

There is a culture of trust at North Seattle Friends

Partly because everyone here is committed to following God's leading

But truth is—that isn't enough

Too often we can trust another's connection to God—that it is real and good

But that doesn't necessarily mean I can trust another person with who I am

If we differ, will I be respected?

Can we listen through the differences to find God's Leading?

What happened? What changed us?

I think it was living through 2 major decisions—both of which we differed on—

Foundational stories in which our differences were enough to divide the church

I don't think we really get discernment until we've lived through one of these kinds of stories

Kinder Kampus

Name change

Kinder Kampus

Begun as a ministry of the church in the 1960s—effective with strong church involvement

After 39 years it had become a business, more and more disconnected from the church

Became the tail that wagged the dog in some senses as they filled up our building

Yet it was an effective business that we were proud of and did good neighborhood work

Director resigned

Time to ask God's Leading around the day care

How tied to the church? Quaker director? Promote from within?

Some said this is an important ministry, others glad for hard questions—we were split!

Potential to physically split us—but if not that, we were emotionally split!

Listening meetings—hard, but honest things were said on both sides

Decision to continue the daycare but to work at being less “us and them”—try harder—get involved

Those who thought we should discontinue KK were heart broken, but committed to stay

Even though some didn't want to continue—none lobbied to change it in the parking lot

Then a serious issue developed between staff and some parents

We really wrestled—was this a block of the Evil One or was this a new Leading?

Led to reopening the decision but recognized the need for more information

Consultant hired and reported

Small group met to work through the report

My sense that I was called to pastor the church not manage the daycare

People told the truth

One who was adamant to continue the daycare said “sin to not do what we know to do”

In prayer, they recognized that the building here was inadequate for a daycare

Clarity that the daycare was no longer ours to do began to emerge

Notified the congregation of our leading

Gathered in a meeting for business to share the leading and come to decision...

As a church we were no longer called to operate the daycare

When we made the decision—we cried together—this was painful

No gloating, no campaigning—we knew that this was tender work among us

Took about a year or more—but in the end we were clear that faithfulness meant to lay it down

Although it felt a bit tentative—was it real? Were we solid?

Yes, it was a miracle in the moment—but going forward would it shift?

Then this story was added to the *Practicing Discernment Together* book
We were interviewed to tell the God movement—when/how the shifts occurred within
In telling it, we saw how God did move among us and it was solid!

Were we wrong in our first decision? Wasting time by not getting it right
We realized in retelling that we had to say yes first, before we could say no
We learned to trust each other's faithfulness because we learned that we can stay together
No one bolted and ran—we hung in there—in the end we all had our hearts broken
All heaven breaks loose if we commit to the windy journey
—the one that doesn't look right and breaks our hearts
The windy God journey that you know is wrong, yet we trust what God is doing
Our God journeys are windy—true personally and corporately

Name change

Friends Memorial Church was our name for the first 98 years of our existence
But now we had varied thoughts about our name, including...
We absolutely must change because no one knows who we are
We absolutely cannot change as this is our identity
We recognized that we didn't have agreement about what we should be called
So we agreed to discuss the options

Submitted suggestions

Small group met—5 with very differing positions
Began by telling their hearts and why their position was important to them personally
Hearing that changed folks—someone said, if we do change do North Seattle Friends
Looked at feedback from the congregation and saw that this was the top contender
Unanimous decision to change our name to North Seattle Friends Church
Wait a week and see—still unanimous

Recommendation to meeting for business—I thought this would be easy with Dick on board
No agreement as people stood in the way of moving forward with the name change

Led to do research about early years of the church

Shared results in meeting for business, including our sin of wanting it both ways
We wanted to leave Indiana YM, but we wanted money tied to Indiana YM
In the end we received the money and in the same meeting approved leaving
We left Indiana YM so we could join Oregon YM, but took the money first

Recognized this was wrong, we confessed our sin and asked for forgiveness

Then there was a unanimous decision to change our name and we celebrated

I think the Leading to do research was key—as was confessing our sin and asking forgiveness
It unlocked something huge

Also, we all held back our reactions until the decision was made after confession and forgiveness
After the decision was made and we were clear—there was an explosion of energy

What about those decisions changed us?

Determined to follow God's Leading

Determined not to let these decisions split us—even though they had the power to do that!

We determined to stay together

Commitment to not push through in spite of objections even if it seems right
Or if the majority or the leadership think this is the right way
Take the time needed to work it through
In the waiting—ask if there is something else to be done, Listened around, etc.
Name change—we were led to do research and work with our past issues
Make sure everyone (especially the key players) are included in the decision
From the beginning and at key points
Didn't always "do it right" but we didn't quit and we didn't give up
In fact there were some painful meetings where some of us "acted out"
We didn't have to get rid of the bad actors so God could work—they could stay
God worked with us as we were and truth is, we were a mixed bag
If someone couldn't do this journey, God took them away for a different reason
Accepted our diversity as good and healthy
We actually need each other and together we CAN find God's leading
It isn't which "side is right"—but how can we be faithful to God's calling/leading
It wasn't about whether it was right or wrong to do Kinder Kampus
Rather what is faithfulness?
What is God asking of us now?
God led us to do Kinder Kampus in the 1960's
But in 2003 we were led differently
Take time to hear each other's heart
Means I have to be vulnerable and talk as well as be patient and listen
Means I need to stay in the conversation and not give into the temptation to leave
Determined to follow God's Leading

In the end we learned that we CAN trust each other
That you will respect me even if we differ
That we can work through difficult things and stay together
That has made us sturdy and established a cultural base for us as a congregation

While those decisions are in the past—they were foundational stories that created a new culture
We can stay together through differences—but we must stay present to the process

Trust God and trusting each other to be faithful to the process
Same thing carries over into all of life—marriage, family, work, friends, etc.

In Matthew 19 we have the story of the rich young ruler
In the end of the conversation with the disciples afterwards, they recognize human limitations
They get the difficulty of doing this life with God and ask, "Then who has any chance at all?"
Jesus looked hard at them and said, "No chance at all if you think you can pull it off yourself. Every chance in the world if you trust God to do it." Matthew 19:26

We can't do this on our own—but if we trust God together, we can move forward together