

## Classis Huron Diaconal Committee Process – July 04, 2022

### Discernment Defined

Discernment is the pro-active capacity to recognize and respond to the presence and activity of God both in our ordinary moments and the larger decisions of our lives.

To discern means to sort out, sift through, distinguish, to tell the difference, recognize, discriminate, determine.

1 Corinthians 2:11 says, “No one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. And we have received the Spirit of God that we may understand what God has freely given us”.

*God knows everything, he wants us to know his will and direction. He gives us His Spirit to know. It is by spending time with God and learning His ways that we'll be able to look at our options and discern His will.*

### Contextual Analysis – what does today look like?

#### Broad Strokes

- Covid Crisis – living in pandemic mode with various perspectives
- War in Ukraine
- Global experience
- Decrease of Christianity in Canada
- People are still looking for something
- Much displacement – between countries, communities, socio-demographic
- Low unemployment rates in the country
- Restricted Immigration – Canada as a gate-keeper
- Increased poverty and food insecurity at home and globally
- Technology which enables isolated work and ... worship

#### Closer to Home

- We are called to be different from the world
- Decrease in engaged membership
- Deacons called to serve the community – many needs
- Covid caused internalization – churches dealing with their own needs
- Covid separated community
- Lack of connectivity
- Lack of appreciation for divergent view points
- Justice for Indigenous Nations

#### Not all is Bad

- Church as a community space
- Empty or full (sanctuaries) are not an indicator of life within the church
- Smaller communities can be closer – CCRC in Kitchener is a great example

- A time of change and new ways of thinking can be a positive opportunity
- Society wants to re-connect
- Technology can be a tool to reach out
- Many stepped up to meet community needs
- Learning to be the Church outside the church.

What is our vision based on God’s purpose for Classis Huron – what will it look like if we are successful?

- Neighboring \*\*\*
- Networking among Deacons – to learn, work, share \*\*
- Deacon and their role seen as lower in Church hierarchy
- Each one us is a Deacon (Eph. 4) \*
- Justice \*
- What should a community sensitive Church look like\*
- Beyond Charity \*
- Helping without hurting

Deeper Dive on the topic of **Neighboring** within Classis/the Church

What is the underlying obstacle to Neighboring within Classis/the Church?

- Time – what other things are we doing or not doing?
- Fear and unfamiliarity
  - Quick to judge those that are different – difficult to ask questions to understand root causes versus what appears on the surface
  - Lack of knowledge – i.e. racism/generational poverty – Have we not had the opportunity to learn or are we unwilling to know or change.
  - Easier to control programs and offer material support rather than develop relationships
- Perception of the organized Church
  - Many folks have had bad experiences in the church
  - As we take pride in our physical spaces (church) we might be broadcasting that only a certain class of people are welcome to attend or come to us
  - Churches have great community spaces but security and proprietary protocols may limit use by “messy” community events and processes.
- Failure to engage with the community we serve
  - Top-down approach to aid in the community – this is what we have - take it or leave it
  - Unfamiliar and disconnected to other groups and agencies also working
- Lack of capacity
  - Lack of capacity to follow through beyond emergency aid
  - Deacons are volunteers with family and other tasks within the church
  - Deacons do this work whereas each member of the Church community has the potential to serve in this way.

How do the listed obstacles block Connectivity within Classis/the Church?

- Minimizes Empathy
- Creates fear and tension within those who serve and those who receive assistance

- Makes relationship building more difficult
- Prevents reconciliation
- Prevents full use of our church buildings as community assets
- Difficult to serve “true” needs in community
- Surface support is not always enough to turn someone’s future
- Church members are not empowered to serve where/how they are able

How can we address these obstacles to Neighboring within Classis/the Church?

- Love abundantly and seek ways to bring God’s peace – pray continuously
- Gather to pray regularly – Zoom as an impactful tool
- Build relationships by experiencing things together
- Emphasize human interactions
- Determine what “helping” looks like
- Participatory approach – everyone (deacons and community members) has something to contribute and together we build toward solutions – we have enough.
- Humble, open spirits
- Diaconal Ministries Canada and their exceptional resources
- Examine systems and structures – do they work in this time?
- Training and orientation
- Use Classis as a networking space – to encourage and learn from one another
- Find ways to make our churches/programs more accessible – go to where the people are
- Collaborate with others as often as possible

How do these solutions relate to our mission as Classis Huron Diaconal Committee? (Could also reflect from a Classis/the Church viewpoint)

- Our role is to facilitate networking within Classis
- Diaconal Ministries Canada has great resources, workshops and funding through the NewGround program
- We can connect directly with churches to support them as they require
- Define our mission within current context
  - Who else is doing it and how do we work together?
  - How do we communicate the mission effectively?
- Be intentional about our interactions at Classis

### Goals/Outcomes/Strategic Direction

Classis Huron Diaconal Committee would both emphasis and exemplify neighboring by:

- Telling the stories of community connections and successful neighboring.
- Sharing Diaconal Ministry and other CRCNA resources and opportunities to engage in learning and collaboration.
- Empowering leaders and promoting that everyone is a deacon -
- Providing information/training and orientation on:
  - What help looks like and what a community-sensitive church looks like
  - Seeking community input in all our community directed decisions
  - Utilizing church buildings and congregational members as community assets
- Facilitating networking to share experiences and build relationships.
- Promote ourselves and related work through new technology – video, zoom meetings, etc.