

**FINAL REPORT  
OF THE REFERENCE TEAM<sup>1</sup>**

**TO THE CHURCH COUNCIL OF  
BINKLEY BAPTIST CHURCH**

**DECEMBER 4, 2018**

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<sup>1</sup> For the sake of greater clarity, two sections of this report were modestly revised after presentation of this report to the Church Council on November 19. These were the "Consultant's Observations" and "Recommendations."

## Background

Binkley Baptist Church is a medium-sized American Baptist congregation founded in 1958 on the campus of the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. Named in honor of Rev. Olin T. Binkley, a progressive minister and educator, the congregation moved to its current location on Willow Drive in 1965. It then added classrooms in 1969, the sanctuary and pastors' offices in 1984, and additional offices, a choir room and chapel in 2007. This year Binkley Church is celebrating its 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

Rev. Robert Seymour, the first senior minister, served for nearly 30 years (1959 to 1988). Subsequent senior ministers served from four to eleven years. The current senior minister, Rev. Marcus McFaul, originally came to Binkley in 2015 as an intentional interim minister. Rev. McFaul served for two and a half years in that role, until August of 2017.

A Minister Search Committee (MSC) formed in August of 2016 to lead the process for identifying and calling a settled minister. However, after a year of effort the MSC was unable to identify a suitable candidate for the position and (after several resignations from the committee) ultimately agreed to recommend calling Rev. McFaul to be the settled minister.

While a strong majority of the congregation (over 82%) voted to call Rev. McFaul to be the settled minister, a significant minority carried deep concerns. For that reason, Church Council convened a working group in the fall of 2017 to select a consultant to assist the congregation in healing and reconciliation. The working group interviewed several consultants, ultimately inviting David Brubaker of Cooperative by Design to contract with Binkley. The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed by the Council Moderator and the Consultant called for the process to begin “no later than March 1, 2018, and terminate no later than November 30, 2018.”

The consulting process that Cooperative By Design uses calls for the formation of a “Reference Team” to partner with the consultant in all phases of the process (information-gathering, healing and reconciliation, and recommendations). Therefore, the report that follows, with the exception of the Consultant’s Observations, reflects the work of the entire Reference Team with the consultant.

### Reference Team Members:

Meredith Bratcher

Tonya Hamm

Matthew Ripley-Moffitt

Jenny Walters

Nancy Cheek

Tom Fewel

Don Willhoit

David Brubaker (Consultant)

## Consultant's Observations

I have consulted with nearly 50 congregations since 1987, and can attest that Binkley Baptist Church is truly extraordinary. The tagline for your congregation should be “Binkley Church: On the right side of history for 60 years!” I have yet to consult with a congregation that got so many things right—including clear and early support for civil rights, the ordination of women, and the full inclusion of LGBTQ individuals in the life and leadership of the church.

Perhaps that is why the events of 2017 were so devastating to some in your congregation. How could a congregation that has gotten so much right manage to get something so wrong?

From my perspective, several factors conspired to make 2017 a particularly painful year. First, the Minister Search Committee (MSC) was too large and too diverse to function effectively. (This conclusion comes from members of the MSC itself.) Second, the accountability lines of the MSC were too broad (to the entire congregation) to manage things when they got complicated. (When a group is accountable to everyone, it is actually accountable to no one.) Third, power and gender issues within Binkley and the society surfaced during and following the search process.

Just because a congregation is dedicated to equal relationships between women and men does not mean it has achieved that goal. Nor does the presence of a single woman in a lead minister role over a 60-year history signal that women are equally likely to rise to leadership. Finally, a succession of women as church moderators does not mean that women and men now fully share leadership in the church.

While women have indeed occupied many formal leadership roles at Binkley, it appears that informal leadership has primarily been the domain of men. Formal leadership roles are critically important, but are often trumped by the exercise of informal power outside of formal channels.

A number of women reported that experience during 2017. In my view, national developments only worsened the experience at Binkley. The new American president, inaugurated in January of 2017, expressed derogatory views of women that likely sharpened the sensibilities of women concerned about processes at Binkley.

*I would urge more conversations about power and gender in your congregation.* As in the broader society, Binkley has not yet achieved full equality between women and men. The challenges of 2017 are thus an important reminder to address this reality, and to initiate honest conversations about what it would take to achieve genuine equality between women and men at Binkley.

--David Brubaker, Consultant

## Summary of Process

The consultant initially visited the Binkley congregation the weekend of February 17/18, 2018. During that weekend, David Brubaker met privately with all six of the ministerial and office staff members and with the Church Council (11 members attended), the Koinonia Group<sup>2</sup> (six members attended), and the Lottie Moon Group<sup>3</sup> (nine members attended). Following that weekend, David proposed that Church Council establish a Reference Team of six to eight members to address “congregational healing, visioning, and structure revision processes.” The process proposal also committed the Reference Team and the consultant to “review the search committee process and identify learnings that will inform future processes.”

### Reference Team Meetings

Including our organizing meeting on March 24, the Reference Team met a total of eight times with the consultant and an additional eight times without the consultant. The dates of our meetings follow, with an asterisk beside the meetings of RT members without the consultant present. Minutes of each of these meetings were provided to Sonnie VanSant in her role as Church Moderator.

March 24	July 9*
April 7	July 24*
April 12*	July 28
May 8*	August 18
May 19	September 11*
May 31*	September 29
June 9	October 20
June 14*	November 5*

In addition to the meetings of the Reference Team, a subgroup on “Structure” convened on July 16, July 30, and August 13, and a subgroup on “Decision-Making” convened on September 5 and October 9.

### Cottage Meetings:

We determined to schedule a series of “cottage meetings” to hear from members of the congregation regarding their hopes and concerns for the congregation. We developed a series of five questions that we posed at all 10 of these cottage meetings, held in April and May of this year. After coding all the responses from the cottage meetings, we prepared a two-page summary to share with the congregation. That summary is attached to this report. The major themes included affirmation for the people and community of Binkley Church, as well as the congregation’s emphasis on social justice and high quality music. There was also a consistent

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<sup>2</sup> An informal and temporary group convened by Church Council.

<sup>3</sup> The Lottie Moon Group is a support group that formed in late 2017, organized by several women who had various concerns around the minister search process. Some felt frustrated about the lack of opportunities to share their concerns. Others either felt uncomfortable speaking their opinion or sensed that they were not listened to or respected when speaking.

call for greater listening, civil conversations, and a “continued and deeper focus on outreach and the local community.”

#### April 7 Meet the Reference Team:

The Reference Team and David Brubaker hosted a gathering on April 7 to introduce themselves to the congregation, outline the process, and allow members of the congregation to ask questions. About 50 people attended.

#### June 10 Lunch and Conversation:

Following the Cottage Meetings in April and early May and additional conversation with members of the congregation, the Reference Team determined to draft a “behavioral covenant” to guide future interactions among members. Approximately 80 people attended this event, which included a report on our findings from the cottage meetings and facilitated table-group discussions about desired behaviors that participants proposed. The resulting summary of table group conversations provided both inspiration and language for the “Community Covenant” that we ultimately drafted.

#### October 21 Lunch and Conversation:

Following the June 10 Lunch and Conversation, the Reference Team worked to create a “Community Covenant.” We decided to hold a Lunch and Conversation to discuss this document. About 50 people gathered for lunch, and afterwards settled in chairs, Samoan-circle style, to read the draft, hear David’s introduction to the purpose and power (and limits) of a community covenant, and hear how this draft came about. After RT members read each of the five sections, David invited attendees to come sit in the “talking chairs” of the circle to offer suggestions and responses. The Team’s “Covenant” subgroup later considered how best to incorporate suggestions into a new draft.

#### Facilitated Conversations:

Based on multiple conversations, responses to letters, and direct contacts by individuals in the congregation, members of the Reference Team and/or the consultant facilitated a total of over 20 meetings from March through October. These included the following:

March 23 and May 19—Teambuilding sessions with ministerial and office staff

April 19 – Met with Lottie Moon group

July 28—Met with two members of the congregation

August 17—Met with former MSC members

September 5 & 6—Individual RT members met with individual Binkley members

September 27 – Met with former member of MSC and member of congregation

September 29—Met with former MSC members

October 15 – Met with former member of MSC and member of congregation<sup>4</sup>

October 20—Met with two groups of Binkley members

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<sup>4</sup> The meetings with former MSC members were with smaller groups of three or four members.

## Learnings from Previous Processes

The Reference Team realizes that we are not the first team to come together at Binkley Baptist Church either anticipating or following a time of great internal change. We looked at the earlier important work of the Discernment Committee (report made to congregation, January 2007) and the Transition Team (report to congregation June 2016). We offer here a summary of their work.

### Background of the Discernment Committee and the Transition Team:

**The Discernment Committee** process began, as best we can determine, in March 2006, after Senior Minister Jim Pike announced that he would be retiring in June 2007. The DC, guided by Daniel Pryfogle of Signal Hill (<http://www.signalhill.us/work/a-positive-regard.3208082>), used an Appreciative Inquiry process, and out of this congregation-wide work grew two committees (Interim Planning Committee and a Transition Committee) to guide us through the interim period, and through a process of discernment regarding staffing transitions.

**The Transition Team** was formed in spring 2014, following the announcement that Pastor Peter Carman had accepted a call to another pastorate. Its charge began with recommendations for a revised staffing model. The team went on to recommend an Intentional Interim Process, and then served as the Search Committee for an Interim Minister. In fall 2014, the TT recommended Dr. Marcus McFaul as Intentional Interim Minister, and then, with his guidance as consultant, developed both a Congregational Profile and a Pastor Profile. All of their recommendations and the profiles grew out of extensive congregation-wide conversations, and were included in their June 2016 report.

We saw some similarities in key recommendations of these two teams, made almost a decade apart, and note them here with appreciation, and with hope that we are now even more persuaded to make them part of our common practice.

*Be deliberate in taking time for congregational listening/reflecting in decision-making*

(DC) Use the Appreciative Inquiry model (sharing, listening and reflecting) to discern what congregation desires; encourage the community to keep “listening each other into speech”

(TT) Embed the conversationally based dialogue/discernment aspects of Intentional Interim Ministry program in life of the congregation

*Value small group discussions to hear and honor different perspectives, to develop trust*

(TT) Use small group discussions, with reporting out that is then shared with whole congregation, to encourage thoughtful and caring exchanges of views before congregational meetings for votes.

(DC) Work towards honoring one another’s perspectives

*Develop practices and programs to continue the work of this team*

(DC) Consider Stephen Ministry to expand a Care Team approach to congregational care

(RT) Consider developing a Listening Team to expand and support work of Deacons

## **Assessment**

### Affirmations:

The 60-year history of Binkley Baptist Church is truly “a story of courage.”<sup>5</sup> In 1967, Binkley elected the first woman as chair of its Diaconate and the first African American deacon in a predominantly white southern church. In 1983, the congregation adopted inclusive language in worship and, seven years later, hired Rev. Linda Jordan as senior minister. In 1992, Binkley became a Welcoming and Affirming congregation. In 2003, the congregation formed an “Earth Ministries Committee” and adopted a church covenant committed to “greening.” Our congregation’s history reflects our core commitments to justice, inclusion and creation care. We are a congregation of strong people with passion for our principles (both a gift and a challenge).

### Healing and Reconciliation:

Binkley Baptist Church is a deeply loved congregation with an extraordinary legacy of leadership regarding civil rights, LGBTQ inclusion, and work for peace. As we began our process, however, it was clear that some members were hurting and others were anxious about signs of decline. While we endeavored to offer multiple opportunities for individuals and groups to dialogue and experience reconciliation, not all who were invited responded to our invitations. We recognize that such listening and reconciling work needs to continue.

### Future Vision:

While Binkley has a clear and compelling Mission Statement, there is less clarity about the future vision of the church. Thus, we acknowledge the initiative that Marcus and the Council have taken to establish clear goals for the future work of Binkley Baptist Church.

### Structural Challenges:

There has been a pattern of ad hoc initiatives over the years, suggesting that there may be systemic roots to the concerns we heard about “process.” We concluded that this suggests a need for a systemic analysis of structure and decision-making processes. We designated a “structure team,” responsible to the Reference Team, to analyze these challenges and make recommendations to address them.

### Congregational Culture:

Given multiple concerns about harmful behaviors and words at the height of the controversy over calling a Senior Minister, we gave particular attention to understanding the congregation’s culture in times of conflict and developing a process to strengthen it. It seems that when things are going well everyone behaves well, but when things are stressful, some behaviors become person-focused rather than issue-focused. We thus drafted a “Community Covenant” based on congregational input and review of similar documents from other congregations.

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<sup>5</sup> Taken from the title of the document prepared by the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Committee of Binkley Baptist Church, Keith Williams and Marlene Dickinson co-chairs.

## Recommendations

Binkley is known in our community and beyond for our commitment to justice, inclusion, creation care, and solidarity with the marginalized. The 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration has come as a welcome gift and reminder of who we are as a congregation. We believe that the justice, inclusion, and solidarity that we embrace in our external ministries must also be fully incorporated in our life together. The recommendations that follow are all predicated on and grow from our unique legacy as a congregation.

### 1) Commit to Ongoing Listening

The Reference Team (RT) sponsored facilitated conversations to work on listening across different points of view, and listening for voices on the margins. We sponsored small group “cottage meetings” that met in a member’s home and “Lunch and Conversation” gatherings after worship. We also heard from individual members, and from small groups, and in all gatherings, the RT “listened to understand.”

As this deep and confidential part of our work continued, we began to wonder who would carry on this role when the RT finished its work in November 2018. We realized that Binkley could well use an ongoing group of people specially designated to listen with empathy to individuals or groups with troubling concerns about our church relationships. This role fits within the work of deacons as supporters of Binkley members’ spiritual needs, although currently deacons are not necessarily selected on the basis of particular caregiving/listening skills or experience. Yet Binkley’s membership, and the Diaconate, are rich in persons with these skills: counsellors, chaplains, campus ministers, and others.

**We therefore recommend that the Leadership Team, or some other group of the Council, identify and recruit a group of Listeners from among all Binkley members.** The Listeners might be appointed for a 3-year term (as Deacons are), or might serve for as long as they are willing. They would keep confidentiality, but share the general themes of what they are hearing with the Leadership Team in some way acceptable to all.

This group would make themselves easily available to any member or group in the church, individually or as a team, and would also reach out to any who they notice are less engaged, particularly in times of distress. It would help for them to remind the congregation regularly of what they do, who they are, and how members can contact them.

The RT also heard enthusiasm for regular cottage meetings as gatherings of a good size both for discussion of important matters in the church, and for fellowship. **We suggest that cottage meetings be organized at least once/year, and that the Deacons take leadership in planning, developing questions for discussion when appropriate, and taking notes to share themes with the congregation.** Members of the RT are happy to share their experiences with organizing the April/May 2018 cottage meetings.

2) Agree on Our Future Direction<sup>6</sup>

In April and May 2018, the Reference team hosted 10 cottage meetings with approximately 70 total participants. **We recommend that future conversations and discernment take place around gender and power issues, and other learnings from the summary of the cottage meeting conversations.**

3) Revise Our Constitution and Decision-Making Process<sup>7</sup>

Discussion around the optimum size for a Minister Search Committee concluded that a nine-member ministerial search committee is too large to allow for best working relationships and efficiency. **A seven-member committee would be large enough to accomplish the task and provide needed skills and diversity.** Consideration should be given to including on the committee a person knowledgeable in human resources. While desirable to include a youth member, the task of the MSC is too time demanding to be practical for a youth member.

Of the seven nominees for the committee, the majority should be selected in the order in which the congregation nominated them. The remaining number should be nominated to assure skills (such as knowledge of group dynamics and human resources) and reflect the diversity of the congregation. We recommend that the MSC report at least quarterly to the Church Council. We further recommend that the MSC suspend the search process if any circumstance arises that causes a vacancy on the Committee. The MSC chair should immediately report the situation to the Moderator with a strategic recommendation for continuing the minister search. The MSC and a team designated by the Moderator may then cooperatively develop a plan for moving forward. With agreement by Council and approval by the Church in Conference, the continuation plan can be implemented and the search process resumed.

Regarding decision making, we have learned of the desire for taking the time necessary to listen to understand each other before making a decision. **We recommend adopting a collaborative decision making model, along the lines of the attached document on decision-making.**

4) Adopt a Community Covenant<sup>8</sup>

**We recommend that Council adopt the proposed Community Covenant that clearly states how Binkley members are called to interact.** We encourage Council to incorporate the Community Covenant into the life and culture of Binkley: for example, posting the covenant in public spaces of the church, reading major points at the beginning of meetings, printing them in bulletins and electronic communications, and including them in social media. We also recommend that you encourage leaders of meetings to remind participants that we can help one another by giving a signal when our manner of engaging strays from how we are called to interact.

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<sup>6</sup> See Attachment titled "Summary of Cottage Meeting Conversations"

<sup>7</sup> See Attachments titled "Recommendation for Constitutional Changes" and "Recommendation for Collaborative Decision-Making"

<sup>8</sup> See Attachment titled "Binkley Community Covenant"



## **2. When you reflect back on the last year or two at Binkley, what would you most like others to know about your experience?**

While at least a dozen participants named positive things here, most observations focused on the challenges, confusion, and pain around the ministerial selection process. Answers to this question provided much more conversation than answers to any other.

### **Key themes (in order of frequency mentioned):**

- A sense of secrecy and some people being on the ‘outside’ - this theme showed up in nearly every group
- A sense of confusion: a lot of people were blindsided and didn’t know what happened
- Sadness, disappointment, pain - these feelings were mentioned the most frequently
- Chaos and no clear sense of control - sometimes it seemed like no one was in control
- A sense that this kind of conflict has happened at Binkley before: usually swept under the rug, not resolved
- Need for hearing women’s voices, and the voices of those speaking from “the margins” of power
- A sense of loss (and fear of loss) - especially losing members or a sense of safety and community

## **3. What would reconciliation look like at Binkley?**

Among the wide diversity of responses, most were oriented around listening, repentance and forgiveness, and rebuilding relationships.

### **Key themes (in order of frequency mentioned):**

- Listening to one another, especially those on another “side” of a conflict, and rebuilding relationships
  - Listening from the heart
- People reflecting and understanding how they may have hurt others; taking responsibility for that
- Building paths for the whole congregation to move towards forgiveness
- Supporting those who are hurt and meeting needs of one another
- Creating new congregational strategies/policies for conflict management and listening, to avoid such a crisis again; and educating the congregation on these new strategies
- For some, the church seems already to be on its way towards reconciliation

## **4. How can we as a congregation be more welcoming of multiple perspectives?**

### **Key themes:**

- Suggestions for welcoming multiple perspectives included:
  - learn to have civil conversations around different opinions; work to ensure that young people, young families feel fully incorporated into the church; look at the whole

## **5. What do you want Binkley to do for you? For the next five years, where do you think Binkley should focus its mission?**

### **Key themes (in order of frequency mentioned):**

- Continued and deeper focus on outreach and the local community
- Keep worship fresh by continuing to change and introduce new things
- Rebuild the sense of community in the church
- Develop a shared vision and improve decision-making processes

## Attachment 2: Recommendations for Constitutional Changes

Subgroup of the Reference Team: Nancy Cheek, Tom Fewel, Jenny Walters, Jim Wilde, and Don Willhoit. This sub-group met on July 16, 30 and August 13. Our task was two-fold:

1. To propose constitutional amendments regarding:
  - a. Composition of the Minister Search Committee
  - b. Procedure to follow when a vacancy comes about on the MSC
  - c. Reporting relationship between MSC and Council
2. To consider adopting a consensus decision-making model for congregational decisions (see attachment 3)

**Proposed Amendment to the Constitution;** changes are shown in italics/in red.

### ARTICLE II THE CHURCH STAFF Section D. Policies and Procedures

1. Selection and Tenure of the *Senior* Minister
  - a. When needed, the congregation shall elect a Minister Search Committee of *seven* members by the following procedure
    - i. A Minister Search Committee Nominating Committee will be formed consisting of the Chair, Vice Chair and immediate Past Chair of the Diaconate, the Moderator, Moderator-Elect, and immediate past Moderator of the Church Council, who shall be Chair, plus one member appointed by the Chair of the Diaconate.
    - ii. The Nominating Committee shall
      1. Solicit nominations for a *seven-member* Minister Search Committee from the congregation. All resident adult (18 years and above) members are eligible to serve on the Minister Search Committee
      2. Ensure the willingness of nominees to serve if elected.
      3. Recommend *seven* nominees, the majority of whom will come from those nominated by the congregation *in the order of number of nominations received*. The Nominating Committee will select the remaining number to assure skills such as knowledge of group dynamics and human resources and to reflect the diversity of the congregation.
      4. Present the slate of nominees at a Church in Conference for the congregation's approval.
      5. ~~The Nominating Committee shall seek to appoint an additional non-voting youth representative.~~
  - b. Church Council will establish a Charge to the Minister Search Committee
  - c. The Minister Search Committee will communicate its process and progress to the *Church Council and the Church in Conference at least quarterly*.
  - d. *The MSC will suspend the search process if any circumstance arises that causes a vacancy on the Committee. The MSC Chair will immediately report the situation to the Moderator with a strategic recommendation for continuing the minister search process. The MSC and a team designated by the Moderator may then cooperatively develop a plan for moving forward. With agreement by Council and approval by the Church in Conference, the continuation plan can be implemented, and the search process resumed.*
  - e. Upon recommendation of the Minister Search Committee and three-fourths vote of the Church in Conference, the Minister shall be called for an indefinite tenure.

## Attachment 3: Congregational Decision-making Proposal

Subgroup of the Reference Team – Nancy Cheek, Tonya Hamm, Jenny Walters

October 2018

### Background

As a part of their work, the Leadership sub-group of the Transition Team interviewed five former Binkley Church Diaconate and Council leaders. The Team also conducted information-gathering activities around several issues including congregational decision-making. Below is the summary of the part of the interviews addressing congregational decision-making.

1. The model of small group discussions, reporting out, and broader communication to the congregation has worked well at Binkley to encourage thoughtful and caring exchanges of views in the Transition Team process (see TT report, June 19, 2016) and Discernment Committee process (see DC report, January 14, 2007). This process should be adopted for use with key decisions (such as the budget) before congregational meetings for votes.
2. Critical elements in this process are transparency and the availability of information and discussion points beforehand. For detailed matters like the budget, it is useful to have both detailed and summarized materials available.
3. Our focus should be on a process of discernment and collaborative decision-making leading up to votes. We should maintain the Baptist principle of giving the whole congregation a voice on key decisions; but should put more emphasis on conversation and less on Robert's Rules. The process of decision-making must be made clear to everyone. Do not rush it.
4. Make good use of technology in disseminating information and possibly in voting.

Here is a selection of statements made at June 10, 2018 “Lunch and Conversation” in conversations about recent decision-making processes.

1. focus on consensus and understanding each other above efficiency
2. many voices must be represented for decision-making - all participants needed before moving forward; those who feel “not heard” must be included
3. resist a tendency towards “small group making decisions behind closed doors”; “be careful about getting small groups who run the show.” Small groups shouldn't have all the power
4. when things are tough, pause: “let's take some time to think about this and continue dialogue.”
5. “need to create mechanism to provide some balance in power relationships”
6. use 75-80% rule for how much agreement we need, but listen to the 20-25%
7. rules and covenants need to be mutually agreed upon

8. reconsider how we work together in meetings, making opportunities to hear and be heard
9. how do we make the business of the church be worship of the church? We would go about our work differently; council meetings can be a form of worship

Based on these ideas from the Transition Team's Leadership sub-group, and the Reference Team's table groups, we offer the following proposal for a collaborative decision-making process.

**Proposal:**

**Believing that we desire to be in community one with another, we recommend that Binkley Church establish a collaborative decision-making process, initially to be put to use with the Church Council and its standing committees and subgroups, and then used in the broader arena of all congregational decision-making.**

A decision-making chart:

Step 1 – Clarify issues to be decided and provide relevant information

Step 2 – Explore the issue and look for ideas – debate, discuss and consider alternate ideas and possible solutions to individual concerns

Step 3 – Look for a proposal that brings together the ideas discussed

Step 4 – Discuss this proposal and clarify. Check again to hear for remaining concerns and make necessary amendments

Step 5 – Check for final agreement and consensus – a vote may need to be taken here. The group/congregation will identify ahead of time the percentage desired for a decision to be made (75%, 80%, 85%?)

*Ideas for this collaborative flowchart taken from Seeds for Change [www.seedsforchange.org.uk](http://www.seedsforchange.org.uk)*

**By infusing this collaborative model into Council and committee work, church leaders will develop experience that can then be translated into larger congregational gatherings when key decisions need to be made. A leader with experience in this area can provide crucial modeling -- possibly someone(s) in the church or a short-term consultant.**

**We highly recommend that the Council form a working group to educate the Council and then the congregation in a collaborative model, and then enlist congregational willingness to participate in it.**

## **Attachment 4: Proposed Community Covenant for Binkley Church**

**We make this covenant to remind ourselves of the ties that bind our hearts in Christian love.**

We, the members and friends of Binkley Baptist Church, affirm these promises:

**We will speak and listen to each other kindly and with respect.**

We treat the other person as if he or she comes from a position of good intent.

We value speaking directly to the person we want to engage.

We listen deeply to understand and appreciate the perspectives and opinions of others.

We practice kindness and respect in all the ways we engage each other, electronically or in person.

We take time to let the other person finish before beginning our response – refrain from interrupting.

**We will welcome diversity of thought, belief, and culture in our community.**

We listen for the voices that are quieter, or slower to make their views heard.

We seek to understand what is important to each person.

We take seriously another person's point of view.

We seek to appreciate a variety of spiritual paths.

**We will practice admitting our own part, and making amends when conflicts arise.**

We take time to check our feelings and assumptions before we respond, when feeling hurt or misunderstood.

We practice getting another perspective on what we say and do from a friend who tells us the truth in love.

We ask for forgiveness, when we need to; offer forgiveness, as much as we are able, as long as it takes.

**We will work together to build the common good, and enjoy one another's fellowship.**

We invite each other to join us in projects we love.

We love and take care of each other.

We pray for one another in times of rejoicing and of troubles (I Thessalonians 5:16-18).

We take time to be together: to learn, to play, and to share meals together.

**We will ask for help in times of trouble.**

When tension in a relationship continues, we ask for an ally to help us speak truthfully and respectfully with another (Matthew 18: 15-20).

When we fall short of this covenant, we re-commit to these practices.

November 3, 2018