

The Discernment and Election Process for a community coordinator

March 2010

Faith and Light International
Formation session



First Phase of Discernment
Letter of request

When	By whom	Action
One to two Months before the community meeting	Vice-coordinator or his/her delegate	Sends a letter, description of the roles, and nomination form to each community member
<p>The Vice-Coordinator asks the community members to prayerfully discern names of people who have the gifts, qualities, experience and availability to serve as a community coordinator. The community members are instructed to explain how each person fits the role for which they are nominated (e.g. builds unity, works well as a member of a team, delegates responsibility, listens well, is very organized, gives concrete, positive and helpful suggestions, inspires trust...). The Vice-coordinator gives a clear timeframe within which the members must respond with their nominations.</p>		

Second Phase of Discernment
Reception of Nominations

When	By whom	Action
After reception of filled nomination forms from the members	Vice-coordinator or his/her delegate	Contacts those who gave the nomination or others who might know the person nominated, for further information
<p>If there is not enough information about the gifts, experience, and qualities of any person nominated (especially in regards to the criteria established for the role), the vice-coordinator will ask questions to obtain more information. How have you experienced this person demonstrating this gift, quality or skill?</p>		
After reception of missing information	Vice-coordinator or his/her delegate	Reviews all the nomination forms and additional information
<p>He/she groups the persons nominated into: those who have clearly shown that they have the gifts, qualities and experience for carrying the responsibility of community coordinator – regardless of how many or how few times they have been nominated and regardless of those for whom there is still not enough information.</p> <p>Many people who are very good people with long histories of service and experience in Faith and Light may be named – people of prayer, who love our people with intellectual disabilities, generous and caring people. The key question is do they have the gifts needed for <u>this</u> role?</p>		

Third Phase of Discernment
Contacting Nominees

When	By whom	Action
After phase two and after discussion with the coordinator	Vice-coordinator or his/her delegate	Contact those who have demonstrated the gifts essential for the role and inform them of their nomination
He/she asks them to pray and discern (with their spiritual or personal accompanier) whether this might be an invitation from God. The Vice-coordinator does not ask the persons nominated about availability at this time, but if the person volunteers strong reasons why this service is not possible, the Vice-coordinator will ask them to confirm their response with trusted accompaniers and will also ask if they would be willing/able to present their reasons for their decision to the Assembly* of the community if this is needed. *(special meeting where members of the community meet to decide important matters about the community)		
	Vice-coordinator or his/her delegate	Contact those who have been nominated many times, but have not demonstrated the necessary gifts for the role
Invites them to pray and discern to what service in Faith and Light God might be calling them (project teams, etc.).		
Prior to the election	Vice-coordinator or his/her delegate	Contact again those persons whose gifts and experience match the essential criteria for the role and ask about their availability.
		Those who have discerned that this is not their call at this time, too, will be asked if they are willing to share their reasons with the members of the community if needed.
		The Vice-coordinator makes lists of the people who allow their names to remain for the final phase of the discernment and election process.

Fourth Phase of Discernment
The Assembly – 1. Introduction

When	By whom	Action
At the very beginning of the Community meeting	The Vice-coordinator or his/her delegate	Prayer
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - At the very start, it is important to create an atmosphere of prayer and discernment. Start with a song. - Scripture reading*: (e.g. Acts 1, 21-26). Reflection questions: From the reading, who initiates the process of discernment? (Verse 24). What are we looking for in a person nominated? (verse 22). What does it mean to be a witness of resurrection for us in F&L? (22: to witness that the community transforms us...) Time for quiet reflection 		
	The Vice-Coordinator or his/her delegate	Introduces the animation sequence of the meeting
<p>The election is done in an atmosphere of discernment. We ask the Spirit to guide us in the choices that we will make, but in the end we are the ones who are choosing...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Present the steps of the process - Why a discernment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To establish the priorities of the Community for the coming years - To elect coordinator - To learn - The role of the facilitator (Vice-coordinator or his/her delegate) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To help the group make decisions. To be at the service of the group. The facilitator does not have pre-determined ideas about what the needs of the community are. - Determine who have the right to vote - Number of votes required: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - First ballot : 75%, Second 75%, Third: 50% + 1 		

* Suggested reading

The Assembly - 1. Introduction

Description of the steps of the assembly

- Prayer and introduction
- Establishment of priorities for the community
- Presenting the list of the persons available
- Election
- Celebration

Note on privacy

Well explain to the participants that what is happening is not secret. Avoid to build mystery around what is happening and be as transparent as possible. Avoid words such as "confidential" or "secret" or "we can not tell what is happening."

Rather suggest that all the persons should respect the experience of those who generously agree to participate to the process. Everyone can speak of his own experience. But everything must be done discreetly and sensitively, everyone being very respectful of the experience of the others.

Fourth Phase of Discernment

The Assembly – 2. Process and Priorities

When	By whom	Action
□□□□	The whole community	Discusses and decides upon the priorities for the Community for the coming years.

These priorities are the core of the mandate for the new Coordinating Team and are a key part of this fourth phase of the discernment of who might better assist the community to live well and to grow.

Suggestions for the facilitator:

- Use flip chart paper or a white board to capture the comments of the participants.
- Start with an ice breaker question like: **“What did we accomplish well in the last two or three years?”** This warm up question aims at helping participants to recall what is happening in the community. By this discussion, participants remember good things that have happened in the community and rediscover issues that need to be improved
- To help the group identify priorities: **“What would you like to do more or to do better?”** By this question you focus the attention on the positive. Take great care to carefully note on the board what participants say. Do not interpret their comments.
- Make sure to post all the sheets with things to do more or to improve.
- Ask the group to identify three priorities from this list on which the new Coordination Team should work.
- **Post these three priorities so that everyone can see them for the next phases of this meeting.**

Fourth Phase of Discernment

The Assembly – 3. Presenting the persons available

When	By whom	Action
	Vice-coordinator, or his/her delegate	Facilitates this part of the process

He/she presents the list of persons available for the role of Community Coordinator, along with a brief description of who they are and of their experience. If it seems necessary or of value, those who discerned that this was not their call at this time, are given an opportunity to explain their decision. It is very helpful to provide opportunity for the members to get to know (or to know better) the remaining nominees.

If the list is very small, this can be done by asking the nominees to respond to the same two or three questions before the assembled members. (e.g. What is your vision for the Community? How do you see us addressing these priorities over the next few years? Where will you need help to live this role well?) If the list is longer, the Assembly can be divided up into several small groups. The nominees can rotate from group to group every five to ten minutes answering whatever questions arise. The purpose of these questions is to help the members to continue to discern who might be the better choice to lead the Community for the coming years.

Since all the members of the community have already been consulted, do not ask or accept at this point any other names from the participants.

Fourth Phase of Discernment
The Assembly – 5. Election

When	By whom	Action
<p>At the time of the election of a Community Coordinator, the Assembly is composed of the community members. Each member has one vote. The Vice-coordinator reminds the members of the format for the election and invites them into another moment of prayerful discernment. Considering the needs and priorities of the Community today and for the next three years and considering the demonstrated gifts, experience and availability of the nominees we pray for the freedom we need to make a good choice and the wisdom we need to recognize who might better lead us at this time.</p>		
After a time of silence	The members	Election of the Coordinator
<p>Before proceeding with the vote: bring attention to the priorities for the Community posted on the wall. The election proceeds by written ballot according to the tradition of Faith and Light. Rules for voting: Normally by secret ballot. Blank votes are authorized. A person normally does not vote for oneself. Recall the % of votes necessary to be elected.</p>		

Take time to pray for guidance. It is important to keep a climate of seriousness and piety during the vote. During the vote and the calculation of the votes, the group sing a meditative song.

Remind participants that we ask the Spirit to inspire our decisions. In all cases, the Spirit is not the one who decides. Participants are the ones who decide by searching the will of the Spirit.

Fourth Phase of Discernment
The Assembly – 6.Celebration

When	By whom	Action
	The Vice-coordinator or his/her delegate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gives the results • Asks the person elected if he/she accepts • Introduces the new coordinator to the Assembly
<p>Take time to celebrate and to confirm the new Coordinator in his/her role.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Present a symbolic gift - Everyone offers their commitment to support the new coordinator - Thank those who participated by leaving their name in the process - Thank the former Coordinator 		
	The Vice-coordinator or his/her delegate	Celebration