WPC Table Talks

From Discernment to Shared Commitment

Session 3 • October 18, 2026 • Congregational Findings

Executive Summary

Table Talk 3 invited participants to connect WPC's hopes with the commitments, changes, and leadership needed to pursue them. Across four tables, 22 participants and four facilitators explored how the congregation can strengthen relationships, grow in Christian faith, and serve its neighbors.

Three tables chose becoming a trusted partner and source of practical help to neighbors as their primary outcome. The fourth chose stronger relationships across generations, seeing those relationships as a foundation for the other outcomes. The discussions treated these directions as connected rather than competing.

A direction is becoming clearer. Carrying it forward will require broader shared responsibility, focused choices, and room for more people to help shape congregational life.

Five Findings Emerged

- Build relationships with neighbors through listening and practical help.
- Connect intergenerational belonging, Christian formation, and service.
- Develop lay leadership and share responsibility more broadly.
- Concentrate resources on fewer commitments that people can sustain.
- Welcome new and younger voices into decisions about WPC's future.

Progress and the Work Ahead

Participants moved beyond broad hopes to discuss volunteer roles, partnerships, use of existing resources, and the kind of pastoral leadership WPC needs. They also named fatigue, financial uncertainty, and institutional habits that may limit change.

The reports show more agreement about desirable directions than about specific actions, ownership, resources, or what to simplify or release. These findings inform the Mission Study and subsequent decisions by Session and the congregation; they are not a record of commitments already adopted.

Whose Voices Were Heard

The 22 participants represented 19 households. Thirteen participants were categorized as age 65 or older, seven as young-family adults, and two in the EN (Empty Nesters) category. No participants were recorded in the young-adult category. The next stage should build on these contributions while inviting additional perspectives.

Trust Learn Welcome Live

The Christian framework used in the Table Talk 2 findings offers a way to hold these directions together. Trust, Learn, Welcome, and Live are continuing practices. Relationships within WPC and with neighbors can deepen both faith and service.

Christ sends us out in love; our neighbors help us grow in faith.

How the Findings Connect

Trust in Jesus grounds the congregation's choices. Learning through Scripture, worship, and relationships equips people to serve. Welcome creates belonging and room to contribute. Living Christ's love connects that faith with practical care for others.

TT3 participants linked strong relationships and spiritual growth with the ability to serve neighbors. Although no table selected Christian formation as its sole primary outcome, several described it as essential. The reports contain fewer concrete commitments for formation than for activities and outreach; that remains work to develop.

What We Heard Across the Tables

Become a Trusted Community Partner

Participants want neighbors to experience WPC as a source of practical help and relationship. Suggestions included working with schools, joining community events, using existing space for connection, and learning from neighbors before choosing new activities. Better communication and visibility matter, but they should accompany dependable relationships.

One table proposed conversations with neighbors and school leaders to understand needs. Another asked whether WPC should broaden its understanding of community beyond active membership. Together, these ideas invite the congregation to listen before deciding what help to offer and to let those relationships influence its practices.

Strengthen Relationships Across Generations

Participants connected intergenerational relationships with belonging, care, and shared ministry. Ideas included family gatherings, childcare for Bible studies, activities in the Christian Life Center, and support for people experiencing loneliness or grief. They also recognized that family schedules and other commitments affect participation.

The underlying concern is broader than attracting families. WPC needs ways for people with different schedules, experiences, and needs to know one another and contribute. Participants also called for younger people to have greater influence over priorities, supported by congregational effort and resources.

Develop People and Share the Work

All four tables raised the need for stronger lay leadership. Participants discussed recruiting and supporting volunteers, clarifying responsibility, and changing how work is distributed. Repeated reliance on the same people can lead to fatigue and limit the congregation's capacity.

The challenge includes helping people discover their gifts and exercise responsibility. More invitations to volunteer will be insufficient if people lack support, authority, or a manageable role. A sustainable approach connects clear responsibilities with room for new contributions.

Choose a Sustainable Focus

Several tables favored fewer, better-supported initiatives. Participants recognized limits on volunteer time and finances and questioned how much WPC can sustain during a pastoral transition. Existing space, relationships, and activities offer resources to build on.

The reports do not establish which programs should end or how funds should be reassigned. They do support making deliberate choices rather than adding activities without considering who will carry them and what difference they will make.

Remain Open to Change

One table asked whether becoming more outward-facing would require changes in how WPC understands community and organizes ministry. The broader question is how the congregation can remain faithful to its Christian identity while becoming more hospitable to people whose experiences and expectations differ from those of current members.

Becoming a Community Partner

Three tables selected trusted community partnership as their primary outcome. Their proposals point to several ways of pursuing that hope, from making WPC better known to building relationships that could change how the congregation serves. The distinctions below summarize the discussion; they are not a plan already adopted.

DIMENSION	WHAT IT COULD LOOK LIKE	WHAT IT ASKS OF WPC
Visibility	Clear invitations and communication	Help neighbors find a way in
Relationship	Listen and offer dependable help	Learn before choosing activities
Shared influence	Let neighbors help shape ministry	Be willing to adapt practices

Listen Before Choosing Activities

One table proposed conversations with neighbors and school leaders to learn about community needs. This offers a practical starting point: test assumptions through listening before choosing a new program. Publicity can help people discover WPC, but becoming a trusted partner also depends on responding to needs people actually express and following through over time.

Make Relationships Concrete

Suggestions included school partnerships, participation in community events, and using existing church space for connection. Within congregational life, childcare for Bible studies and activities addressing loneliness or grief could connect belonging, faith, and care. These examples illustrate possibilities raised in discussion; the tables did not settle which should receive priority.

Give Younger People Room to Shape the Work

Some participants called for younger families and youth to influence mission priorities, with congregational effort and resources supporting their choices. Other comments recognized that family schedules affect participation. Together, these observations suggest that meaningful involvement requires listening to younger people about both their interests and realistic ways to contribute.

This is an emerging direction, not evidence that authority has already been shared. Seven young-family adults participated, while no young-adult participation was recorded. The next stage can build on those contributions and invite additional voices without assuming their preferences or availability.

Carrying These Hopes Forward

TT3 made the desired direction clearer. The discussions were less specific about how WPC would sustain the work. Four findings help distinguish the hopes expressed from the commitments still to be developed.

Equip People to Share Responsibility

All four tables raised concerns about leadership, participation, or distributing the work. Recruiting more volunteers alone will not resolve those concerns. A practical response would pair manageable responsibilities with support, authority, and opportunities to develop gifts. A pastor can help equip people for ministry; the congregation must also decide what it will carry together.

Make Focus a Real Choice

Several tables favored fewer, better-supported initiatives. They did not identify which activities should end or which resources should shift. The next decisions therefore involve both what to pursue and what to simplify or release, taking account of volunteer time and financial capacity.

Give Christian Formation Practical Shape

Several tables described Christian formation as essential, although none chose it as the sole primary outcome. Concrete commitments were less developed than proposals for outreach and activities. Further discernment should explore how Scripture, worship, learning, and service will help people grow in faith, and how WPC will recognize that growth.

Distinguish Direction from Commitment

CLEARER DIRECTION	DECISIONS STILL AHEAD
Serve neighbors through practical help	Which needs and partnerships to pursue
Share leadership more broadly	Who will lead, with what support and authority
Focus on fewer sustainable commitments	What to prioritize, fund, simplify, or release
Connect faith, belonging, and service	How to nurture growth and recognize progress

These decisions belong to the next stage of discernment. Progress should include the difference people experience in relationships, faith, and practical care, alongside attendance and activity counts. Willingness to discuss change does not by itself establish the capacity or commitment to carry it out.

Leadership and the Choices Ahead

A Pastor Who Equips the Congregation

Participants want a pastor who can inspire, teach, build relationships, and help turn ideas into sustained action. They also want leadership that develops other leaders and strengthens congregational ownership of ministry.

These expectations belong together. A pastor can guide formation, connect people, and support change, but cannot substitute for shared congregational responsibility. Clear roles for the pastor, staff, Session, and members will matter as WPC moves forward.

Connections with the Congregational Assessment

The discussions echo the Congregation Assessment Tool's priorities of reaching new people, attracting families with children and youth, and creating meaningful relationships. They also reinforce its concern about dependence on clergy and the need to develop lay leadership.

WPC's intellectual curiosity and openness to discussion can support faithful learning. Participants' calls for focus also raise a practical question: how can thoughtful conversation lead to decisions and sustained action? The attendance pattern does not explain the congregation's culture or establish what any age group believes.

Faithful Tensions to Hold Together

PRIORITIES TO HOLD TOGETHER	QUESTION FOR DISCERNMENT
Aspiration and capacity	Which commitments can we sustain with the people, time, and resources available?
Pastoral leadership and congregational ownership	How will a pastor equip others, and what will members carry together?
Christian identity and openness	How can we remain grounded in faith while learning from people whose experiences differ?
Established service and new influence	How will we honor faithful service and give younger people and newcomers room to shape priorities?

What Was Achieved

Each table selected a primary direction and connected it with practical ideas, leadership needs, or changes in congregational life. The discussions made clearer that relationships, faith, and service reinforce one another and that renewal requires participation beyond a small group of dedicated people.

What Remains Unfinished

The next decisions need greater specificity: which few commitments to pursue, who will share responsibility, what resources they require, and what practices may need to change. Signs of progress should describe the difference people experience, as well as attendance or activity. Willingness to discuss change does not by itself establish readiness to carry it out.

Participation and the Next Stage

Category key: 65+ = people reviewed as age 65 or older. YF = adults under 65 raising children at home (young-family adults); these are individual people, not counts of families. EN = the Table Talk category for adults under 65 without children being raised at home. It includes child-free adults and is broader than "empty nesters."

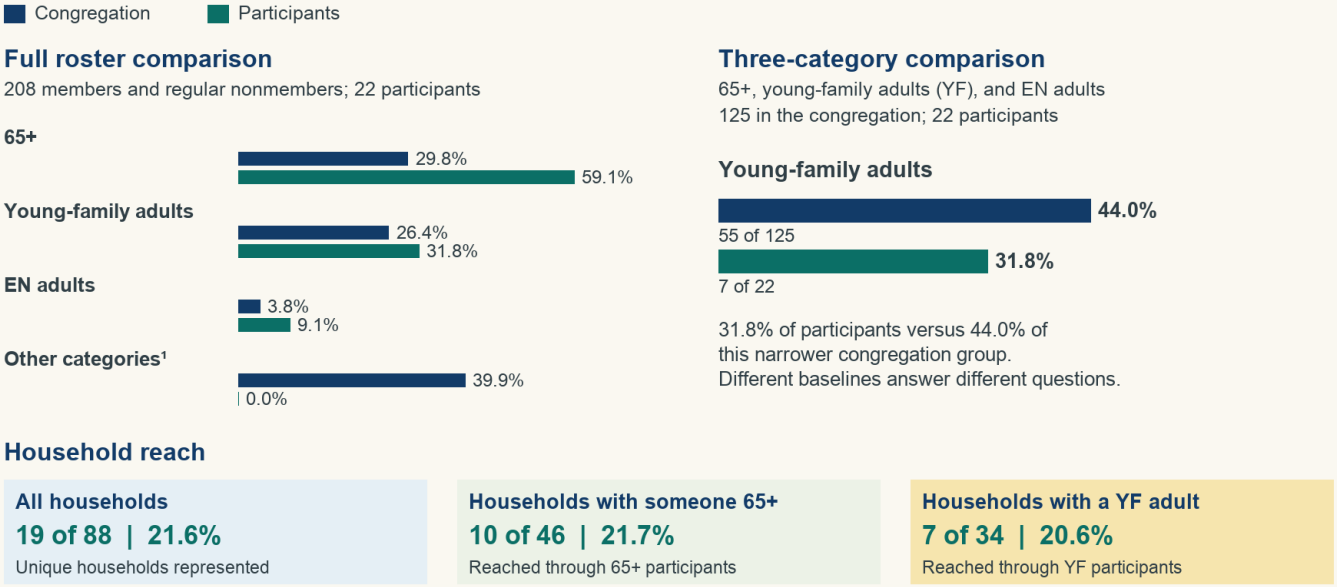
YA = young adults; C = the roster's child category; <65 = otherwise unspecified under 65; ? = unresolved. Counts use the reviewed roster labels. The workbook proposes an under-18 child cutoff for YF but does not finalize it; YA and C are not treated here as verified age bands.

Participation at a Glance

Who participated and which households were reached

22 participants • 4 facilitators • 26 people present

20 members and 2 regular nonmembers participated. Participant counts exclude facilitators.



Household reach

All households	Households with someone 65+	Households with a YF adult
19 of 88 | 21.6%	**10 of 46 | 21.7%**	**7 of 34 | 20.6%**
Unique households represented	Reached through 65+ participants	Reached through YF participants

¹ Young adults, children, unspecified under 65, and unresolved categories: no recorded participants.

Household categories may overlap. Counts describe attendance, not agreement or household-wide endorsement.

People categorized 65+ were more strongly represented than in the full roster. Young-family participation exceeded its full-roster share but fell below its share of the narrower three-category group. No young-adult participation was recorded; inviting additional voices remains important.

How to Read These Findings

This synthesis brings together four table reports and the verified participation roster, with the congregational assessment providing context. Recurring themes indicate convergence in the discussions, not unanimity or a representative survey. Household participation does not mean every household member attended or endorsed the findings. Table observations are presented without personal names, and individual views are not attributed to demographic groups.

The Next Stage

The next step is an integrated TT1–TT3 Discernment Analysis examining WPC's identity, aspirations, willingness to commit, and the relationship between continuity and change. It will trace these themes across the three sessions, drawing on the congregational assessment and relevant Mission Study evidence for context. That second report will distinguish shared hopes from demonstrated commitments and identify questions still requiring discernment. It will provide a foundation for subsequent decisions by Session and the congregation.