinces where Faith and Light exists and where we have so many friends...

Artist's workshop

- Organise a painting or drawing workshop. Let us try to show our community with something that characterises it. We can send these drawings to the communities which we prayed for during the meeting with a small message of friendship, or present them in the parish at the time of the next communal celebration by inviting the participants to visit us.
- Make a little cap for a walk in the fresh air (see page 96).

Accordion leaflet

We stick a small map of the world on it and we can write: "*Faith and Light, a large family in the world*".

The Charter

Faith and Light communities across the world form the branches of one big international family. Within each continent, zone, country, we carry one another's burdens, sufferings and joys. Solidarity is expressed by sharing financial support for the life of Faith and Light but also by sharing the benefits

of their particular gifts, their friendship, the wisdom of their experience, and their faithfulness in prayer. As members of a single family, communities seek to live in love and unity. (III, 4)



Remaining in communion

We can make little surprise visits...

The meditation proposed for eleventh meeting: “A *transformation of hearts*” can nourish our prayer (see page 79).

Twelfth meeting

The community, welcoming and mission ground



The word of the month



Welcoming is at the heart of the Christian community. When a frail person or a stranger is welcomed then so is Jesus (cf. Lk 9, 48 - Mt 25). There is a beautiful story in the Old Testament about welcoming: Abraham was sitting at the entrance to his tent and saw three men standing close to him. He ran to meet them, washed their feet and gave them something to eat. It was actually three angels that had come to visit him.

Welcoming new people into the community is important. There are still many parents with their children who do not know the joys of Faith and Light, many others who feel alone and who need a community. Perhaps it is necessary to go to these people who are awaiting a place of friendship and peace.

This welcoming is never easy. Time must be taken to listen and to understand each person, to explain how the community started, the Charter and Constitution, how we run these meetings. Welcoming implies 'presenting ourselves' as well as also receiving the other person just as he/she is with their needs and expectations.

A community is always a missionary. It has a mission to spread the Good News, the value of disabled people, not only understanding their importance but also their place in God's plan and in the Church and society. This mission occurs by allowing others to know the joys and demands of community life.

Thus, **by welcoming new people, we are preparing the creation of new communities.** In effect, a community should never be made up of more than forty regular members. When the number is too big, you do not know each other personally, you do not realise when someone is absent. It is hard to separate. Bonds of friendship and solidarity are created. It is not easy either to find a new leader, to get together a coordination team, to join a new parish...

Nevertheless, in spite of all the sacrifices that this implies, giving life to another community and discovering its richness is one of the greatest joys that a community can experience. Faith and Light is a treasure that has been entrusted to us by God to disseminate: *"Grow and multiply"*.



Focus on the theme of the month

Any community founded on Jesus seeks to be open, missionary, fertile. Let us open up our community to welcome new members so they can discover our treasure.

Possible biblical references

Gn 18, 1-10:

The visit of three angels to Abraham.

Lk 9, 48 and Mt 25:

Whosoever shall welcome one of this children...



Welcome and reunion

We each arrive with a new friend. After the gesture or song marking the beginning of the meeting, we have the 'weather bulletin' and we introduce the person we have invited. Between each introduction, let us take our instruments and sing to welcome them.

Sharing



Together

All the community takes part in a mime starting with the visit of the three angels to Abraham (Gn 18, 1-11). The leader explains the theme of hospitality, welcoming new friends, the importance of visits ...

In small groups

- Can I recount the joy of an unexpected visit?
- A visit that I have made?
- Is the community a missionary? How?
- How can it be more so?

Praying



*Lord Jesus,
When You walked the roads of Palestine,
The numerous crowds came to listen to your words,
And many sick came to you to be healed.
You took the time to welcome each one as an individual.
We pray,
Give us a welcoming spirit,
Give our community a welcoming spirit,
Yes Lord, open our hearts.
Amen.*

Prayer of a poor person

"Jesus, you open my heart, so that I know how to welcome my brothers."

Celebrating



Artist's workshop

A little confectionary for a **celebratory tea**: Sarah's galettes! (Recipe page 96) Could we bake them at a neighbour's home if our locale doesn't permit it? This time hospitality would be required. Our visit could be like that of the angels to Sarah!

Game: The list of questions

The leader of the game gives each person a sheet to fill in with questions, for example: what is the quality that you appreciate most in others? What is your favourite animal? hobby? greatest wish?...

When all the participants have answered, the leader collects the sheets, mixes them up and gives them out again in such a way that each person has a sheet from another person. Then, taking it in turns, each participant reads the sheet that is in their hands and tries to find out who it belongs to.

Accordion leaflet

We write the name of the friend we have invited to the meeting. We will keep them in our prayers.

The Charter

Each meeting includes a time of getting together to talk and to listen to one another. The essential thing is to form personal relationships within which we discover the suffering and the gifts of one another, where we learn to know someone else by name. Sharing in small groups enables each person to express him/herself through words or other forms of communication, e.g. drawings, modelling, mimes or gestures. In this way we seek to "be with", carrying one another's burdens, to encourage and support each other and to respond to the needs of each one. Through friendship, made up of tenderness and fidelity, we become signs of the love of God for one another. (I, 1)



Remaining in communion

Perhaps a few could get together to remake and taste “Sarah’s galettes”(see page 96). These galettes could be offered to close friends of the community or families who have already heard about Faith and Light or at the time of a visit to people that you would especially like to invite to the community in the new year... Or even sell them to raise funds for solidarity (see page 88). The ideas are numerous... Be creative.

And if you are unable to meet

It is quite simple to organise a **newsletter**. The leader sends a letter to the first person on the list of community members, who completes it with their news, adds a photo or drawing... to the second person... and so on until everyone has received the letter with each person’s news on it. Better is to add a list of addresses to the letter so that no-one is forgotten!

The meditation: “*Being man*” could fuel our prayer (see page 80).

Box of treasures

1. Meditations for each meeting

■ First meeting : Canticle of Brother Sun

Most High, all powerful, good Lord,
Yours are the praises, the glory, the honour, and all blessing.
To You alone, Most High, do they belong,
and no man is worthy to mention Your name.
Be praised, my Lord, through all your creatures,
especially through my lord Brother Sun,
who brings the day; and you give light through him.
And he is beautiful and radiant in all his splendour!
Of you, Most High, he bears the likeness.
Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Moon and the stars,
in heaven you formed them clear and precious and beautiful.
Praised be You, my Lord, through Brother Wind,
and through the air, cloudy and clear,
and every kind of weather through which
You give sustenance to Your creatures.
Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Water,
which is very useful and humble and precious and chaste.
Praised be You, my Lord, through Brother Fire,
through whom you light the night and he is beautiful
and playful and robust and strong.
Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister our Mother Earth,
who sustains us and governs us and who produces
varied fruits with coloured flowers and herbs.
Praised be You, my Lord, through those who give forgiveness
through Your love,
and bear infirmity and tribulation.
Blessed are those who endure in peace
for by You, Most High, they shall be crowned.
Praised be You, my Lord, through our Sister Bodily Death,
from whom no living man can escape.
Woe to those who die in mortal sin.
Blessed are those whom death will
find in Your most holy will,
for the second death shall do them no harm.
Praise and bless my Lord,
and give Him thanks and serve Him with great humility.

Francis of Assisi

■ **Second meeting: The gift of compassion**

Being sympathetic is to become close to the person who is suffering. But we can only really become close to another if we accept becoming vulnerable ourselves. A sympathetic person says: *“I am your brother; I am your sister; I am a human being, fragile and mortal, just like you. I am not outraged by your tears and I am not afraid of your suffering. I, too, have cried. I, too, have suffered.”* We can only be with the other person when they cease to be the ‘other person’ and become like us. This is why it is sometimes easier to show pity than compassion. The person suffering reminds us of our own suffering. How can I help a single person if I have not taken on my own solitude? How am I to approach a disabled person if I refuse to accept my disabilities? How can I be with a poor person if I do not accept acknowledging my own poverty?

When I reflect on my life, I realise that the moments of greatest comfort and consolation are those when someone has said to me: *“I can’t make your suffering go away, I can’t offer a solution to your problem, but I can promise not to leave you alone and that I will support you for as long and as well as I am able.”* Our life has a lot of pain and suffering, but what a blessing when we don’t have to go through it alone! This is the gift of compassion.

Henri NOUWEN, *Living his faith daily*

■ **Third meeting: If the note said...**

If the note said:

It isn’t one note that makes a score... there wouldn’t be a symphony.

If the word said:

It isn’t one word that can make a page... there wouldn’t be a book.

If the brick said:

It isn’t one brick that builds a wall... there wouldn’t be a house.

If the drop of water said:

It isn’t one drop of water that can make a river...

there wouldn’t be an ocean.

If the grain of wheat said:

It isn’t one grain of wheat that can sow a field...

there wouldn’t be a harvest.

If the man said:

It isn’t one gesture of love that can save humanity... there wouldn’t be justice and peace, dignity and happiness on man’s Earth. As the symphony needs each note. As the book needs each word. As the house needs each brick. As the ocean needs each drop of water. As the harvest needs each grain of wheat, the whole of humanity needs **you** as and where you are.

You are unique.

No one can take your place.

Michel QUOIST, *The Breath of Love*

■ **Fourth meeting: The need for a community**

In order to live his/her faith, everyone, even the person with the most severe disability, needs to meet real friends in order to create together a warm environment in which each one may grow in faith and love. Those who come to Faith and Light to meet people with intellectual disabilities must come in a spirit of receiving from them their specific gifts while sharing their own gifts with them.

In front of a severely disfigured person whose words and gestures are often difficult to understand or even non-existent, the spontaneous reaction is often to look the other way and flee. This reaction emerges often out of misunderstanding and fear but it can also reveal egoism and hardness of the heart. To create a real and liberating relationship with people with intellectual disabilities, “our hearts of stone must be changed into hearts of flesh”. Jesus and his Holy Spirit can transform our hearts to enable us to welcome the poor and rejected person and to recognize them in all their human reality and spiritual depth. This transformation of love will lead us to recognize the face of Jesus in ourselves and in the other.

We are led along this path of conversion and of the faithfulness in love by the witness of Mary. Mary and the disciple whom Jesus loved, present with the suffering Jesus, show us a way of living this same loving and faithful presence with our friends in the community. Mary teaches us, like a caring mother, how to carry human suffering together and to live out of the resurrection.

In spite of and through suffering, the community becomes a place of peace and joy, mediator or revealer of the gifts that God has given to those with an intellectual disability: that is their capacity for welcome and for love, their simplicity and their rejection of conventions. In a society based on usefulness and power, people with disabilities may not be efficient but they are nonetheless prophetic in the area of the heart and of tenderness, and in what is essential in the human person. And so those who are poor evangelize the rest of us.

In order to help people with intellectual disabilities to find peace of heart, hope and the desire to grow, it is certainly necessary to see them in the light of the Gospel, but also to understand their human needs in their suffering, and to know how to respond. For this, we must gradually acquire human experience and the necessary knowledge. Those who are involved in Faith and Light must become competent in the way they accompany people who suffer or are in difficulties.

Extract from the Charter of Faith and Light¹ (II, 2 and 3)

¹ Full text: <http://www.faithandlight.org/rubriques/haut/about-us/charter-and-constitution>

■ **Fifth meeting : I am learning day after day**

I am learning day after day,
What is necessary of seasons
in order to free the weather of what it must give,
What is necessary of ploughing in order to free the seed of all its flour,
What is necessary of wine presses
in order to free the blood of a whole grape harvest,
What is necessary of great wind in order to free the sea of all its violence,
And what is necessary of stones
in order to liberate the fire, prisoner of the stone!

And now I know what is necessary of patience
In order to free the song which lifts the heart of man,
What is necessary of grief
In order to liberate the peace which torments the earth,
What is necessary of sorrow
In order to liberate the cry which makes of all a people.
And now I also know what is necessary of silence
In order to free the love of with which I say that I love you.

Didier RIMAUD

■ **Sixth meeting : The light came into the world**

The light came into the world and illuminated it while it was bathed in darkness. It is for that reason that we go forward holding the candles, that we hurry, carrying the lights so as to signify the light which shone for us, but also so as to evoke the splendour that this light will give. Let us therefore run together, let us all go to meet God. This true light which lights up any man coming into this world, it is coming. Let it illuminate us all, let us all be resplendent. May none among us remain, like a stranger, away from this light: may none, while he is overwhelmed, insist on remaining plunged into the night. Let us all go forward into the light, all together, lit, let's walk to his meeting, with the old man Simeon, let us welcome this glorious and eternal light. With him, let us exult all our heart and let us sing a hymn of thanksgiving to God, Father of the light, who has sent us the true clarity to chase the shadows and make us resplendent.

SAINT SOPHRONE of Jerusalem

■ **Seventh meeting: The community, place of forgiveness**

Whilst I do not accept being a mix of light and shadows, qualities and faults, love and hate, altruism and egocentricity, maturity and immaturity; whilst I do not recognise that we are all children of the same Father, I continue to divide the world into “enemies” (the “bad”) and “friends” (the “good”); I continue to raise barriers around myself and my community, to spread prejudices.

However, if I admit that I have weaknesses and faults, that I have sinned against God and against my brothers and sisters but that I am forgiven and that I can move towards the interior freedom and a love more true, then I can accept faults and weaknesses in others. They too are forgiven by God and can move towards freedom and love. I can look at each human being with realism and love; I can begin to see in them an injury which creates fear, but also the gift that I can love and admire. We are all mortal and fragile people but we are unique and precious. There is a hope; we can all move towards a greater liberty. We are learning to forgive. The community is the place of forgiveness. In spite of all the trust that we can have in each other, there are always words that hurt, attitudes where we put ourselves forward, situations where our sensitivities clash. That is why living together implies a certain cross, a constant effort and an acceptance that is a mutual forgiveness each day.

Jean VANIER, *The community, place of forgiveness and celebration*

■ **Eighth meeting: Secret resurrection**

Secret resurrection: I like this alliance of words that I found in the work of Pascal. Secret, that is what the resurrection of Jesus is, because it happened without witnesses, in the night. Secret, like great beginnings, like sources, like creation itself. It isn't the radiance of high noon, but the breaking of the day, the virginal light of dawn.

Secret, that is what the resurrection is because it did not impose on the outside, like an event that everyone can see and notice. It is a spouting of life which touches us inside. Had television cameras been there, there would have been nothing of this event to film.

Secret resurrection because it is a religious mystery which delivers its secret only in revealing that of the cross. The resurrection of Jesus is not a simple returning to life, like that of Lazuarus. The Lord is not returning to his life before his passion as if nothing had happened, like he hadn't died. He didn't go back to the familiar framework of before.

The resurrection is not a denial of the cross, a revenge on the cross. On the contrary, it proclaims with strength that God was with the Crucified, up until in his abandonment, that the cross, far from being a failure, was the triumph of a Love stronger than death. This is why the Resurrection has nothing more to show than its wounds. He shows them as the manifestation of God's glory. Without the cross, without the wounds we would be able to speak of the glory of God, but we would not know what the word meant. Because the glory of God is the splendour of his Agapè. The resurrection of Jesus is the manifestation of this glory: it makes us see, in the Crucified, the great theophany of the history, the height and the depth of the divine Love.

Eloi LECLERC, *The hidden kingdom*

■ **Ninth meeting: He prefers to rely on you**

Only God can give faith but you can offer your testimony.
Only God can give hope but you can give confidence to your brothers.
Only God can give love but you can teach others to love.
Only God can give peace but you can create union.
Only God can give strength but you can support the discouraged.
Only God is the way but you can show it to others.
Only God is the Light but you can make it shine in the eyes of all.
Only God is Life but you can give others the taste for living.
Only God can do the impossible but you can make it possible.
Only God is self sufficient but he prefers to rely on you...

Prayer of the Cumpinas Community (Brazil)

■ **Tenth meeting: Live in thanksgiving**

How can we really live in thanksgiving? When we look over all that has happened to us, we can easily separate our life into two parts: the good things, for which we can be grateful, and the bad things, to forget. But with a past so divided, we cannot go forward freely to the future. With so many things to forget, we can only go forward limping. The real spiritual gratitude includes all our past, the positive as well as the negative, the joyful moments as well as the sad. All that we have experienced until now has contributed to leading us here. We want to remember all the moments like as many steps of our walk with God. That doesn't mean that all that has happened to us was good, but that even our bad experiences are not produced without the loving presence of God.

Henri NOUWEN, Living his faith daily

■ **Eleventh meeting: A transformation of hearts**

Since the first pilgrimage [to Lourdes in 1971], the small communities which were created have continued to meet regularly. In these groups, transformations are seen that are sometimes deep: parents accept their child just as he/she is: young people, often disillusioned by or rebelling against the absence of a true ideal for them, find a sort of commitment which is both at a personal and communal level. [...] Our action is obviously not political. However, it seems to me that we each have to do something in the transformation of mentalities and hearts with regard to the disabled person, so that they are not seen as a being who is missing something but as one whose life has a deep meaning. Hopefully, we can modify, not all of society, but the life of some families who bear the heaviest burden and who, because of this, are the poorest. It is, I believe, the deep significance of this Faith and Light experience.

Marie-Hélène MATTHIEU, *Better to light the lamp than to curse the dark*

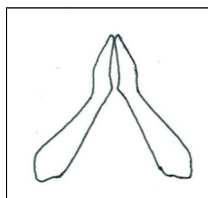
■ **Twelfth meeting : Being man**

It is delectable to be “man” and to live! To simply be man, look at the sky, the sun, the flowers and the stars at night. Look at children, laugh, play, work love, dream, open up your imagination, be joyful: it is a celebration every day. To live, quite simply, to be good, not to want to have everything, not to be jealous, not to groan, nor to complain but to help, sympathise, console, visit a sick person, be there when needed, wear yourself out for others, fall asleep in an armchair, eat and drink together... and all that not because you have to do it or because it is serious but because you want to do it, because you are man, man amongst others, because you see.

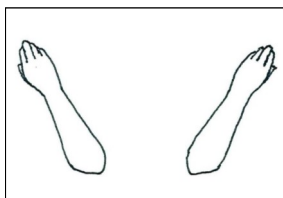
Do you know the danger that threatens our time? We live in the century of the “useful”! “What does it do?”, people ask. “What is its use?” “What does that bring in?”. You calculate the book value, the efficiency and the production. You are busy. You bustle about. You are overloaded. You don’t have time. You calculate. It must pay. And you forget that the beauty of life is in the moment when the calculation stops, when you are simply man, that you are living simply and joyfully. At the beginning, they work to live and in the end they work and forget to live. Stand up for yourself! You are not a machine made for an exact return. You are a lot more than your function, your profession, your job, your work. You are first and foremost “man” to live, to laugh, to love, to be quite simply a “man”. And that is the single most important thing in this world.

Phil BOSMANS

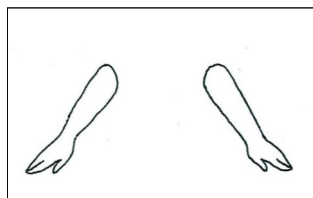
2. The Lord’s prayer with actions



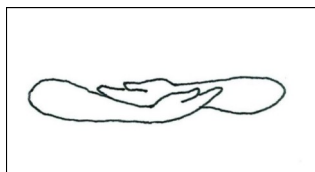
Our Father,
Who art in heaven



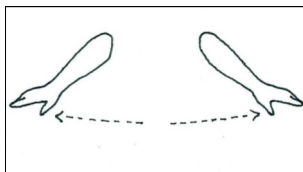
Hallowed be Thy Name



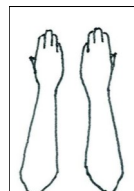
Thy kingdom come



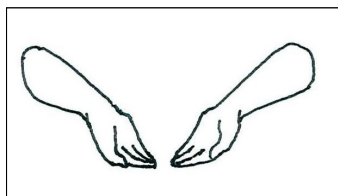
Thy will be done,



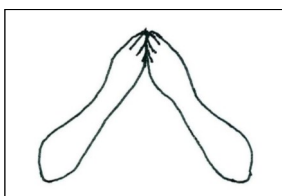
On earth



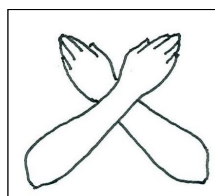
As it is in heaven



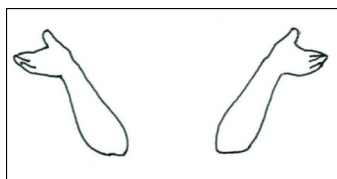
Give us this day



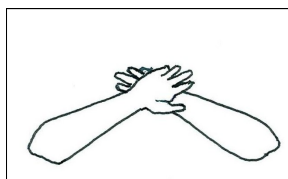
Our daily bread



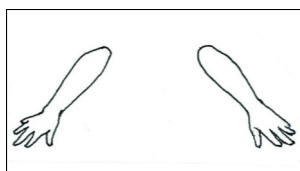
And forgive us
our trespasses



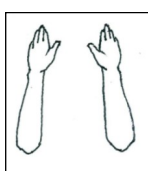
As we forgive those
who trespass against us



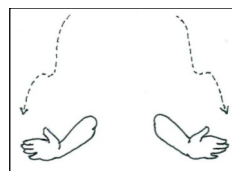
And lead us not
into temptation



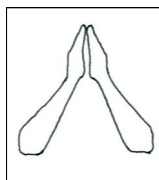
But deliver us from evil



For the Kingdom, the power
and the glory are yours



Now and for ever



Amen!

3. The prayer of a poor person

We can experience this together when we do the community prayer during the meeting, or in small groups between two meetings, or at our own home and also of course in the coordination team meeting..

“The prayer of a poor person” was given to us by Father Joseph Larsen, former International Chaplain. It is a prayer of the body which says: *“I am there because I love you. I am there because you are precious to me. I have put aside all other things, for you, you are more important than anything”*. Our presence becomes a sign, a word, a word without words. It is the way friends show their friendship: *“I am happy to be with you”*.

It is not easy to persevere in a blatantly useless situation, without a result to be proud of. It isn't only *"being with"*. However, at Faith and Light we know that it is a sign of love, a school of love. Gradually the heart changes. We are no longer focussed on ourselves but on the Beloved.

Sit on a chair in a well-balanced position which lets you remain still, without losing concentration. We put our open hands on our knees and close our eyes, thus creating an inner space that nothing can enter. The back is straight. We breathe slowly and calmly. We can help ourselves with a word of love that we repeat inwardly, for example, *"I am there for you Jesus"*, or simply the name *"Jesus"*. We remain there, trusting, in the silence of the heart, for at least ten minutes, letting Jesus love and transform us. At the start, we will have a lot of distractions. The peace only comes after a while, perhaps only towards the end. We should not worry, it is our poverty. Peacefully, let us return to our little word of love. The prayer of a poor man is going to change us. It is going to bear a lot of fruit, fruit of an astonishing quality, *Faith and Light quality*.

4. Short history of Faith and Light (mime)

First scene

Gérard and Camille, Loïc and Thaddée, Leader of the diocese pilgrimage, host.

Gérard and Camille are the parents of Loïc and Thaddée. These two children have severe disabilities: they cannot walk and talk, they are dependant in everything.

– Camille says: *"I do not even know if they recognize me"*.

They are a real family but life is quite difficult.

In 1968, Camille and Gérard decide to go on a pilgrimage to Lourdes to ask Mary to help them. But in good faith, the organisers of the diocese pilgrimage tell them *"Sorry, but your children are too disabled, they will not be able to understand the meaning of the pilgrimage and they could bother the other pilgrims..."*

Camille and Gérard are terribly disappointed, and they decide to go to Lourdes come what may, under their own steam, even if it is very complicated.

In Lourdes, the hosts are worried about seeing the two children:

– A host: *"But Madame, their place is at the Notre-Dame reception"*.

One host, however, accepts them but on one condition:

– *"Your meals will be served in your room so as not to bother the other guests..."*

Camille and Gérard have a heavy heart. They left to find hope and comfort from Mary who appeared to Bernadette; the weakest one of the town. But in Lourdes, they felt lost, marginalised and as set aside within the Church.

Song.

However...

Second scene

Camille, Gérard, Jean and Marie-Hélène.

On their return, they had the opportunity to share their pain with Jean Vanier and Marie-Hélène Mathieu and two other parents. Jean has created the first l'Arche home five years before, a house where people with an intellectual disability share their life with helpers. It is a family life. Six years ago, Marie-Hélène has founded the Office chrétien des personnes handicapées in Paris to help and support parents.

From their talk, an idea came up: *"And if we were planning a pilgrimage in Lourdes with the persons with an intellectual disability and their families"*.

Their dream is going to come true. Everything is becoming clear.

"The families will be accompanied by a young friend. Preparations will be made in small communities of 20 to 30 people. They will experience the pilgrimage together."

It requires three years of work, meetings, reflection and organisation to prepare for this unique event: booking hotels, organising transport, planning a programme and a liturgy accessible to those whose intelligence is limited but whose heart is so open.

Song.

Third scene

Pilgrims, shopkeepers, police, inhabitants...

There was a bit of panic in Lourdes before their arrival:

– An inhabitant: *"What will happen if a crowd of disabled people turn up, those called 'daft', 'abnormal'?"*

The police are mobilised, a contingent of soldiers protect the banks of the Gave:

– A policeman: *"Imagine... if they get it into their head to throw themselves in the river!"*

– A shopkeeper: *"I prefer to put down my shutter and close the shop!"*

Many behave in the same way. As for the hoteliers, they are quite worried.

However, on Good Friday morning, 12 000 met at Lourdes. They come from fifteen countries that have also prepared themselves in communities:

– *"Hello, my name is (John)."*

– *"Guten tag (John), du bist mein freund..."*

– *"Lo mi chiamo (Sandra). Sono italiana. Et tu?"*

– *"Me lliamo (Juan)..."*

On this Good Friday, thanks to Thaddée and Loïc, Mary welcomes for the first time thousands persons with an intellectual disability, along with their parents and friends. It is an immense movement of love, joy and hope. They are happy to be together...

Together, we discover that this heavy wound that is the disability does not lock us up, but that it widely opens our hearts to each other and the door the love of Christ and his mother. For four days, we meet, pray, sing, have fun and celebrate this love of God that is given to us all:

Song: *"My friends, let's sing all our joy, God is alive, alleluia!"*

Fourth scene

Jean and Marie-Hélène, community leaders

This Easter Monday, Jean and Marie-Hélène organise a meeting of the three hundred community leaders before leaving:

– Jean and Marie-Hélène: *"We want to say goodbye and thank you! Goodbye! Thank you!"*

But everyone says:

– Community leaders: *"We do not want to go back to loneliness. We want Faith and Light to go on!"*

– Jean said: *"Do what the Holy Spirit inspires you to do! Keep meeting each other in your communities. Celebrate, go on a pilgrimage."*

It was thus that Faith and Light is born.

Now, everyone gets into the coaches, the trains and the planes,...., a bit sad that it is already over, but in a deep joy. Everyone is certain of one thing in his/her heart:

– A pilgrim: *"What we have just experienced is not over. But it is truly a start..."*

Many communities are going to carry on meeting. In Faith and Light we discover what is essential, in experiencing each month, times of meeting, sharing, prayer and celebrating... out of friendship. In welcoming all those who are alone and who will come. In calling so many other persons who are in distress and who are isolated.

Faith and Light is about meeting, friendship, prayer, celebration and joy!

In 1975, the Faith and Light communities throughout the world went on a pilgrimage to Rome. For the first time, they are received by Pope Paul VI in the St Peter basilica: He speaks personally to each pilgrim with a disability: *"You are loved by God as you are. He dwells in your heart. Trust in Him. Look: He gives you a room among other Christians, in His church. In His name, I bless you, and I bless the parents and friends that God has given you."*

Today, there are more than 1500 communities in 80 countries worldwide who can sing like us... and with us!

Song.

5. Let us be one!

Letter from Ghislain du Chéné, international coordinator

During an international meeting, I attended an Anglican service with Paul who has Downs Syndrome. At the time of receiving communion, we followed the procession, making, as we had been advised, the gesture of crossing our arms across our chest to receive the blessing of the celebrant. On our return to our seats, I heard Paul burst into tears, and say to me: *“Why wasn’t I able to take communion?”* It touched me and made me ask myself other questions: Why was Paul more sensitive than me to this cruel separation between the various Christian denominations? Why was it so difficult to make our friends with a disability understand that there are divisions between Christians even though Jesus prayed, *“that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me”?* (Jn 17, 21) (...)

The priority that we should quickly put in place is to learn to get to know each other better!

- Get to know each other better in order to better understand each other and get to know where we are alike and where we differ. There is a very good Faith and Light document that needs to be read and re-read¹.
- Get to know each other better by going to the meetings of others. Inevitably there will be Christians from other denominations not far from our communities. How much effort do we make to invite them, to make them aware of Faith and Light or to help them to start a Faith and Light community in their church? Certainly, it is easier in some countries than in others, or in towns than in the countryside, but it is vital to get a good knowledge of our local environment.
- Get to know one another better in order to know what we can do together. There are differences that enrich us through the beauty and diversity of the liturgies and that are not obstacles to joint celebrations.
- Get to know each other better in order to testify to the scandal of these divisions. I have already told you that anger can be the source of beautiful prayers, of prayers that touch the heart of Jesus. Therefore we should not hesitate to proclaim our sorrow and pain like Paul.

Once this first step is taken, we can then go on to the second stage, which will be wonderful for us! Why not do what l’Arche has started to do in Australia? It is a method called “host and guest” that makes it possible to get to know other denominations. Each one, the host then the guest, understands, as a community, how much the other church benefits them and helps them to follow Jesus.

¹ “Ecumenism in Faith and Light” available from the International Secretariat.

Ecumenism is one of the priorities of Christian churches who wish to achieve full communion. I believe that this cannot only be done from on high - it is not through the reflections of theologians or through the dogmas that it will be achieved. However, if this real willingness of the heads of the churches meets the cry from the hearts wounded by our churches, then we will really make progress. It is necessary for the husband to meet the wife to give rise to the unity to which we all aspire! Therefore, I invite you to send us stories like that of Paul. We will bring them together in one document to illustrate how the smallest of us suffers because of this lack of unity. It will show that the "people of God" also want to be advisors on the communion between churches, and that they want to put their heart and soul into this work!

Until then, I invite you to pray regularly in your communities from two texts of the Gospel: the prayer of the husband (John 17. 21-23) and the prayer of the wife (Luke 1. 46-55).

And on April 24, let us sing together our message of joy: "*Christ is risen! Yes, He is truly risen!*"

6. The Feast of Light

Why have we adopted 2 February, feast of the Presentation of Jesus at the Temple as the day of celebration for all Faith and Light communities in the world? There hasn't been a big discernment or official decision. This date came about quite naturally.

From 1972, a French community decided that its annual celebration would take place at Candlemas, the day when Jesus is presented as the Light of the world and where the symbol of candles is so telling. The idea of this celebration spread across the whole world like wildfire, as is evident. At the Presentation of Jesus at the Temple, as at Faith and Light, parents are reunited with their small child and his/her friends, Simeon and Anne.

The parents, members of Faith and Light, are felt and feel more often still in their flesh, the prediction of Simeon to Mary: "*A blade will pierce the heart*". And we see that their child is a sign of contradiction. He reveals deep thoughts which hide in the hearts. The person weak, disabled, ill, dying... Deeply disturb us but it transforms us if we want to put our hand in theirs.

Some ideas for organising the celebration

A Faith and Light community can organise the celebration with the parish or ecclesiastical community in which it is integrated. At the welcome, the priest, pastor briefly introduces the community. Faith and Light songs will have been specially chosen, like for example, "*My Friends, let's sing all our joy*". Community members, parents, friends, persons with a disability take part in the procession of offerings or can take the collection. At the end of the celebration, the community leader or a member of the coordination team introduces Faith and Light and invites those present for a drink to friendship

or to a meal or even to the fiesta. Make sure each person, on leaving, receives a leaflet and a small note about the life of the community, its address...

The Feast of Light can also be organised by two communities who get together in one of the local parishes or Churches to which they belong. Finally, the provincial council can also meet all the communities for a communal celebration.

This celebration could be the opportunity to invite new people.

7. The washing of the feet celebration

The meaning of our action



On the night before his death, Jesus washed the feet of his disciples with much love and humility and said: *“For I have given you an example that you also should do as I have done for you”*. What humility, what an example of service, of goodness! Jesus teaches us by this gesture, to put ourselves at the service of one another with love and gentleness. He teaches us to go spiritually on

our knees before our brothers and sisters, especially the poorest ones.

We are going to wash each other’s feet, in an atmosphere of prayer, of silence, knowing that it is a time of grace. Saint Bernard liked to say that the washing of feet was a sacrament, that is to say, a moment, when, Jesus, by his love, joins us.

To be sure, washing each other’s feet is a symbol. However, it reveals our desire to forgive, to be forgiven, to serve with humility, to become smaller, poorer. Thus, to wash each other’s feet becomes for each one of us a prayer.

This gesture has also a particular significance from the point of view of unity.

If we cannot always eat together at the same Eucharistic table as our brothers and sisters of other denominations, we can already be deeply united to each other in living through the washing of feet together.

The procedure

Before beginning, several persons will have prepared the room. The chairs will be arranged in a circle. At the centre, there are placed a Bible, a candle and a basin, a jug filled with water and a towel. Water will have been placed in reserve, outside the circle, to refill the jug if necessary.

The celebration begins. The candle is lighted. We sing some quiet songs and recollect ourselves to find peace and interior silence. After the songs, the leader will explain the meaning of the evening ceremony *“We are going to wash each others’ feet as Jesus has asked us to do”*. And he reads the text of the Gospel of John (13,1-17).

Then he kneels down in front of the person who is on his right in the circle and washes his two feet very slowly, with a great deal of love and respect. This is a sacred gesture. He wipes the feet. When he has finished, he remains on his knees before the person. This latter person puts her hands on the head of the other, and they both pray in silence. This is a gesture of mutuality and reciprocity. After several moments of prayer, the who has had her feet washed, rises and kneels before the person on her right and washes his feet... and so on, until each member of the community has had his/her feet washed.

During all this time of the washing of feet, we can arrange for background music or softly sing a refrain (from Taizé, for example). In the end, we sing together “Ubi Caritas”, and recite the “Our Father” holding each other’s hands. Certain persons with difficulties must be helped in order to be able to accomplish all these gestures. However, it is important for them to experiment with this responsibility of service. When the gesture of the washing of feet appears to be difficult, even impossible to carry out, it is up to each leader to intervene with kindness to make one or other of the participants not feel guilty, and suggest the simple washing of hands.

8. The Announcement and sharing Day, your participation in International Solidarity¹

The Faith and Light communities are the trustees of Good News, so we should regularly remind ourselves of this by reading the Charter. We should also be missionaries so that those who do not know this Good News may, like us, know the joy and comfort brought by the bonds of friendship within our communities.

Every mission requires resources. The great family of Faith and Light is growing throughout the world, particularly in regions and countries who are experiencing difficulties.

The “Announcement and Sharing Day” is therefore an important time of year: it should be planned as a part of each community's yearly programme so that we may **all be missionaries in solidarity!**

Here are some ideas for a good agenda:

- Book the parish hall.
- Make a decision sufficiently early on about what aids will be used on the day. A show, performance or concert; a sale of cakes, pancakes or jams in prettily decorated little pots; flowers; bric-a-brac or flea market; fêtes; raffles ...

¹A small booklet “A few easy recipes for fundraising” is available from the International Secretariat, foi.lumiere@wanadoo.fr

- Prepare all the material aspects together, but also what needs to be announced (leaflets, a short presentation text on Faith and Light, photos, slide show etc.)
- Make an open invitation to all the parishioners, friends, parents, neighbours, acquaintances etc.
- Be there on “D-Day” with everyone wearing their most beautiful smile!

When everything is over, the coordination team can make an evaluation to see what went well and what needs to be improved next year.

And finally, don't forget to send the money raised to your provincial coordinator.

The preparation for this Day, which will mobilise the whole community, will give you a new boost! All practical details for organising this day can be found in “Up Sails!” issue 5 - go and look it up, it's all there! ¹

9. Artist's workshop

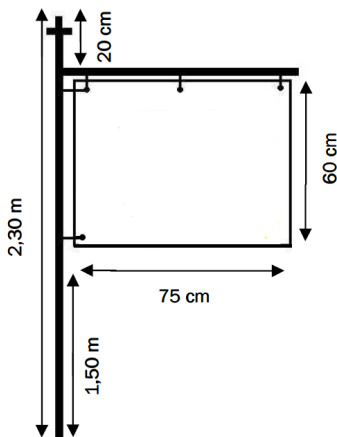
The community banner

Pole: *able to be folded or dismantled, 2.3m in length,*

Of which:

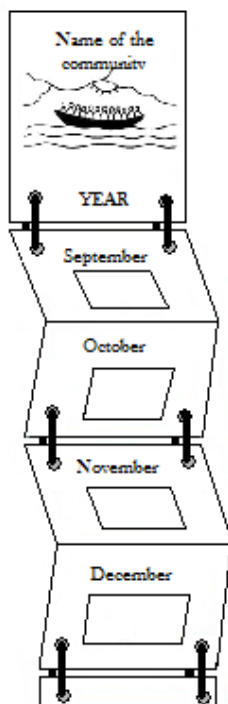
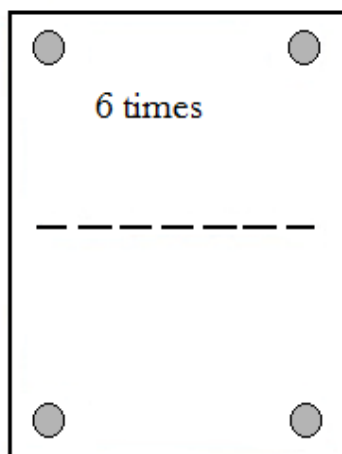
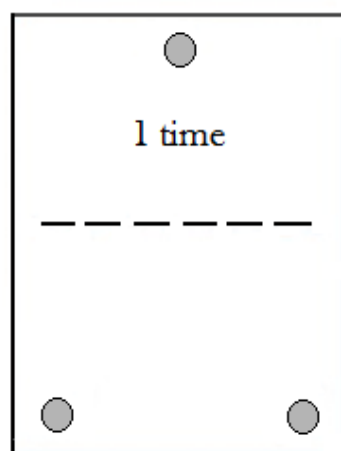
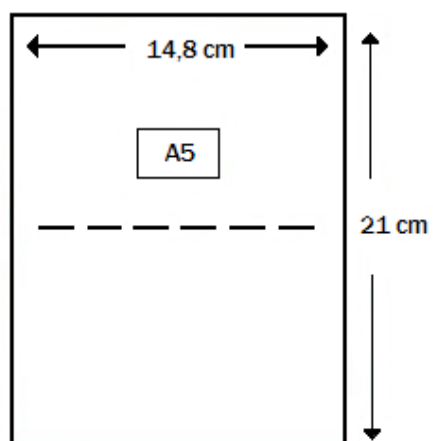
- Spearhead (that extends beyond the fabric) of 20cm. It can represent a cross, the insignia of your patron saint, a star, a boat ...
- Horizontal part that supports the fabric of 75cm.
- Free handle of 1.5m

Fabric: 75 x 60cm, stretched by a crossbar at the bottom of the spearhead. The name of the community, country and province can be painted or embroidered on it, as well as an illustration that characterises the community. This should be double-sided so that the text and images are visible from both sides.



¹ <http://www.faithandlight.org/rubriques/haut/publications/Up%20sails>

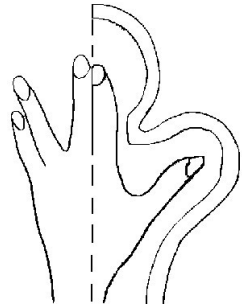
Accordion leaflet



Finger puppet

Felt, scissors, needle and thread, glue, strands of wool for the hair, cotton wool, beads.

- Cut the doubled material using the pattern made for your hand size. Leave a margin for comfort.
- Sew the sides, turn the whole thing the right side out.
- Stuff the head with cotton wool.
- Decorate the puppet.

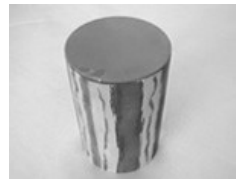


Musical Instruments

Tom Tom Drum

Metal tin (without a lid), balloon, scissors, sellotape.

- Cut the rubber balloon.
- Stretch the rubber balloon over the top of the can.
- Sellotape all around the metal tin. The balloon must be stretched.
- Decorate the can.



Maracas

Drinks can, seeds (and/or beads), cardboard, scissors, pencil, sellotape.

- Put the seeds (and/or beads) in the cans until you get a sound you like.
- Cut out a piece of card and sellotape it to cover the top of the can.
- Reinforce it with an elastic band.
- Decorate the outside.



Rainmaker

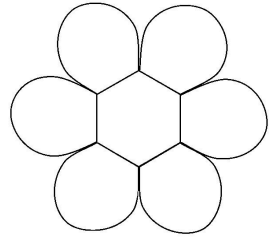
Cardboard tube, seeds, cardboard, tacks, sellotape, hammer.

- Put the tacks in the cardboard tube using the hammer.
- Block up one end of the tube with a circle of cardboard (with the same diameter as the tube).
- Put the seeds in the tube and block the other end of the tube with a second circular piece of cardboard.
- Decorate the rainmaker.



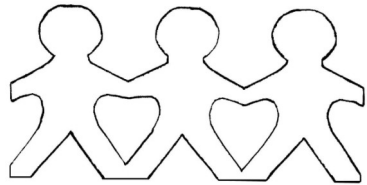
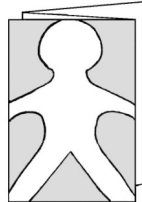
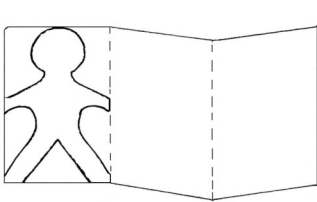
A flower that opens by itself in water!

- Cut out a flower using this template in a thick paper. In the centre of the flower, a word or name can be written.
- Fold the petals over the centre.
- Fill in a bowl of water
- Place the flower at the surface of water.
- Admire it as it opens up and blossoms!

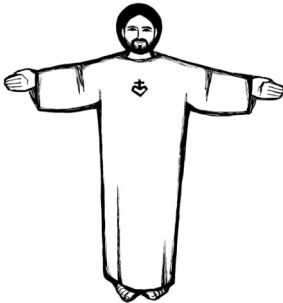


A paper chain of 'hearts'

- Fold a strip of paper as many times as you want people, each folded section should measure 7cm by 10cm.
- Cut off the shaded part.



The silhouette of Jesus



A crown

Cardboard, elastic thread, felt tips, crayons, stickers...

- Cut out as per the template
- Decorate.



Recipe for salt dough

1 cup of table salt, 1 cup of warm water, 2 cups of flour.

- Thoroughly mix the flour and salt together in a salad bowl or other large bowl.
- Add the water (all at once) and knead the dough with your hands. It must be pliable but not stick to your fingers. If it is too crumbly, or looks like grains of sand, add a little more water until it is pliable and easy to work. If it is the opposite, it is too wet and too sticky, add flour and work the dough.

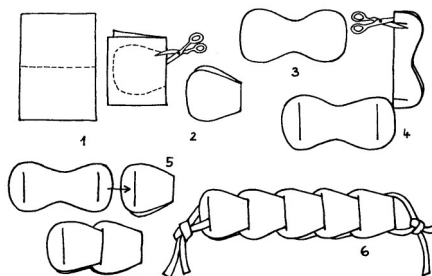


Drawing of the Visitation

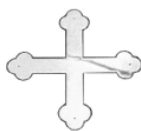
A chain

Piece of oilcloth, PVC or cardboard, scissors, cord.

- Cut out rectangles measuring 10cm by 4cm.
- Cut out a curved shape from each using the template and put in two notches.
- Insert the pieces into each other as shown in the diagram.
- Link the two ends with the cord.



Various Christian Cross



Greek Orthodox cross



Huguenot cross



Armenian cross



Latin cross



Russian Orthodox Church

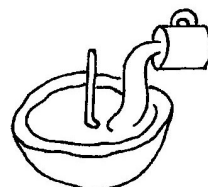
A bookmark



Candles

Walnut shells, wax (old candles), cotton threads.

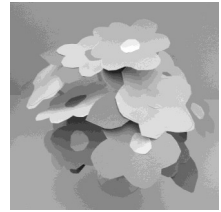
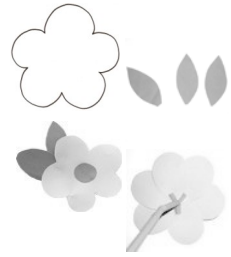
- Melt the wax in an old pan, in the oven or in a bain-marie.
- Fix the cotton wick into the bottom of the shell with a drawing pin or staple.
- Pour the melted wax in, holding the wick upright.



A Bunch of flowers

Coloured sheets of paper, glue, straws, green if possible, scissors, pencil, small pot (yogurt), sand, semolina or rice

- Draw flowers on the coloured paper using the template.
- In a different colour, cut out a small circle for the centre and glue it to the middle of the flower.
- Cut out leaves from the green paper and glue them under certain flowers.
- Cut 3 slits at one of the ends of the straw and spread it out into a corolla.
- Glue the straw to the back of the flower.
- Glue the leaves on the stem.
- Fill the small pot with sand and plant the flowers in it.



A finger rosary

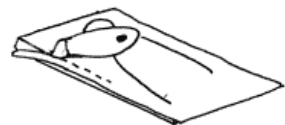
10 wooden or coloured beads, cord, 1 small cross.

- Nothing easier! Thread the ten wooden or coloured beads on a fine and strong cord. And close with a cross of your choice.

Ann icon

Picture, piece of plywood, wallpaper paste, clear varnish, cloth.

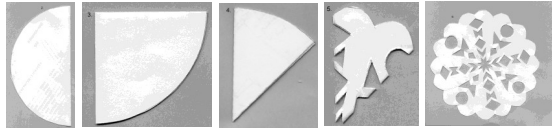
- Choose a picture and cut out a piece of plywood slightly smaller than this image (5mm at least).
- Coat the picture and the plywood with wallpaper paste.
- Wait five minutes, then stick the picture down by pressing with a clean piece of material starting at the centre to avoid bubbles forming. It must be left for 24 hours. The second step can be achieved between two meetings or the following time.
- With a craft knife, trim the excess closely, then sand the edges with glass paper.
- Coat the whole thing in clear varnish.



A paper doily

White or coloured paper, scissors.

- Draw a circle and cut it out.
- Fold the circle into three.
- Cut out random shapes on the folded edges.
- Open it up!

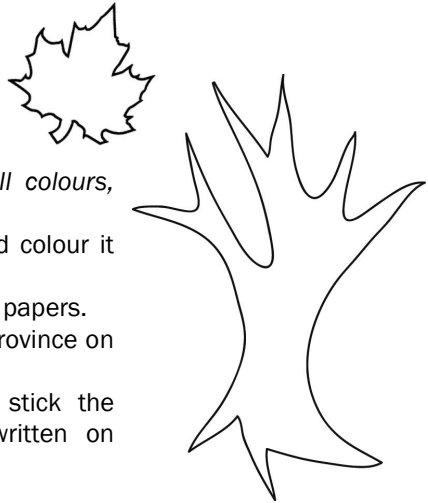


Name tree

If you are unable to get hold of real tree branches, here is how you make your 'name tree'.

Large piece of cardboard, leaves of all colours, scissors, glue.

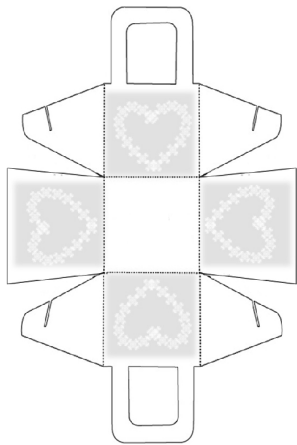
- Draw the trunk on the cardboard and colour it in.
- Cut out leaves from different coloured papers.
- Write the name of a Faith and Light province on each branch.
- On each branch, we are going to stick the coloured leaves with our names written on them.



Treasure chest

160 gram paper, scissors and glue, felt tips or paint

- Cut out using the template.
- Scoop out the inside of the handles and cut the slots.
- Folding along the dotted lines and fold the other way.
- Close the short sides by sliding the slots in the other one.
- Raise the wider sides and paste.
- Close with a ribbon.
- Decorate.

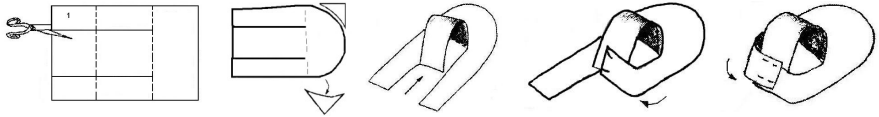


A cap

Sheet of wide A4 paper, scissors, staples.

- Cut out as shown in figures.
- Fold up the centre part.
- Bend one of the sides to the centre part and staple. Do the same on the other side.

Before stapling it, try it on! If it is too small, cut the slits a little further from the visor; if it is too big, do the opposite.



Sarah's galettes

To make approximately 15 galettes: 250g flour, 140g sugar, 100g soft butter, 1 egg

- Mix the butter, sugar and egg.
- Knead by hand. Roll out the pastry to a thickness of about 1cm.
- Mould into small, round galettes.
- Put in oven (Gas mark 6 - 180°) for about 20 mins, until the galettes are golden.

Card Hearts

Card paper, coloured sheets of paper, scissors, glue.

- Cut out hearts from coloured paper.
- Write a wish on each card, or even just names.
- Stick the hearts on the card so it looks like a large bouquet.
- Decorate it using your imagination...

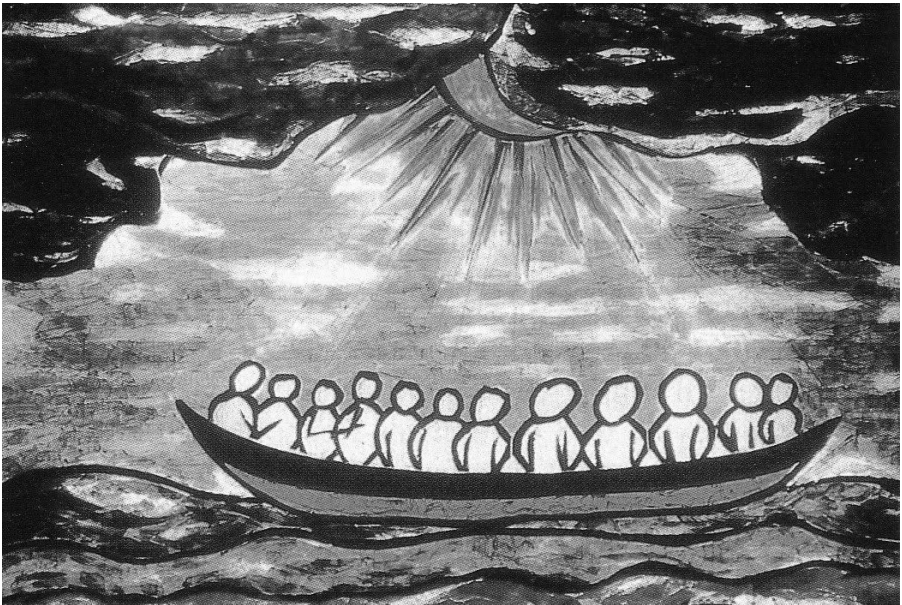


10. The Emblem of Faith and Light

Meb was a painter, he had an intellectual disability. He composed his work of art on the occasion of the first pilgrimage to Lourdes in 1971 after some one read him the Charter of the first Faith and Light pilgrimage.

Meb created a simple painting. A boat in which he put a number of figures. He painted twelve of them. Jesus must be sleeping somewhere in the bottom of the boat. Then there was the sun and the clouds. Meb was certainly very inspired. He could not count.

His idea : we are in a boat and we are travelling together. Sometimes the sea is rough, sometimes it's dead calm, sometimes you need to row, and sometimes the wind blows in the sails... Meb had understood all that.



“The clouds parted and Your light, oh Lord, shone down upon us.”

11. Evaluate the year to progress

At the beginning or end of the year, together or as a coordination team, let us take the time to evaluate the life of the community. On that day, let us invite the vice coordinator who accompanies us. The small booklet “Day for a renewal” can help us¹.

Here are some tips that have been taken from it. Each person answers these questions:

- What have I liked the most this year in the community?
- What I have like least?
- How do we pray together as a community?
- How do we celebrate together as a community?
- How do we get to know one another and share our faith when we meet?
- How do we deepen our friendship between our meetings?
- Do we have almost equal numbers of persons with intellectual disabilities, family members and friends? Do we have a chaplain who participates in our community?
- Do we have a coordinating team that prepares and evaluate our meetings?
- How much importance do we give to using the Guidelines?
- How can we be more creative in our coordinating team?
- How do we pray for/contribute to the unity of all Christians? How do we try to get to know people from different denominations?
- How do we experience our belonging to the international family of Faith and Light and how do we express this belonging?
- How would we describe the atmosphere of our community?
- How is our community a part of the parish/local church?
- How often do we meet as a whole community?
- How open and welcoming is our community to new members?
- How many members do we have?
- If we are more than forty, are we praying and considering about giving birth to a new community?

If we choose to do this evaluation as a community, we form small groups. The leaders will note what each person has said. The evaluations will be looked at in the coordination team meeting with a view to preparing for the next year.

Some communities take a weekend, or a day outside, often in the religious community with which they are twinned, in order to have the whole time for reflecting together in relaxation and friendship.

¹ Available for free from the International Secretariat.

12. Available documents

For community building

Charter and Constitution	free
Annual Guidelines	5.50 €
Guidelines for the first year	5 €
DVD gesture songs (<i>in French only</i>)	8 €
Leader's pack	3 €
You will shine in the World like Bright Stars (Reflection on the Identity and Mission of Faith and Light)	2.50 €
Sharing our responsibility	3 €
General rules of financial management	free
A few easy recipes to raise funds	1 €

For deepening our life together

Day for a renewal in the community	free
Deepening our spirituality in Faith and Light	3 €
Faith and Light in daily life, Joseph Larsen	2 €
Morning and evening prayers	1 €
Retreats in Faith and Light	3 €
How to prepare and live a retreat	3 €
Ecumenism in Faith and Light	3 €
Fioretti, Father Joseph Larsen	2 €
Formation week-ends and sessions	1 €
Let's go on holiday together	1,50 €

Getting to know us better

DVD: «The Faith and Light Story», Marie-Hélène Mathieu (presentation in English, French, Spanish, Italian)	10 €
Churches messages to Faith and Light	3 €
Leaflet	free
Finances leaflet	free
Poster, small and large format	0.08 €
Faith and Light badge	2 €

Books of Marie-Hélène Mathieu

“No longer alone, the Faith and Light adventure”, translated in different languages, contact the International Secretariat.

La lumière d'une rencontre (*in French only*)

Dieu m'aime comme je suis (*in French only*)

Mieux vaut allumer une lampe que maudire l'obscurité (*in French only*)

... and the books of Jean Vanier

Discover the books of Jean Vanier online <http://www.jean-vanier.org/en/home>

Prayer of Faith and Light

**Jesus, you came into our world
to reveal the Father to us, your Father and our Father.**

You came to teach us to love one another.

**Give us the Holy Spirit, according to your promise,
so that he will make us**

**instruments of peace and unity,
in this world of war and division.**

**Jesus you have called us to follow you
in a community of Faith and Light,**

We want to say «yes» to you.

**We want to live in a covenant of love
in this big family you have given us,
where we can share our sufferings and difficulties,
our joys and our hope.**

**Teach us to accept our wounds, our weakness
so that your power may be revealed.**

**Teach us to find you in all our brothers and sisters
especially in those who are the weakest.**

Teach us to follow you in the ways of the Gospel.

**Jesus come and live in us and in our communities
as you first lived in Mary.**

She was the first to welcome you in herself.

**Help us to be faithfully present, with her,
at the foot of the cross, near the crucified of the world.**

Help us to live your Resurrection.

Amen.