WPC Table Talks

Discerning and Choosing Our Shared Future

Session 1 • August 23, 2026 • Building on What We've Learned

Executive Summary

WPC's first Table Talk brought together 21 participants at four tables to consider the identity and aspirations that should guide the congregation's future. Fourteen participants were age 65 or older, and seven were under 65.

Although the tables used different words and emphasized different concerns, they did not produce competing visions. Collectively, they pointed toward a common emerging identity.

> ***WPC senses God calling it to become a more visibly Christ-centered, accepting, and connected community—one that grows people in faith, equips them to participate and lead, and expresses Jesus' love through focused mission, service, and social justice.***

Participants affirmed WPC's existing strengths as a friendly, welcoming, caring, thoughtful, and relational church. They also challenged WPC to make those qualities more intentional and visible—especially to newcomers, younger people, families, minorities, and others who may not yet feel fully included.

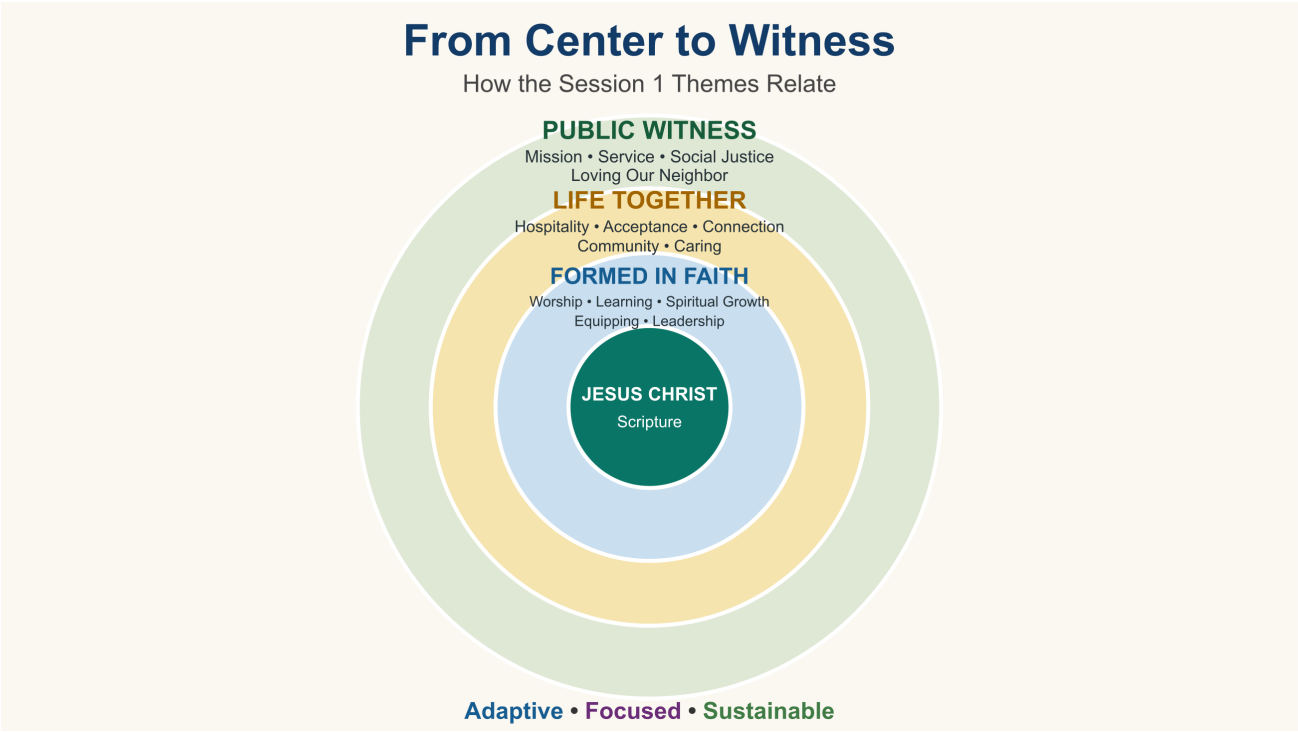
Six Themes Emerged

- Christ-centered faith made visible in congregational life
- Intentional hospitality, acceptance, and welcome
- Connection as the bridge between identity and action
- Focused mission, service, and social justice
- Spiritual formation and leadership development
- A sustainable and adaptive model of church life

The tables generally saw these themes as parts of one integrated calling rather than separate priorities.

From Christian Center to Public Witness

All four tables wanted WPC's Christian identity to become clearer and more visible. Participants named Christ, Scripture, faith, prayer, worship, testimony, spiritual growth, service, and social justice. Their aspiration was not simply to use more religious language, but to form people whose worship, relationships, learning, service, and leadership reflect Christ.



Christ and Scripture are the center; formation shapes life together; congregational life moves outward in witness.

From Friendly to Intentionally Hospitable

Friendly, welcoming, caring, community, and family remain authentic descriptions of WPC. The conversations nevertheless distinguished friendliness among people who already know one another from intentional hospitality toward people who are new or different.

- Are newcomers greeted and incorporated consistently?
- Can people question, disagree, and participate without first proving that they fit?
- Do the building, signs, relationships, and pathways into church life communicate openness?

Connection Turns Identity into Action

Connection appeared at every table through shared work, meals, small groups, personal invitations, mutual care, mission, and intergenerational service. One memorable phrase was "work as fellowship and fellowship as work." WPC may need fewer stand-alone activities and more experiences that build relationships, deepen faith, and serve others at the same time.

A Pathway from Welcome to Leadership

Participants repeatedly described belonging as a journey rather than a single invitation. WPC's future may depend less on filling existing positions and more on intentionally welcoming, forming, entrusting, and sending people.

The pathway links hospitality and belonging with faith formation, service, and leadership.

Focused Mission, Service, and Social Justice

Every table named mission, outreach, service, caring, generosity, social justice, or loving one's neighbor. There was also agreement that a smaller congregation may need to concentrate on fewer, higher-impact commitments. The aim is not retreat, but mission that is more coherent, spiritually grounded, participatory, and effective.

- Connect mission explicitly to Jesus' teaching and WPC's faith.
- Create opportunities for children, families, newcomers, and longtime members to serve together.
- Invite people personally and explain both what WPC does and why it matters.

An Adaptive and Sustainable Church

Participants recognized WPC's smaller size, competition for people's time, and changing volunteer patterns. They valued flexible roles, shorter commitments, shared leadership, family-inclusive opportunities, and ministries that accomplish several purposes at once. Growth should arise from faithful identity—not from becoming a church WPC is not called to be.

Strong Convergence Across Four Tables

The four recorder summaries show unusually broad convergence. The map below distinguishes strong emphasis from supporting emphasis; it is a qualitative reading of the conversations, not a vote or statistical score.

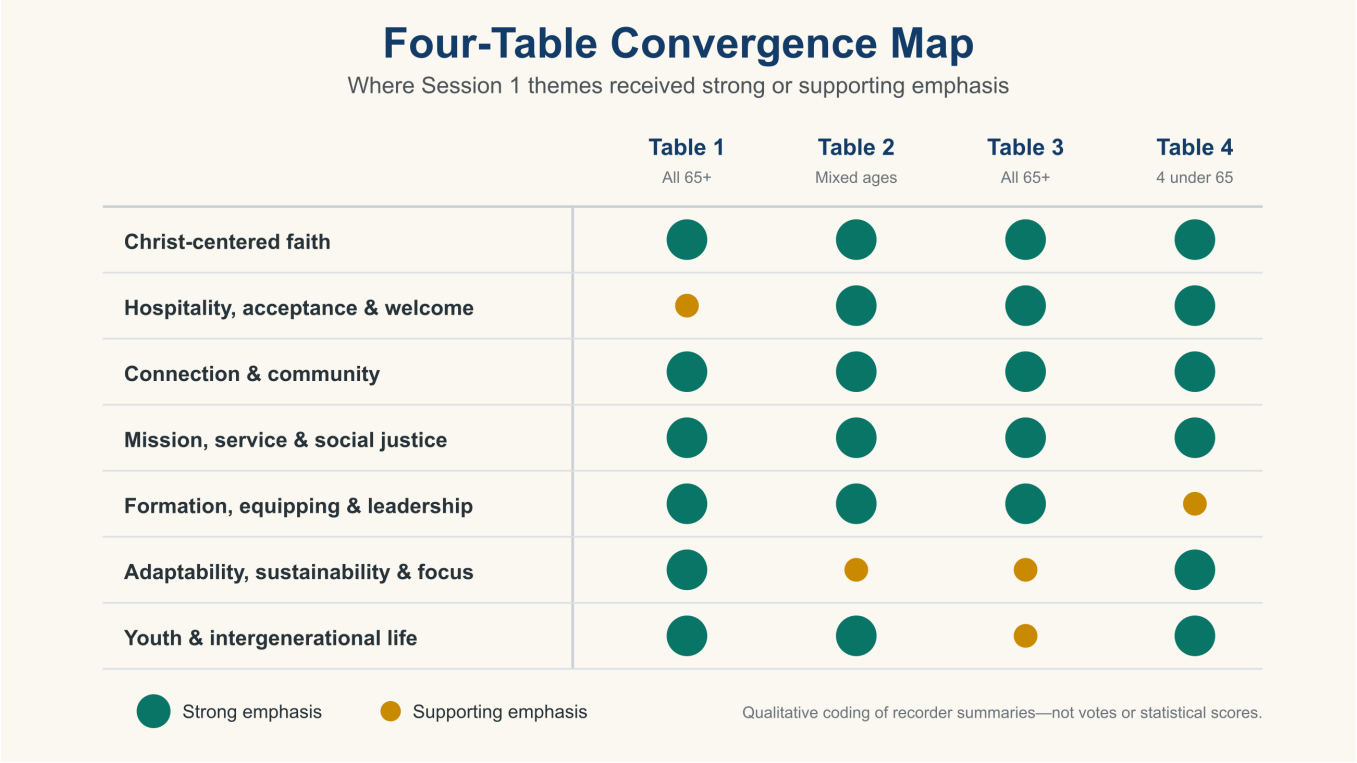


Table 1: Langan • Table 2: Tassie • Table 3: Weston • Table 4: Nebel

What the Map Suggests

- Christ-centered faith, connection and community, and mission or service were strongly emphasized at every table.
- Hospitality and acceptance were shared concerns, with especially strong attention in the mixed-age and younger-majority conversations.
- Formation and leadership were prominent across the older and mixed-age tables; the younger-majority table reinforced them through concerns about time, participation, and new leadership models.
- Adaptability and sustainability were strongest where participants explicitly discussed focus, scale, or changing patterns of participation.

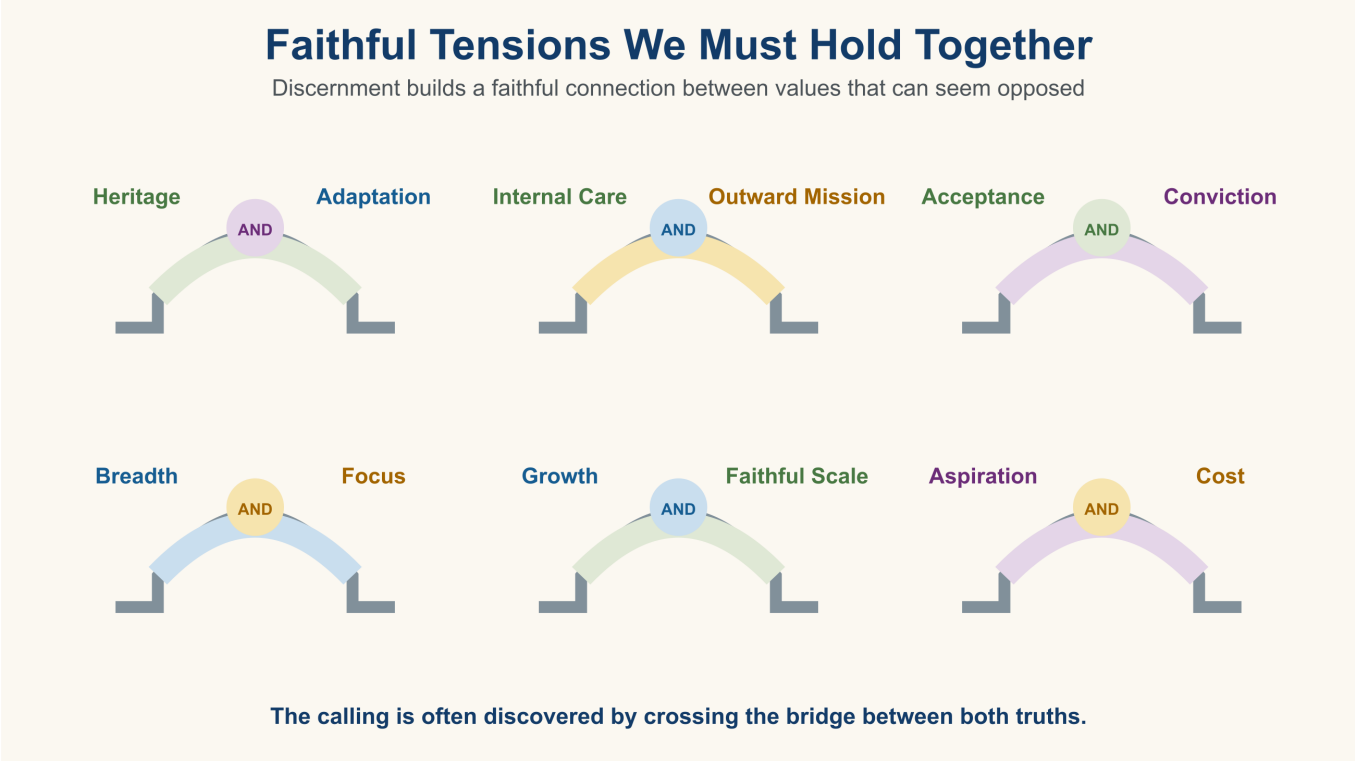
A Demographic Caution

The 21 participants included 14 people age 65 or older and seven under 65. The sample therefore offers a strong picture of WPC's older core while introducing a smaller group of younger voices. Differences among tables may reflect age, life stage, facilitator, personalities, or conversational flow; they should be treated as useful tendencies, not conclusions about generations.

The Participants included:
John Coleur, Kathy Fink, Lois Klimstra, Abigail Lewis, Bob Lewis , Tim and Emily Marshall, Rebecca Massey, Andy McCausland, Bill McNair, Tom Miller , Michael Nebel, Carine Niemann, Kitty Peck, Jolanta Sezfer , Barbara Scott , John and Nancy Person, Justyna Randazzo, Cindy Ritchell, and Madeline Weston

Faithful Tensions We Must Hold Together

Session 1 surfaced productive tensions. These are not necessarily problems to eliminate or questions with easy either-or answers. They may be places where faithful discernment is most needed.



The calling may be discovered by building a faithful connection between both truths.

Why These Tensions Matter

Heritage and adaptation. WPC cherishes its history, relationships, traditions, property, and sacred memories while recognizing the need for flexibility and change.

Internal care and outward mission. A connected congregation is better equipped to serve its neighbors, while shared service can deepen relationships within the church.

Acceptance and conviction. Participants want WPC to be safe and accepting while maintaining meaningful Christian and ethical commitments with courage and humility.

Breadth and focus. Many ministries are valued, but limited people and resources require choices about which commitments most clearly express WPC's calling.

Growth and faithful scale. Participants welcomed vitality without assuming that success means becoming a much larger or fundamentally different church.

Aspiration and cost. Any genuine priority may require sacrifice, redirected resources, changed practices, or relinquishing something familiar.

What We Heard Across the Congregation

Distinct Emphases Worth Continuing to Test

The two tables that included participants under 65 gave greater attention to minorities and excluded groups, children and younger families, acceptance and nonjudgment, participation as a path to belonging, social justice, time constraints, and low-burden community activities.

The older-majority tables gave especially strong attention to Scripture and theological education, congregational history, existing mission commitments, internal care, leadership development, and the significance of WPC's property and columbarium.

These patterns are hypotheses for continued discernment—not demographic verdicts. The sample was small, and table composition was only one of several influences on each conversation.

A Provisional Synthesis

WPC understands itself as a caring, thoughtful, and relational congregation. It senses God calling it toward a more visibly Christ-centered, intentionally hospitable, deeply connected, and outward-facing life.

That calling would be expressed through focused mission and social justice, stronger spiritual formation, meaningful and sustainable ways to participate, and clearer pathways for newcomers, younger people, and other members to grow into leadership.

WPC does not seek growth for its own sake. The emerging aspiration is faithful vitality as an accepting, intergenerational, and sustainable community of Jesus Christ.

This synthesis is intentionally provisional. Session 1 named WPC's identity and aspirations; the remaining Table Talks will continue testing priorities and shaping the shared future the congregation is prepared to embrace.

About Session 1

The August 23, 2026 gathering included 21 participants at four tables. Facilitators were the Rev. Dr. Tassie Green, Susan Langan, Chelsie Nebel, and Mark Weston. This summary reflects the table recorders' reports and preserves the strongest areas of convergence as well as important differences and tensions.

WPC Table Talks • Listening together, discerning together, responding together