

Leader's Handbook



Faith and Light international

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Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to take on a responsibility in Faith and Light. Following Jesus, the Good Shepherd, you are like shepherds¹ in Faith and Light. All the coordinators in Faith and Light work together so as to nourish the life of the communities who are the heart of our movement. We know that there are joys, difficulties and challenges associated with a role of responsibility. We continue to go forward because we know that we are not alone. We know that Jesus is close. He has sent us people to support us: the community's coordinating team, the province team and the vice coordinator who accompanies us. They have been sent to us to share our joys and our sorrows, our fears and our hope.

This document would like to provide you with additional support. It brings practical elements to what is defined in the Constitution. This booklet is by no means complete. But we think that it can help you to answer any questions that you might have. We hope that it will be useful to you and help you with those in your charge so that they grow in unity and peace.

Another resource document may be able help you in your role: *Sharing our responsibility*.

It is important for us to build and strengthen this place of communion, forgiveness and celebration, where each one of us, whether we have a disability or not, whether we are family members or friends, can grow in the love of God and one another.

¹ Only Jesus is the Good Shepherd. We can try to walk in his footsteps, learning to be gentle and humble, but let us avoid being called "shepherds".

Our vision and our mission in the world

We consider that belonging to Faith and Light and accepting the responsibility for a community is a call from God. We believe that his purpose, when he inspired our founders in 1968, went far beyond the simple recognition of the needs and suffering of the Proffit family (Camille and Gérard whose two children, Loïc and Thaddée, had severely disabilities) and families in a similar situation. He wasn't just offering an opportunity to young people to commit to a movement that could change their lives. Finally, it was not only to awaken the attention of our Christian Churches to the need to give a real place to each one of their members.

God has given Faith and Light the mission of becoming a living witness, in the world and for the world, of the values that Jesus taught us: the complementarity of gifts and needs, unity and harmony in diversity, the incalculable value of each person and, above all, to love as God loves us. In our communities, we strive to fully live, in truth, that each person is precious, unique and loved. As coordinators in Faith and Light, we have the mission to be faithful to the gift that we have received. But we also have a mission that extends beyond our communities, our provinces and even our international family. In many, if not most parts of the world, Faith and Light rows against the current. We cannot exist just for ourselves. Taking the words that God had for his servant (Isaiah 49, 6), it is not enough to be at the service of the members of Faith and Light. God wants us to be the *light to the nations* so that his *salvation may reach to the ends of the Earth*.

I - The role of the coordinator in Faith and Light

Responsibility in Faith and Light always lies with many. At each level (community, province, international), there are coordinators¹ who are discerned and elected (communities and provinces). Others are nominated (vice province coordinators or vice international coordinators). They coordinate a team responsible for the organisation and life of the movement at community, provincial or international level. Still others are nominated to be part of a team and accompany community or provincial projects.

1) The coordinator in Faith and Light, a servant

In Faith and Light, every coordinator is first and foremost a servant following in the footsteps of Jesus (John 13, 1-17). He is called to serve his brothers and sisters for a given time, the duration of his mandate. The coordinator prays to be led by the Holy Spirit and learn to be *gentle and humble of heart*.

The main role of the coordinator is to love the people with an intellectual disability², to be close to their parents and members of their family and to be able to invite and promote the meeting with friends, especially young people. The coordinator also has the desire to understand, *to be with* and to serve those he is responsible for. So as to serve others well, the coordinator recognises his own needs and takes care of himself.

We all have full lives within which Faith and Light occupies a special place. Due to our other concerns and responsibilities, we are not always available and we certainly cannot carry out everything

¹ "Coordinator" means either a person appointed temporarily to the post of coordinator or a person elected for a responsibility at community, province or international level. The coordinator is always a lay person. He/she can be elected individually or with his/her partner. In this case, at a vote, they only have one vote.

² In this text, we have used the expression "person with an intellectual disability". Language evolves a lot according to times and cultures. Each country will retain the expression commonly used, as long as it respects the person.

that others may ask or expect from us. We learn to accept our limitations, to make choices according to what we can do and to trust in God and others more.

The coordinator fulfils his role by being a *servant of the vision, a servant of communion and a servant of organisation.*

a. Servant of the vision

The coordinator sees the importance that those with an intellectual disability and their family have in God's plan and knows how much they need to be surrounded by friends and a community. Likewise, the coordinator must have a true understanding of Faith and Light as expressed in the Charter and the Constitution (vocation, inspiration, goals and structure). He lets himself be guided by their inspiration and follows the path they trace. Being a servant of the vision is the main responsibility of the coordinator in Faith and Light. He must make sure that he is not overwhelmed by all the activities to be organised, or even by the accompaniment of community members or other coordinators.

In Faith and Light, we believe that God has given us a vision of the way in which people can be brought together, meet and support one another in communities as described in the Charter and Constitution. The coordinator is at the service of this vision.

The coordinator regularly announces the vision not only within Faith and Light but also to the Churches and society. He introduces the world to the gift of people with an intellectual disability, their need for relationships, friendship and community and the specific role that they can play in bringing people together from different cultures, backgrounds and religious traditions.

The coordinator is inspired by the wisdom of former coordinators, drawing on their experience, wanting to learn from them so as to better serve those they accompany.

In order to be a better servant of the vision, the coordinator in Faith and Light is continually nourished by the Charter. He draws his inspiration and his ability to renew through reflection and personal prayer, alone and with his team and his community.

As a servant of the vision, the coordinator remains open and attentive to the Holy Spirit. He reads the signs of the times so as to confidently face the challenges that he encounters. With his team, he needs to remain anchored in Jesus and to keep some time for prayer and discernment.

b. Servant of communion

The coordinator carries in his heart and prayer those he is responsible for, allowing each one to find their place. He listens and exercises patience. He is willing to overcome difficulties and discuss conflicts that may arise. He is able to forgive and knows how to work with different people by encouraging an atmosphere of reconciliation. The coordinator is humble. He is the guardian of unity.

Communion involves being with the other one in a deep and real way. We take the time together, getting to know one another, making sure everyone is listened to and heard. In a community, our hope, our fears, our ideas and our wishes are welcomed, recognised and understood. We are accepted as we are.

The coordinator has a special responsibility to be a craftsperson of unity. He does this by seeking consensus, inviting his team to find common ground from which we can all go forward together, in a spirit of unity for more life.

The coordinator listens attentively to each person. When conflicts arise, he plays the role of mediator, not judging or taking sides but trying to discover the truth and reminding everyone of the values and principals upon which the community and movement are founded.

The coordinator also leads by example, being ready to recognise his needs and his mistakes, to ask for support and forgiveness.

The coordinator calls all members to walk in the footsteps of Jesus. He encourages and confirms them.

c. Servant of organisation

The coordinator is responsible for the organisation and coordination of activities that nourish the life of the community. He is helped and supported by those who have chosen him and with whom he works. Together, they share the responsibilities: they carry the life of Faith and Light in prayer, they plan and assess, they recognise and highlight the gifts of each member, helping each person to grow and find belonging. They see the needs and set the priorities. The coordinator knows how to delegate.

Each coordinator is confirmed, encouraged and helped by his accompanier. Faced with the importance of the responsibility that has been entrusted to him, the coordinator may be afraid and have doubts. He does not have all the skills. He will ask for help in the areas where he has weaknesses. God is close to those who exercise a responsibility and endeavour to do it humbly in a spirit of service. We can be sure of one thing, we are not alone.

2) Coordination, collegial experience

Faith and Light is a movement of communities within an international family. Coordination in Faith and Light is a service to a community, a province or to the international level to allow each level to keep the vocation and mission of Faith and Light. This is based on loving, clear, direct, timely and accurate communication.

Faith and Light believes that each member is responsible for the life of the movement depending on their gifts and abilities. For this, each member, especially the coordinator and members of the coordinating team, need formation.

Coordination in Faith and Light is a task that is accomplished over a set period of time. It is essential that each coordinator withdraws at the end of their mandate so as to allow others to develop and share their coordination gifts.

• The coordinator

With his team, he shares the responsibility for coordinating the work of the community, the province or the international level

in the spirit of the movement. Faith and Light has a specific process of discernment to choose its coordinators (see appendix 3, page 51).

• **The practice of coordination**

Coordination in Faith and Light is fashioned on the model of our communities. Its source is a life of prayer, listening to the Holy Spirit and discernment.

Coordination in Faith and Light is collegial. It encourages all team members to take part in reflections, discussions and decision making. After listening, reflecting and discussing, the decisions are made by consensus. When the team cannot reach a consensus, a vote may be taken after listening to all points of view. In very rare circumstances, the coordinator may have to make the decision alone, based on prayer and after listening to all opinions.

- Coordination in Faith and Light promotes a real community spirit between team members; each team experiences their time of meeting by living the four times of the community meetings.
- Coordination in Faith and Light encourages the development of new responsibilities.
- The coordinator invites the team to meet regularly.

The loyalty of the team members brings stability to the group. By carrying out the responsibility that is entrusted to them, the team members deliver efficient coordination. A periodic changing of team members is essential for the life and renewal of the community and the movement. This is why each mandate has a duration set by the Constitution.

During their meetings, the coordinator pays attention to the times of prayer, sharing and celebration. There is a time for formation and a time for work: assess, look at the requirements, reflect, establish priorities, make decisions, plan. He ensures that everyone takes part and is listened to.

- **Coordination and finances**

One of the aspects of coordination is to monitor the financial needs related to each circle of responsibility, to ensure that Faith and Light has the necessary means to fulfil its mission, locally and worldwide.

3) Being good stewards of the gifts entrusted to us

a. Recognising and developing his coordinating gifts

Everywhere in the world and in each circle of responsibility, every Faith and Light member must pay particular attention to the identification and selection of good coordinators. We have a duty to supply them with tools and formation so that good coordinators become better, that is to say more competent and effective. Goodwill and availability are not enough. Love and prayer are essential but the complex demands of accompanying extremely diverse groups require specific skills and gifts. These are what we will be paying attention to when it is time to discern and choose a coordinator. He may not have all the qualities but within the team, collectively, all the skills together add up to better coordination.

Of course, the coordinators should be well accompanied by other experienced coordinators.

b. Value experienced coordinators

What do we do with those coordinators who are no longer eligible or available for posts of responsibility? The most important role in Faith and Light is being a loyal member of your community. However, we should do our utmost to welcome and carry on benefitting from the gifts, experience and wisdom of those who have served the communities, the provinces and the international family to the best of their ability. We must not forget them and we should invite them to be part of, for example, the nominating committee, a project team...

c. Finances in Faith and Light¹

We have needs. Finances are also part of the life of Faith and Light but it has a special character. Four words sum it up: **transparency, competence, generosity and trust.**

Finances in Faith and Light are radically different to that of other organisations that are responsible for carrying out specific projects for people with disabilities: schools, centres, institutions... The mission of Faith and Light is the communion of people, it puts the emphasis on the *being* with rather than on the *doing for*. Finance is at the service of this communion.

Faith and Light believes that Providence will always provide for its needs if we do the best that we can do. The money needed for the life of the community and the movement must be the result of a joint effort.

In order to be able to act in full transparency, the *financial table* received from the international secretariat must be carefully completed and sent each year to the province for the community and to the international level for the provinces.

We form the same body across the world, we take care of one another, be we near or far, whilst giving priority to the poorest. Financial solidarity within our international family serves the mission of Faith and Light, which is called to deepen and get itself known.

¹ All the practical details are in the *Financial Rules* booklet, available from the international secretariat or on the intranet of the website.



II - Life of the community and responsibility

The life of Faith and Light is mainly lived within local communities. The whole structure and the other circles of responsibility have been put in place to nourish and support this community life and to connect communities around the world. Our community is not alone. We are a community of communities.

In this chapter, you will find useful information for the creation of a community, its life, its stages of growth from birth to maturity and on the importance and the role of the coordinating team with the community coordinator.

1) The community

a. The nature of the community

What makes a community unique and special? We are made to work and live together. When a group of people choose to gather together around a common vision and values that serve an intensely good cause, we have the foundations of a community.

• Community members

Faith and Light communities are made up of people with an intellectual disability surrounded by members of their family, friends, especially young ones, and a chaplain¹. They meet regularly, at least once a month. The number of members making up a community is important. A community should not be too big so that everyone is able to meet and get to know each other well. A community can be created from a group of fifteen people (three families and their friends) who meet regularly. When a community reaches or exceeds the number of forty people, it must be prepared to create a new community

¹ See the note on chaplains, available from the International Secretariat or on the intranet of the website.

- **Seeking a balance between members**

It is very important to work on establishing and maintaining a balance between the community members, to have enough friends, at least one per disabled person, which allows a pairing. They accompany one another during meetings and between meetings. Each group of members brings their gifts and, together, they form this character unique to Faith and Light communities. Among the friends, the young people play a particular role. Often, all the generations mix, from babies to the elderly. The community is the mirror of the family. However, it can sometimes be preferable to create communities especially for young children as we will see later.

- **The commitment of members**

Building a community takes time. The members need time to meet and get to know one another. The life of the community becomes a reality when the participants attend meetings regularly and are faithful to the *time of fidelity*, also called the *fourth time*. It is important for the community to know who is really committed as a member. When a new person has taken part in several meetings, the coordinating team can invite them to commit to the life of the community on a regular basis for at least one year. The communities are also encouraged to prepare, every year, a celebration where all the members renew their commitment¹.

b. The life of the community

- **Monthly meetings**

Each meeting of the community is a celebration. It is characterised by four times: a time of welcome, a time of sharing, a time of prayer and a joyful time of celebration. Very often, they are interwoven. The coordinating team determines how best to integrate these four components during the meetings whilst following the *Guidelines*.

¹ This often happens during the Feast of Light or at the beginning of the year.

The Guidelines

The main resource available to the Community Coordinating Team for planning the monthly meetings is the Annual Guidelines. It is prepared each year by teams from different countries. For each month it offers a meditation on a theme and suggestions for living the four times of the meeting. It is up to the coordinating team to adapt what is presented to the particular culture and Christian traditions of the members of the community, as it wishes.

So as to fully experience the meeting and allow friendships to develop, it is important to set aside enough time for these meetings (at least three hours).

- **The four times of the monthly meetings**

- **A time of welcome**

The Charter reminds us that the most important thing is to create personal relationships. The way in which we welcome each person sets the tone of the meeting. We take the time to share news with each other. A song or some games allow the creation of an atmosphere that is conducive to the opening up of hearts. For these reasons, the time reserved for the welcome can sometimes be quite long.

- **A time of sharing**

The welcome is followed by a sharing around the monthly theme introduced in the *Guidelines*: it is the nourishment of the heart and soul. A short word is prepared and presented by the community coordinator, a member of the coordinating team or the chaplain. This meditation can be illustrated by an evangelical mime in which *everyone* takes part. Then, we form small groups (of about six people) to discuss what we have learnt from the mime and answer questions suggested in the *Guidelines*. A member of the coordinating team leads each group. Sometimes, the parents may want to meet separately whilst their children and the friends share their own activities.

– A time of prayer

It is good to have a *prayer corner*. An environment prepared and decorated with care, creating an atmosphere that is conducive to contemplation. The prayer must be able to be understood by everyone without any explanation. A symbol (water, light, object, drawing, specific gesture...), songs, musical instruments invite us to open up to God. We use the wealth of local cultures and religious and social traditions.

The time of prayer is the opportunity for the community to present to the Lord what each person is carrying in their heart and what has been shared in small groups. This is the time to give thanks and entrust ourselves to the Lord. We pay particular attention to ensuring that each person is able to participate and express themselves.

Some communities whose members belong to the same religious denomination meet on a Sunday, attend the parish mass together and hold their meeting afterwards. It is ideal because the vocation of Faith and Light is to ensure that the people with disabilities and their family find their place within their ecclesiastical community. When the community meets for a special celebration (Eucharist, service or liturgical or paraliturgical celebration), it must be

Bringing the Gospel to life

Bringing the Gospel to life in Faith and Light is an excellent way of expressing for the people with an intellectual disability. They understand deep inside themselves things that cannot be translated into words. It is presented as a mime but goes much further because it places the person in the situation described in the Scriptures. It is neither role play nor putting on a show. It is quite simply an activity that allows the reliving of a passage from the Scriptures as a true story that is happening here and now and that addresses each one of us today. It is good that *everyone* takes part and is able to *live* a character, that no-one is left to one side as a *spectator*.

The mime can be performed in silence whilst a text from the Bible is read or with a few words, taking care to keep only a few key phrases.

well prepared (songs, actions, offerings...) and characterised by simplicity, contemplation and joy, all whilst respecting the traditions of its Church.

Interfaith communities prefer to meet in the week so as to allow each member to take part in the liturgy of their own religion. These communities prepare and experience together a meaningful and nourishing time of prayer during their meetings.

– **A time of celebration, of feast**

Our meetings are characterised by moments of joy: we play, sing, dance... and share a meal. Through the meal or snack and party, we celebrate our friendship. It is good to sit down together around the same table especially if it is prepared with care and well decorated. Even if we only have a few fruits to share.

The communities like to celebrate birthdays. It is a way of recognising the unique value of each person, the special place that they hold in the community and the special gift that they bring. The community can also celebrate the anniversary of the day when it was created, when it was recognised.

– **A time of friendship and fidelity**

Friendship deepens when we take the time to be together. Between the monthly meetings, the members of the community like to spend time together in smaller groups or just in twos or threes: they talk about their life, their fears, their dreams, their hopes... They pray, give service, relax, share a meal or other activities which nurture friendship: it is “the time of fidelity” (Charter I, 4)

Pilgrimages, retreats, summer camps and weekends that allow the community to share a common life for a few days are also times of fidelity. These are important activities that allow the deepening of mutual relationships and strengthen community bonds.

On these various occasions, the leader of the event will send the completed and signed *Code of Conduct* document to the provincial coordinator. (It can be requested from the international secretariat or downloaded from the website)

- **The spirituality of Faith and Light in everyday life¹**

Some describe our Faith and Light communities as being a *school of holiness*. Many say that their life has changed since they joined the community. We see others differently, not in relation to what separates us but in relation to what we share. We see the world differently through the experience of our new friends. We begin to change our way of seeing and being with others, including ourselves. The things that seemed important begin to be less so. We walk together, sharing our joys and sorrows. With time and as we discover the strength of accompaniment in difficult times, taking our lead from Mary and John at the foot of the cross, we stop trying to change, wanting to eliminate, trying to improve what cannot be improved.

We grow in understanding, acceptance and friendship. We see the gifts and signs of hope where we only saw tragedies and limitations before. We accept our gifts with gratitude and humility as opportunities to serve. We make different choices and our actions reflect what we learn. We now have a better and deeper relationship with Jesus.

- **The need to be present in the greater community**

Our Charter affirms our conviction that the people with an intellectual disability play an essential role in the human community, society and Churches. In order to put into practice their gifts and grow as people, they need to be completely integrated, to take part and belong to society and their Church and to have the opportunity to give and receive. In

¹ See the book by Father Joseph Larsen *Letters to my brothers and sisters in Faith and Light* available from the international secretariat or the intranet.

order to testify to their unique gifts, it is important that the community seizes the various opportunities to take part in the life of local churches and society (common prayers, spiritual formation activities, service to others, community celebrations and pilgrimages, leisure activities...).

- **Twinning with a religious community**

It is good that each community establishes, as much as possible, links with a religious community. Twinning involves giving news regularly, entrusting prayer intentions and visiting (once a year) this community for a time of meeting and friendship.

- **Our vocation and our ecumenical mission**

Over the years, the communities have developed within different Christian denominations. The movement has become more and more aware of its specific vocation within Churches and society and its ecumenical mission. This involves two aspects: the communion of hearts and the search for unity between the Churches.

This mission lies mainly in *the communion of hearts*. The communion of hearts is outlined in the prayer that is the soul of the ecumenical movement: *Father, make us one so that the world believes in your love*.

Through this *communion of hearts*, people belonging to different Churches become friends, listen to each other, admire the work of the Holy Spirit in others. This *communion of hearts* assumes that we value what is important: what unites us and not what separates us. This communion of hearts also assumes that we are growing in the love of our own Church and that we are deepening the foundations of our faith.

The second aspect is the desire to seek and pray for the unity of the Churches sharing a common faith. The road to unity will be long because we are confronted by a certain number of elements and traditions and, in some cases, with a painful history that divides us. To face to this work, Faith and Light

is called to inform priests and pastors of what is experienced within the movement, its suffering and its joys.

There are three kinds of community:

- A community rooted in a Church and whose members all belong to this Church. Ecumenism is therefore experienced through prayer for the unity of Christians and the desire that we are all one.
- A community where the majority of members belong to one Church and who welcome members who belong to other Churches.
- An inter-faith community welcoming members from several Christian denominations (in more or less equal proportions) and having a prayer common to all the denominations represented.

On the road of ecumenism, Faith and Light believes that disabled people can be a source of unity. Faith and Light wants to help communities to truly live this ecumenical mission and, to this end, has published a booklet on *ecumenism in Faith and Light*, a source of inspiration as well as practical advice¹.

• **Community links with their Church**

Communities maintain links with their Church thanks to the regular participation of their members and through communication and visits between the communities and the church authorities. The community chaplain plays an important role in helping all members to settle in and belong to their own Church (see the paragraph about chaplains on page 31).

¹ It is good if, through personal links, the community can visit a parish of another tradition, for example during the week of prayer for Christian unity.

c. **Communities with young children**

Faith and Light encourages the welcoming, within a same community, of people with an intellectual disability of all ages. This diversity is very enriching. But we have noticed that the parents of very young children felt better in communities with other parents with children of a younger age. The practical needs of very young children are very different to those of school age children, teenagers and adults. The meetings need to go at a different pace. It can prove very difficult to organise a meeting that responds to the needs of everyone. Thus, gradually, communities are being created around young children and their parents. Often, brothers and sisters take part.

Today, there is another reason why we are very much in favour of this kind of community. The lives of young children with disabilities are threatened before and even after birth. In some countries, parents are under pressure to abandon their child. Faced with this anxiety and uncertainty, Faith and Light wants to bring a ray of hope to these families. By welcoming them, they make them understand that they are not alone. Other families have experienced this heavy burden and want to be by their side. They can testify that the life of this small child deserves to be lived, that he only asks to be loved and to love in return. He attracts friends, he is at the heart of these communities that have originated with him. When we know this, suffering and joy can coexist.

• **Members**

Such a community can be formed with three or four families, each one accompanied by a friend. The whole family, brothers and sisters are an integral part of this community. It is also good to welcome families with non-disabled children. One or two older couples can play the reassuring role of grandparents and so maintain the family structure of the community. It is

¹ Available at the international secretariat or on the intranet of the website.

A special mission to young friends

Communities with young children also have a mission to young people. Giving them responsibilities and having them organise activities and events are excellent ways of inviting them to discover the gifts of people with intellectual disabilities through Faith and Light. Young people are eager to be of service, so they can feel truly useful and see their own gifts being appreciated. It also allows them to receive the Good News and to accept their smallness, to discover that they are loved by God as they are, with their imperfections and their gifts. And so a whole new vision of life opens up to them.

very important to have a chaplain as soon as the community is created. He can be a major support for the parents on their journey.

- **Activities**

It is necessary to organise activities dedicated to children, which can be based on the theme of the month in the *Guidelines*. These activities can be carried out by friends (in particular teenagers and young adults). Meanwhile, the parents can meet in small groups to share their problems, suffering, joy and hope.

d. **The growth of a community**

A community is a living being that has its pace of growth, its vitality, its maturing but also its difficult times, its challenges, its worries and its illnesses.

On this path of growth that goes from its birth to its recognition, the community needs to be guided by an accompanier with an objective external point of view, who can support, confirm, recall the content of the Charter and Constitution and breathe a new hope. This will be the role of the vice province coordinator or their delegate. There is no need to hurry the growth stages of the community, each one will find its own pace.

- **From birth to recognition**

- **First contact**

A Faith and Light accompanier (usually a member of the province team) contacts one or two people who have expressed the desire to create a community. The necessary documents are sent to them: *The Charter and Constitution, Our First Guidelines...* In turn, the people wanting to start a community contact families, friends, a priest, a parish community... A small group of interested people meet to learn more about Faith and Light and pray together for a new community to be born.

- **Community in formation**

It is important to seek, from the start, a balance among the members, including young friends and a chaplain. After at least two meetings in the spirit of Faith and Light, they can become a community *in formation*. This community is accompanied, encouraged and guided by the vice province coordinator. He will nominate a *correspondent* who will be the link between the fledgling group and the Faith and Light family.

- **Community in probationary period**

When the members (people with an intellectual disability, family, friends and chaplain) are present, when the community lives the four times of Faith and Light during the monthly meetings, when the community begins to live the *time of fidelity*, when it shows the desire to live according to the Charter and Constitution of Faith and Light, then the community in formation can, after a few meetings, express to the person accompanying them its wish to be officially recognised as a Faith and Light community. If the accompanier approves this request, he appoints an interim community coordinator and the community enters a probationary period. At this juncture, the community chooses a name if this hasn't already been done.

– **Recognised community**

In order to enter the Faith and Light family, the community in probationary period must meet the conditions required to be recognised and submit a request¹ for recognition to the province coordinator or the vice international coordinator if the community is not linked to a province.

• **The criteria for the recognition of a community**

- The community has a good knowledge of the Charter and Constitution, accepts them and wants to live in accordance with their requirements. The community uses the *Guidelines* to prepare its meetings.
- The community wishes to know more about Faith and Light and uses other existing documents for its progression.
- The local bishop (or relevant church authority) is kept informed of the project.
- The coordinating team is stable and works as a team with the interim community coordinator.
- The community brings together at least fifteen people who regularly attend meetings: people with disabilities, family members, friends and a chaplain.
- The community lives the four times of the monthly meetings: welcome, sharing, prayer, celebration and the time of fidelity between the monthly meetings.
- The community tries to be close to a parish or a local church community and integrate into it.
- The community is in the probationary period for at least one year.
- The community has been visited at least twice by the vice province coordinator or their delegate. He will have

¹ See page 49.

visited the community coordinating team at least once and the whole community once.

– The community wishes to belong to the international family.

- **Who recognises the community?**

The province team determines if a community can be recognised as a Faith and Light community. If the community isn't linked to a province, the recognition is undertaken by the vice international coordinator after consultation with the international team.

- **What are the stages to follow?**

– The whole community assesses the life of the community with the help of the questionnaire *Get to know us better* (see page 49).

– A request for recognition, explaining the reasons why the community wishes to join the Faith and Light family, is sent by post to the province coordinator or the vice international coordinator, with the *Get to know us better* questionnaire.

– After evaluation, the province team or the international coordinating team decide if the community can be recognised.

– Recognition, announced in a welcome letter, is an occasion for celebration for the community and other neighbouring communities and the coordinator (and if possible members of the team) who recognised it will join in.

- **Election of the community coordinator**

Once the community is recognised, the whole community or the community coordinating team proceeds with the election of its coordinator. (See the note on discernment and elections in Faith and Light available from the international secretariat or the intranet).

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

It is necessary that the community coordinators really know what Faith and Light is before beginning to meet as a community. If the community does not rely on the Charter and Constitution for the organisation of meetings, it will be very difficult to make subsequent changes (for example, if they meet without being surrounded by young friends or family members from the start, or if their goal is to do something *for* the people with an intellectual disability rather than *with* them, or if they do not want to belong to the international family...) or they do not want to make their financial contribution to the life of Faith and Light (annual contributions and solidarity).

It is important that the team that agrees of the recognition and the community itself understand that a group can do excellent work without being called to be part of Faith and Light. For example, if a community feels called to meet only with those who have a physical disability rather than an intellectual one, or if it does not feel called to meet with family members, it could be a sign that God is calling them to a different kind of group. In such circumstances, the role of the vice province coordinator is to help the group, if it so wishes, to find out in what direction Jesus is calling them and not to pressure it to accept the directives of Faith and Light if this does not seem to be their vocation.

If the community wishes to belong to Faith and Light but is experiencing difficulties in its approach, the role of the vice province coordinator is to carry on working with it so as to support it and help it to meet these conditions. For example, try to help it to integrate friends or family members, if this is the difficulty encountered or help them to meet regularly...

Under such circumstances, it may be wise to ask the community to do another assessment and request for recognition

one year later. In this case, the vice provincial coordinator needs to make every possible effort to assist the community.

e. Giving birth to a new community

Giving birth to a new community is a sign of fertility. It is something to hope for and not fear.

When a community exceeds forty people, it is necessary to consider multiplication. It is quite understandable to meet resistance from community members, strong relationships having been forged. It can be difficult to form a second coordinating team, to find a parish that welcomes a new community and another chaplain. The community coordinator and the coordinating team must create the desire to found a new community in everyone. Fundamentally, it is about getting people to understand why it is essential to go to the end of this process. This is a lot easier when the community has prayed, right from the very start of its history, for the grace to grow and multiply.

• The process

Multiplication can happen by dividing the community into two or by sending a group of six to twelve people on a mission to be the nucleus of the new community. First of all, it can be recognised if it is well formed and balanced at member level. Otherwise, it will have to continue its growth and spend a year in probationary period.

Other aspects to consider in the way to multiply a community

- We ensure a good geographical spread that will facilitate the movement and encourage relationships between members.
- Of course, we ask each member their preference and we take account of the friendships already established whilst reminding people that this new stage is a mission, a service.
- We take into consideration religious affiliations so as to ensure a better inclusion and integration of each member into their Church.

The vice provincial coordinator who accompanies it will help with the discernment and the election of the coordinator or the appointment of a correspondent and a new coordinating team.

Multiplication day is a day of thanksgiving and celebration, it is a birth. It is the sending off of the new community on a mission. For a time, the two communities will have a special relationship and remain in close contact whilst seeking to establish their own identity. They can celebrate the Feast of Light together, organise summer camps together, experience a retreat or a formation session...

f. Aging communities¹

What happens when the community runs out of energy? Aging is a normal stage of life, the aging of the community is due to the age of its members, its inability to attract new members or simply its exhaustion after years without renewal.

If it is a crisis, the community coordinating team and the vice province coordinator will do everything possible to breathe new life into the community. The vice province coordinator can bring two, three or four members of another community on a mission, organise meetings with a dynamic community in the region, help to welcome new members, encourage the community to take part in a summer camp or a province retreat...

When it involves a community that is aging due to the age of its members and it no longer welcomes new people for various reasons, the vice provincial coordinator will accompany the community in accepting this new stage of its life. He will help to find its new vocation within Faith and Light and to live in hope and trust.

The community coordinator will encourage loyalty between members and help them to find the appropriate pace for their

¹ See also the note: *How to accompany ageing communities* available at the international secretariat or on the intranet of the website.

meetings. He will maintain the bond between the community and the life of the province. Thus, the community will be able to always feel that it belongs to the Faith and Light family and feel supported even if, because of its situation, it is less present at province meetings and its organisational structure is adapted to the situation. The aging community is called to discover, in a special way, its mission of prayer for Faith and Light across the world and for the birth of new communities especially communities around the parents of young children. This new pace of life will be welcomed with the support of the province team and will be celebrated as a new mission.

- **The closing of a community**

A community may be forced to close for various reasons: aging, the health of its members... Some communities have seen fit to have a celebration of prayer and thanksgiving for the life of the community where each person can express the joys experienced, where they can commit to praying for each other and entrusting themselves to God. Friendship between members is encouraged to continue in all ways, especially in prayer.

g. Community finances¹

Everyone is asked to make a personal contribution. It is the community that determines the amount that it should ask from each of its members by including its needs, those of the province and those of the international level, which amount to 300€ per community.

- **When does the contribution begin?**

A community in probationary period for one year should begin to contribute to the support of the movement's mission.

- **The importance of a treasurer**

The coordinating team selects the treasurer. He manages the community's finances. He collects the contributions from

¹ See the note *General rules for financial management* available from the international secretariat or the intranet.

each person at the start of the year and gives the province the amount due to it as well as what is due to the international level. He helps with fundraising. The community reserves must never be higher than what is necessary for its life for the current year. He submits the accounts to the province treasurer each year.

- **Announcement and Sharing Day**

Some activities can be organised by the whole community (cake sales, raffle, party, meal served at the church after a liturgy, flower sales...)¹. These events also allow us to testify to what Faith and Light is.

2) **Coordination of the community**

a. **The coordinating team**

The role of the coordinating team is to ensure that the people with disabilities and their families are surrounded by a community of friendship and peace supported by friends where each person can grow.

Supporting a Faith and Light community requires teamwork. No person has the gifts, the time, the money, the energy nor the wisdom to fulfil this mission alone. Hence the need for a team that works for the good of the community.

- **Its composition**

The community coordinating team is made up of four to eight people including at least one parent, one friend, a chaplain and, as much as possible, an intellectually disabled person. It is led by the community coordinator. The various responsibilities are shared between the members of the team (secretary, treasurer...).

- **How do you choose team members?**

The members of the coordinating team are chosen for their

¹ See the booklet: *Some easy recipes for fundraising* available at the international secretariat or on the intranet.

spirit of service and their talents, complementary if possible, and finally for their wisdom and their good judgement. It is recommended to renew the coordinating team every year so as to ensure the supply of new energy. It is important that the team is stable and loyal so that it can really get involved, with the coordinator, in serving the community.

- **A special member: the chaplain**

The presence of a chaplain in the coordinating team is invaluable. He represents Jesus who guides the community in the light of the Gospel. The chaplain is usually the one who presides over the liturgical celebrations, the time of prayer during the meeting. He is the link with his Church. The main role of the chaplain is described in the note *Chaplains in Faith and Light*¹. The chaplain is chosen by the coordinating team or the community for a renewable mandate of three years.

- **The responsibilities of the coordinating team**

- It accompanies each of the community members, listens to them and is attentive to their needs.
- It ensures that the meetings are lively, interesting, appealing and nourishing by ensuring the quality of the times of prayer, sharing and celebration. It encourages the members to meet regularly between community meetings.
- The team prays together and carries the community in its prayer.
- It ensures that the community is loyal to its vocation by determining the priorities for its growth.
- It makes the community members aware of the reality of the large Faith and Light family beyond the borders of the community.
- It reflects on the Charter and Constitution.

¹ Available from the international secretariat or on the intranet.

- It creates an atmosphere of peace and unity that is conducive to the development of each person and encourages each person to reveal their gifts. It helps each member to grow by giving them a place within the community.
- It facilitates and encourages communion between all the community members, between the community and the large Faith and Light family. It promotes the integration and inclusion of members into the community in the wider sense (Church and society).
- It implements activities that breathe new life: holiday camps, retreats, pilgrimages... Occasionally, these activities can be done with other communities.
- It updates the community directory with the details of each member and, every year, sends a copy to the province coordinator.
- It verifies that the accounts are well kept and accurate. It ensures that the contributions are paid to the province.
- It organises a *Announcement and Sharing Day* and sends the money raised for solidarity to the province treasurer.

● **How does the coordinating teamwork?**

The coordinating team continually and thoroughly looks into the life of the community. This is the reason why it meets between each community meeting and lives the three times of the community.

– **A time of prayer and renewal**

In order to deepen its formation, the team reads and reflects at every meeting on the theme of the *Guidelines*. It may read passages from the Charter, the Constitution, various leaflets published by Faith and Light and the book by Marie-Hélène Mathieu, *Never again alone, the Faith and Light adventure*.

– **A time of celebration**

It is at this time that the team relaxes and shares joyful moments. The members of the team sing, dance, play a game, share a meal or a snack...

– **A time to reflect and share: assessment**

The team assesses the last community meeting. What was good and what was less so? How do we better prepare for the next meeting? How can we improve the life and the atmosphere of the community?

The team also reflects on the personal development of each member. Does each person feel like they belong to the community? Are there people who are alone, who do not feel at ease? How can we encourage members to meet up between each meeting?

– **A time to prepare for the next meeting**

Preparation is having an overview and sharing the responsibilities by making sure that all community members are included according to their gifts. The coordinating team is not there to do and prepare everything. It delegates, as much as possible, tasks like decoration, prayer intentions, making a birthday cake...

– **Its role during the monthly meeting**

Team members and those with specific responsibilities should arrive early to prepare an attractive and welcoming atmosphere and to deal with last minute details. They will lead what they have planned.

– **A special time together**

No coordinating team has the time nor the ability to do everything for each meeting. This is why the teams meet one day or one weekend at the beginning or end of the year, perhaps in the religious community that the community is twinned with, to assess the year, plan the one to come and review the life of the community. It is an opportunity to strengthen bonds, take more time to pray, rejoice and have fun together.

Essentially, the team is asked to be united so as to create unity in the community. The team feels a kind of urgency to share the gift that has been entrusted to them: Faith and

Light cannot be satisfied while some parents and family members remain isolated, while people with an intellectual disability are rejected and while many young people still have not discovered the gift of people with disabilities and encountered God's love. Each team should aspire to give birth to a new community.

– **Where do we find formation and support?**

The coordinating team regularly invites the vice province coordinator to attend one of its meetings. It is an opportunity to speak openly, receive formation and support.

Faith and Light offers additional formation opportunities and tools through which, members of the coordinating teams can renew themselves and deepen their commitment and their understanding of the goals and objectives of the movement.

The most important are:

- Province meetings and assemblies
- Retreats
- Formation sessions
- Pilgrimages
- Faith and Light documents
- *"Up Sails!"*, the Faith and Light international newsletter
- ...

b. The specific role of the coordinator

Every team and community needs a coordinator who brings their members together in unity. The community coordinator reminds everyone that the community exists essentially to welcome and promote the growth of people with an intellectual disability, the members of their family and their friends, in the spirit of the Beatitudes. He works with the coordinating team to ensure that the whole life of the community is in accordance with the Faith and Light vision.

The community coordinator listens and is attentive to the contributions, desires and needs of each person, particularly the people we rarely hear from or who are at the fringes of the

community. The coordinator spends time with solitary people and builds bridges where there is conflict.

The community coordinator:

- promotes unity, guides, encourages and nourishes the coordinating team,
- leads the coordinating team meetings. Together, they learn to collaborate and support one another,
- seeks future coordinators and encourages the development of their coordination gifts through formation so that the life of the community can continue after the end of his mandate,
- informs the coordinating team and the community of Faith and Light events happening nearby, in the province and across the world, thanks to the internet site, the Facebook group and "*Up Sails!*" He passes community news on to the large Faith and Light family,
- remains in regular contact with the vice province coordinator who accompanies him,
- encourages members of his community to take part in various activities proposed and organised by Faith and Light: meetings, formation sessions, retreats...
- leads the community delegation at the province assembly,
- makes the community aware of solidarity within the international family.

c. Where do we find support and confirmation?

In exercising these responsibilities, the community coordinator recognises his gifts and his weaknesses. It is natural that he will have some difficult moments. He may be discouraged, suffer criticism, disputes or community stagnation. He may also feel overworked. In those moments, he must remember that the community chose him for this service and that he is not alone. The Holy Spirit will always come to his aid. In addition, there are

people who accompany him, in whom he can trust and from whom he can ask for help.

There is much support on which he can rely:

- community members,
- coordinating team,
- community chaplain,
- the vice provincial coordinator who accompanies him,
- the provincial team.



III - Provincial and International Level

1) Province

a. What is a province?

The Faith and Light communities are not isolated islets, they belong to a *body*, to a *family*, to a *community of communities*. A province brings together about fifteen to forty communities. Each province is made up of a *branch* of the international family of Faith and Light.

What is its function?

The province is responsible for uniting and serving the communities, in particular through their accompaniment and by organising enriching activities for all the members (assemblies, meetings, retreats, formation sessions, summer camps...). It connects the communities in the province and with the international family.

In order to serve its communities and best represent them, the province sets up a legal association. When there are several provinces in a same geographical country, it is useful and necessary to have a national legal association.

When the province is made up of communities from various countries, it can be useful and necessary for a legal association to be created in each country.

b. How is it organised?

There isn't a predetermined way of organising the province. Each province has the freedom to organise itself as it wants in order to respond to the particular characteristics of each, but it must be done in cooperation with the vice international coordinator who accompanies it.

If a province brings together communities with different cultures, languages and geographies, it can choose to organise specific meetings for the groups of communities and/or appoint vice province coordinators to accompany communities linked by their cultural, linguistic or geographical environ-

ment. These community groupings aim to facilitate communication, formation and accompaniment. All the communities are an integral part of the province assemblies and meetings.

c. The life of the province

• The provincial assembly

The provincial assembly is the representative body of the province. Its role is to represent all the members of all the communities of the province. It implements the objectives and priorities.

The provincial assembly takes place every four years with the participation of delegations from each of the communities in the province.

The main responsibilities of the provincial assembly:

- define the strategic direction of the province,
- elect the province coordinator,
- ratify names for the province nominating committee.

• The provincial meeting

Its aim is to give life to the movement in the province. It is mainly a place of sharing, reflection and formation for the province's community coordinators. It is the opportunity to create a province community. If possible, community members are also invited to province meetings.

Provincial and international responsibilities

Provincial and international responsibilities serve to facilitate exchange and communication between everyone across the world. They facilitate the formation of community members to the mission of Faith and Light by placing the emphasis on the deepening of its vocation, its objectives, its activities and its spirituality. They support all the coordinators and ensure the growth of each community and each member. They invite each person in the international family to be a witness and a missionary in the Churches and the world.

2) Coordination of the province

a. The provincial team

Led by the province coordinator, the province team coordinates the carrying out of the directions decided by the province assembly and governs the movement in the province. It works closely with the vice international coordinator who accompanies it so as to remain in communion with the international family.

• Its role

- The team makes sure that the community coordinators are elected in accordance with the spirit of the movement.
- It organises the appropriate formation for the exercising of their responsibility.
- It supports and accompanies community coordinators in their mission.
- It determines the formation initiatives to be carried out in the province.
- It ensures the thriving and standing of the communities in a climate of closeness with neighbouring communities.
- After discernment, it appoints the vice province coordinators from a list submitted by the province nominating committee or by the communities involved.
- It organises and leads the assembly and the province meeting and decides the number of delegates from each community and the guests.
- It appoints the provincial chaplain.
- It appoints the members of the project teams according to the requirements.
- It encourages financial solidarity.
- It looks after the legal structure of the association and the finances of the province.

b. The provincial coordinator

The provincial coordinator is the main link between the communities and the international family. He receives and passes on information and communicates with the vice international coordinator who accompanies the province.

• His role

- He accompanies the vice provincial coordinators and passes on to them any information that he has available.
- He ensures a real detection, in his province, of people who are likely to assume responsibilities at all levels.
- He takes part in the coordinating council that takes place every five years.
- He forms bonds with other province coordinators.
- He leads the province delegation at the international meeting and the general assembly that takes place every five years.

c. The vice provincial coordinator

The vice provincial coordinator plays an essential role in the accompaniment of communities.

• How is he chosen?

The province nominating committee consults the communities and draws up a list of potential leaders. After the discernment and with the help of the vice international coordinator, the provincial coordinator chooses the vice provincial coordinators from the list of names proposed by the nomination committee.

• His role

- He accompanies the community coordinators as well as the correspondents from new communities.
- He visits every community that he accompanies at least once a year and maintains regular and frequent contact by telephone, email, video conference...

- He creates bonds between the communities by proposing and supporting formation initiatives, meetings and inter community activities (retreats, holiday camps, formation sessions...).
- He sends the community coordinators all the information about the life of the province and the international level.
- He leads the election of community coordinators.

d. The finances of the provincial organisation

The provincial team is responsible for the provincial finances. It encourages the *Announcing and Sharind Days*, gives reminders about personal annual contributions and other ways of raising funds to cover the costs of provincial assemblies, province meetings... as well as the participation of the province in international activities. The provincial team makes sure that its annual contribution has been sent to the international treasurer to ensure the operation of the international association and for the solidarity requirements

3) International Coordination

The board of directors of the international association and the international coordinating team are at the service of the whole international family. Together and in communion, they look after the movement across the whole world, deepen its spirituality, remain in contact with the authorities from the various Churches, set up international project teams, prepare and publish documents, manage any questions relating to the movement, organise and lead international meetings and general assemblies.

a. The general assembly

The general assembly represents the Faith and Light members from all over the world. As the first and ultimate authority of the movement, it has the responsibility of setting priorities and overall management, after consultation with the communities and provinces.

It discerns and elects members of the board of directors: president, vice president, international coordinator, deputy interna-

tional coordinator, international treasurer and two other members.

It approves the potential amendments to the Charter and Constitution proposed by the board of directors.

b. The board of directors

The board bears legal responsibility of the international association. Its main role is to make practical decisions for Faith and Light as a whole, especially in the areas of law, finance and administration. It meets twice a year.

c. The coordinators council

The coordinators council meets at least once between each international meeting. It is led by the international coordinator. It is made up of the provincial coordinators, the vice international coordinators and the international chaplain who gives spiritual support and accompaniment. Together, they are responsible for giving life to the movement across the world. The members of the coordinating council come together to form an international community and seek God's will for Faith and Light together. It is a place of mutual support, formation and reflection. This time of reflection is an opportunity to assess the implementation of the priorities decided by the general assembly and to deepen the understanding of the objectives of Faith and Light and the ways in which the movement works.

d. The international coordinating team

Its primary objective is to give life to the movement. It maintains close bonds with the provinces. The international coordinating team has a global vision of the growth, the development and the problems of Faith and Light in the world. This allows it to identify the priorities and the expectations of the movement. The vice international coordinators are mainly attentive to the provincial coordinators that they accompany and support. It works as a team to ensure that we identify and select good coordinators and that we propose the appropriate formation for them.

This team is made up of the international coordinator, the deputy international coordinator, the international chaplain, the vice international coordinators and the secretary general. It meets at least once a year.

e. The international coordinator

The main concern of the international coordinator is the life, growth and well-being of the international family in each province and in each community.

His role

- He implements the guiding principles given by the general assembly.
- He manages and leads the international coordinating team.
- He accompanies the vice international coordinators, helped by the deputy international coordinator.
- He oversees the general organisation of the operation at international level and formation.
- He takes part in the meetings of the board of directors.
- He is the guarantor of the vision.

f. The deputy international coordinator

In regular touch with the international coordinator, together they carry out the whole of his mission. They can share, by mutual agreement, the accompaniment of the provinces.

g. The Finances of the international organisation

The life of the international coordinating team and the board of directors depends essentially on the contributions from community members.

The board of directors and the international coordinating team ensure the formation of the provincial coordinators, financial management and make sure that they are managed properly. They organise solidarity among the provinces so that resources are fairly distributed for the life and growth of Faith and Light across the world.



Appendices

I – Accompaniment in Faith and Light

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

In Faith and Light, we have people to help us to live better, to learn and to grow, coordinators who are ready to walk with us, to listen to us and to share what they have learned. We call this relationship and process *accompaniment*. Experience has shown us that the process of good accompaniment is mutual, both parties benefit. This is the main role of all coordinators in Faith and Light.

a) The types of accompaniment

There are different types of guidance: spiritual, personal and functional. It is the responsibility of each individual to seek and

On the road to Emmaus

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

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

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

to find those who are able and trained to provide spiritual and personal guidance. Coordinators in Faith and Light are called to receive and to provide functional guidance to other coordinators and teams.

Functional accompaniment in Faith and Light is focused on the role.

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

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

Accompaniment is a journey toward communion. It is important in this accompaniment relationship to work at creating bonds of trust, which will allow us to be real and transparent and to be able to simply express our needs and our concerns, to share our experience, to recognize our strengths and our weaknesses, to listen to each other and to ask each other questions, to pray, and to laugh together.

b) Fundamental choices

Some fundamental choices must be made for a successful accompaniment process to occur within Faith and Light. We do not choose the people we accompany or those who accompany, but we are called to love them. What to do when there may be differences and problems? We try to get to know these persons, to discover and acknowledge their gifts, what is good in them, We pray for and, when possible, with them.

c) Who accompanies?

Accompaniment in Faith and Light the responsibility of the all coordinator.

d) Where and When to accompany?

To accompany means to assist leaders in their daily tasks, to walk side by side, to help them to deepen their roots in Faith and Light. It is also to assist in special situations: when the coordinator is newly discerned (transition period) or when the coordinator faces problems, when the team does not work well together... Person to person accompaniment can happen during informal or formal one to one meetings. They can use other events to spend time together: during meetings, formation sessions, retreats, discernments.... Between meetings, they maintain contact (phone, fax, letters, e-mail, videoconference...).

Group accompaniment happens when the accompanying person comes to visit the province or the community, attends team sessions or on the occasion of a Provincial or International Meeting. This provides an opportunity to accompany the group (community, team or assembly) as a whole.

e) Mid-mandate review

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

f) How to accompany

It can be very useful at the beginning to establish a programme of regular contacts together (phone call every fortnight, weekly e-mails...) can be most helpful. It is good to schedule those meetings that require the accompanying person's presence in advance, as described in the Charter and Constitution (discernments, meetings...).

g) How to 'be'?

The accompanying person knows how to be present when needed, humble and discreet. He knows how to be close but also how

to keep some distance so he/she can have an outside and global perspective.

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

True listening leads the accompanying person to a better knowledge and understanding of the person, the circumstances, the group and its culture. He/she is a person of discretion and knows how to keep matters in confidence when required

h) What to do?

- *Interpret the situation and reality.* Because he/she is an outsider, the accompanying person can stand back and clarify or defuse a situation. He can even help some to see the hidden beauty in others in the community or team.
- *Help evaluate:* to review the strengths, the weaknesses, and challenges in relation to the team, or in relation to the life of Faith and Light in the different circles of responsibility (Community, Province, International). Such an evaluation allows for the redefining of the true priorities.
- *Announce and remind of the vision, inspire:* every day, life and its problems tend to make us forget what we have been chosen to do. We need to be reminded of the goals and vocation of Faith and Light.
- *Challenge:* the guide can ask questions that foster reflection and positive action. He/she encourages people to explore new and perhaps unfamiliar, paths.
- *Encourage:* the accompanying person encourages members to move forward, after they are reminded of the vision.
- *Confirm:* showing the road travelled and the progress made. It is to encourage, thank and to reinforce each person's self-confidence. It is the opportunity to point out once more to the

coordinators the trust the team that elected them has in them. It is also the chance to remind those being accompany of their gifts and expertise.

- *Show the truth*: Sometimes the accompanying person has to help the coordinator to see the truth, both the positives and negatives points, especially in difficult or controversial situations and to invite change where necessary.
- *Advise*: the accompanying person gives advice from his/her own experience. This may relate to general questions or to concrete situations, such as the planning of a formation session or council meeting, the accompaniment of another coordinator...
- *Pray*: the accompanying person prays with the coordinators, teams and communities that he/she accompany. We all need God's guidance and mercy.
- *Lend a helping hand*: when needed, the accompanying person may assist the coordinator in a new or delicate task: how to welcome a religious authority, how to be present at a difficult meeting, how to prepare a formation session....

i) Provide the support needed by the Leader

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

2. To get to know ourselves better

This questionnaire is designed to help the community to evaluate itself and to give the vice-provincial coordinators tools to help them in their role of accompaniment and guidance during their visits to the communities or when they meet the coordinating teams for an evaluation. In addition to a reflection on Faith and Light Charter, the questionnaire provides the community with indications to guide its efforts and establish priorities on its journey towards recognition. It can also highlight what needs to be further explored and help the community coordinator to prepare his or her report for the provincial team when necessary.

Community name:

Foundation date:

Province:

Coordinator's name and address:

E-mail:

1. When does the community meet? How often do we meet?
2. How many persons with disabilities do we have?
How many family members?
How many friends?
Young friends?
Is the membership balanced?
3. Do we have a stable coordination team that prepares and evaluates the meetings?
Who are the members of our Coordination Team?
How long have they been serving on the team?
4. Do we have a chaplain who participates in our community?
How?
Who is he/she?
He/she is from which denomination?
5. Do the members of our community strengthen their friendship between meetings? How?
6. How do we pray for/contribute to the unity of all Christians?

7. Are our Community members all from of the same Christian denomination? Which one?
Do we welcome some members of another Christian denomination, which one? How many?
The Community is interdenominational (it brings together persons from different Christian denominations in a more or less equal numbers)? Which ones?
8. How is our Community and its members part of the local Church?
9. How would we describe the atmosphere within our Community?
10. Do we use the Guidelines to prepare our meetings? How?
11. Do we have a community directory?
Do we have a community photo album?
Do we have any special projects this year outside of our community meetings? If yes, what are they?
12. Does the provincial council help us? If yes, how? If not, what help do we need?
13. How do we experience our belonging to the provincial and international family of Faith and Light and how do we express this belonging?
14. Do we have any projects or initiatives that could help or be useful for other Communities? If yes, what are they?
15. Often, a community has a special talent that it can share with other communities. In our opinion, what is our community's gift?
16. Do we have, as a community, any specific difficulties or challenges?
17. Are there other topics that we would like to cover here in more depth? Which ones?
18. Are we willing to participate financially in the Faith and Light family? How?

19. From these questions, what would we consider:
Two strengths of our Community?
Two areas of growth, upon which to concentrate our efforts?
Two priorities?
20. How would we describe one of our meetings?

3. Discernment

Discernment is an ongoing process by which we, individually and together, seek to make choices that are more closely in harmony with God's loving desires. Most importantly, Jesus left us the gift of the Holy Spirit and one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is discernment.

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

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

4. Nomination committee and project teams

a) Nomination committees

There is an international nomination committee and there is a nomination committee in each province.

The nomination committee searches for persons who have the qualities, gifts, experience and ability to serve competently in the various roles of responsibility in Faith and Light, according to the profiles established by the board of directors.

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

- to the general assembly for election of the members of the Board,
- to the provincial assembly for the election of the provincial coordinator,
- to the international coordinator, for the choice of vice international coordinators (who will be appointed by the board of directors)
- to the provincial team (or provincial assembly) for the choice of provincial coordinators

The general assembly or the provincial assembly, upon presentation by the board of directors or the provincial team, respectively, appoints the members of the nomination teams, after reflection and discernment, and following the profile established by the board of directors.

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if necessary, and after reflection and discernment on all this information, it submits the names of the most suitable people:

- to the general assembly for election of the members of the board,
- to the provincial assembly for the election of the provincial coordinator,
- to the international coordinator, for the choice of international vice coordinators (who will be appointed by the Board of Directors),
- to the provincial team (or provincial assembly) for the choice of provincial vice coordinators.

The general assembly or the provincial assembly, upon presentation by the board of directors or the provincial team, respectively, appoints the members of the nomination teams, after reflection and discernment, and following the profile established by the board of directors.

b) Project Teams

Both in the international and provincial level, there are project teams appointed by the provincial team or the board of directors. The provincial team or the board of directors will call persons who are competent and with different areas of expertise to take responsibility for specific projects (planning, organisation, running).

Each project team has a very specific, limited duration, which is the duration of the specific project. For example, there is no project team in charge of formation, but specific project teams are set up for the varied training sessions.

The project team receives a mandate of well-defined objectives, an explanation of the means available, and set deadlines for accomplishment of its mission. It is under the authority of the provincial team or the board of directors.

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

5. Available documents

*at the international secretariat or on the intranet of the site:
www.faithandlight.org*

Never again alone, the adventure of Faith and Light
Marie-Hélène Mathieu (www.amazon.com)

- Charter and Constitution
- Annual guidelines
- Leader's handbook
- Our first guidelines
- Identity and mission of Faith and Light

- General rules of financial management
- A few easy recipes to raise funds

- Day for a renewal in the community
- Spirituality of Faith and Light
- Letters to my brothers and sisters, Fr Joseph Larsen
- The Mysteries of Faith and Light, Ghislain du Chéné
- The Way of the Cross, Ghislain du Chéné
- How to prepare and live a retreat
- Retreats in Faith and Light
- Ecumenism in Faith and Light
- Fioretti, Fr Joseph Larsen
- Experiencing the essential of Faith and Light in the midst of a pandemic
- The way of the heart, chaplains bear witness

- Messages of the Churches to Faith and Light
- Leaflet
- Faith and Light posters

"Up Sails!", the Faith and Light international letter

Notes

**I therefore confirm you
in your commitment:
to be,
in the storms
that the families experience,
a small boat
on which everyone can find a place**

Pope Francis to Faith and Light, 2 October 2021