

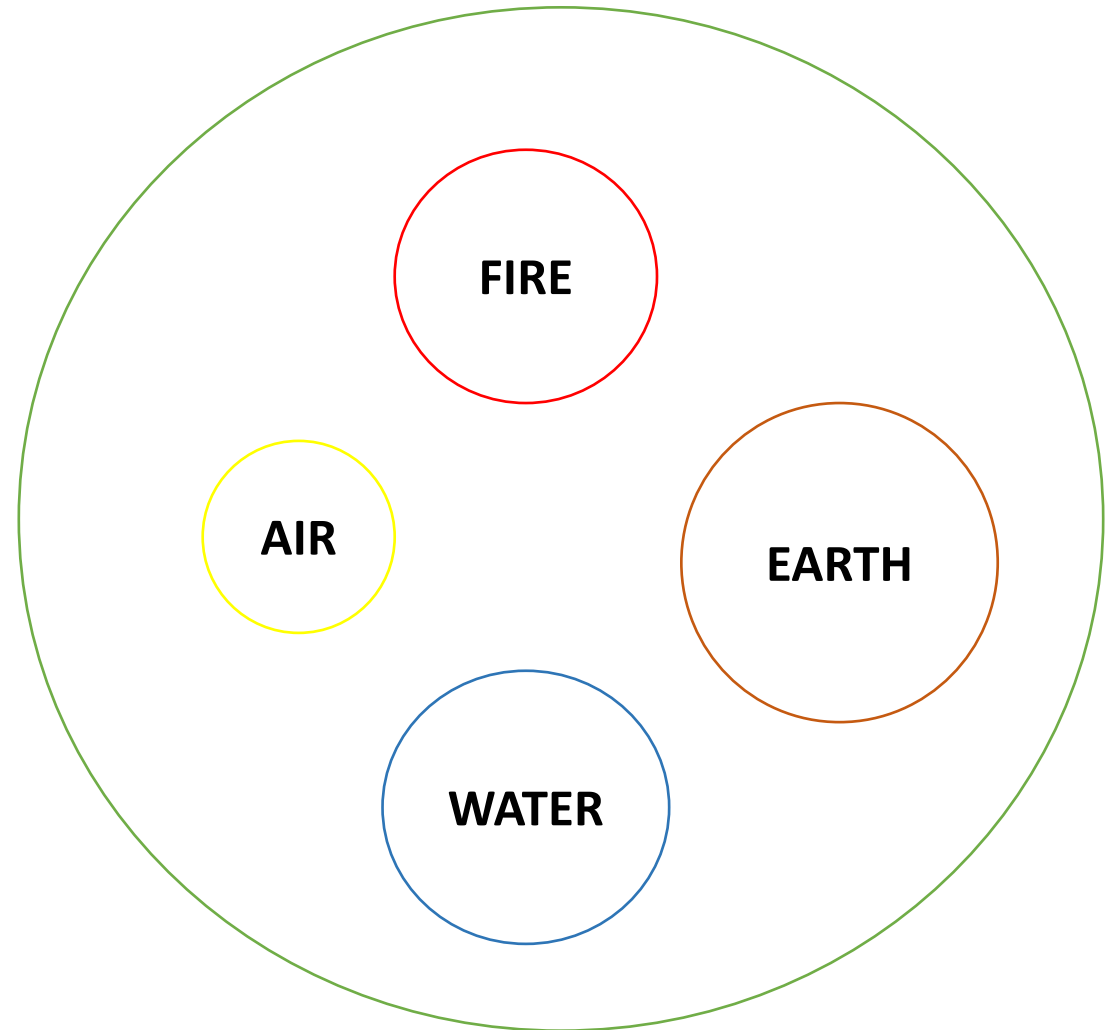
A Confederacy of Indigenous Anglican Lands in Circle with the Primal Elements

A way forward to an Indigenous Anglican Spiritual Ministry in the
Anglican Church of Canada, a journey together

The Primal Elements

The outer circle represents Mother Earth and the inner circles represent each of the four major elements necessary to sustain life. We need clean ***air*** to breathe, clean ***water*** to hydrate our bodies, ***fire*** to bring warmth to our bodies and food and lastly good ***earth*** to plant food and medicines for our journey. There are also four elements in our journey to self – determination: ***Spiritual formation, leadership formation, mission and ministry and sustainability***. Each one of these elements can be equated to four points of Indigenous self – determination.

For the purpose of this thought piece the term Indigenous means: the original people of the Land, wherever that may be. This includes First Nations, Metis and Inuit.



AIR – SPIRITUAL FORMATION

Mervin Wolfleg, when teaching on the proper way to smudge said that on the top of our head is the beginning of a swirl and this is where the Creator breathed life into us. When the Creator breathed life into us we were also given our instructions for living on Mother Earth; our responsibility and purpose for being.



SPIRITUAL FORMATION

This is the beginning of our spiritual formation. As we journey we meet many who mentor our purpose and we are given teachings to lead us on the good path and right relations. God also gives us gifts to use for the benefit of all. If we use these gifts with good purpose, we can become complete beings. Spiritual formation is about having a “Good Mind,” even when we are in conflict. Air represents “vigilance, trusting nature, clarity, independency and kind heartedness.”



It has been said by many that “I am not religious, but I am spiritual.” What does that mean? Can you be one without the other? There are many who say that a true spiritual being is one who is in balance with mind, body, emotion, and spirit. Once we are complete we reach the top and become generous with what we have and what we have been given.

Spiritual Formation

Historical trauma has broken many spirits and it is our responsibility to find ways to restore the spirituality of our people. Our young people are most vulnerable because many are growing up without knowing their traditional teachings and/or Christian values. They have not found their purpose for being and we see them fall into despair that may result in suicide or other destructive behaviors. We need to breathe air into our people who are hurting and nurture their spiritual formation.



Questions to ponder:

- What Is your purpose for living and for doing?
- How do we become complete beings in the eyes of the Creator?
- How was your spirit formed? Traditional values, Christian values, Wisdom Keepers, Wisdom givers?
- What is our history has shaped your spirituality? Authenticity is important or that which comes from the ancient ones and has not been corrupted by the colonizers. For example, the Circle – Church buildings were furnished with pews but for the most part our people sat in circles. We have been reclaiming the circle, making it our own and giving it life according to our traditions as Indigenous people.

Water – Leadership Formation

We cannot live without water, plants do not grow without water. Good water is hard to come by in many of our communities. Water is used to baptize, to bring us into a life with Jesus. Water is used for blessings of homes and people, water is a gift of the Creator. To grow leaders, we need living water: ‘On the last day of the festival, the great day, while Jesus was standing there, he cried out, “Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, and let the one who believes in me drink. As the scripture has said, ‘Out of the believer’s heart shall flow rivers of living water.’” (John 7:37-38) Water represents “understanding, mildness, mercy and forgiveness.”



Leadership Formation

The State of Indigenous Leadership

Generally, it takes longer for an Indigenous person to get through the ordination process

Generally, our clergy are not seminary trained, therefore, The Church may regard them as being second class

Most of our Indigenous clergy serving Indigenous communities are not paid

Many are ordained when they are elders or on the verge of becoming an elder

At one time there were many missionary priests in our Indigenous communities, but when the money dwindled, so did the missionaries. Some left some very sad legacies.

Due to lack of faith leadership our young people have missed out on Christian formation



Leadership . . .

Sacraments are not provided on a consistent basis, some places go years without the sacraments

We have different learning styles, need time to process and think about how we respond to questions, questions that may show if we are capable of learning. Also, thought needs to be given so that the answer does not offend anyone

The use of story - telling is essential, we learn the way Jesus taught the disciples

One does not put forth self for leadership, one is called by the community

High value on the traditions of the community. "Potlatch or Feast Way," you serve what you work for, Elder's eat first, speeches of thanksgiving, give-away, abundance, sharing of traditional songs and dances, spiritual leaders are asked to pray, no matter what denomination, as all are respected



Leadership . . .

Medicine Wheel Ministry (see graphic)

Traditional teachings can be seen and practiced

Circular, everyone does something in the circle that is important to maintain ministry in the community. Someone makes the fire, someone cleans the altar linens, someone leads the songs, someone provides food for the “tea” hour, people volunteer to read the scripture, someone does the preaching, someone takes care of the money and the bills for the building. etc.

The role of Elder’s is highly regarded and they are often called upon for advice and guidance.

Medicine Wheel Ministry



Leadership . . .

Sometimes leadership is hereditary, if your father was a chief, you become his successor; if your father was a priest or spiritual leader, you become the priest or spiritual leader

Communities are able to determine what kind of training the person needs to be an effective, healthy leader but many denominations impose what they think is needed

Leadership is a lifetime formation and at some point you are expected to “pass on your medicine,” or identify your successor. This is usually done in consultation with other leaders in the community.

In order to be an effective leader, you must be whole and healthy. Therefore, all training must include healing from historical trauma, residential schools and other trauma where Indigenous people experienced loss that has resulted in internalized oppression



Generally, these go against leadership development in non-Indigenous communities. There are contributing factors:

- The community is smaller**
- Very expensive to send someone out of the community to receive training and that training may not be culturally appropriate/relevant**
- The old missionary mentality is still present in many Indigenous communities, ministry is to the people, not with the people; little value on lay ministry (this needs to be changed in the Book of Common Prayer, all people need to see themselves as ministers, not just the person wearing the robes and stoles)**
- It is very difficult to remove a spiritual leader from a community to go outside of the community to receive seminary training. The loss, even though not long term of a spiritual leader may have a negative impact on the community.**

A Solution . . .

First, we need to remember that Jesus came from a small church and his ministry was concentrated. He didn't try to go everywhere, he trained his disciples to go forth: ***"¹⁸ And Jesus came and said to them, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.'*" (Matthew 28:18-20)**



A solution . . .

If we look at Jesus' formation, there are four points that stand out:

1) He learned and taught (¹⁴ **About the middle of the festival Jesus went up into the temple and began to teach.** ¹⁵ **The Jews were astonished at it, saying, "How does this man have such learning,^[a] when he has never been taught?"** ¹⁶ **Then Jesus answered them, "My teaching is not mine but his who sent me (John 7:14-16); Then he went about among the villages teaching.** ⁷ **He called the twelve and began to send them out two by two, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits (Mark 6:6b-7).**

2) He preached using story-telling (**One day, as he was teaching the people in the temple and telling the good news, the chief priests and the scribes came with the elders, Luke 20:1**)



Solution . . .

3) He healed *(When Jesus entered Peter's house, he saw his mother-in-law lying in bed with a fever; ¹⁵ he touched her hand, and the fever left her, and she got up and began to serve him. ¹⁶ That evening they brought to him many who were possessed with demons; and he cast out the spirits with a word, and cured all who were sick. ¹⁷ This was to fulfill what had been spoken through the prophet Isaiah, "He took our infirmities and bore our diseases."* (Matthew 8:14-17)

4) He prayed, went away to pray and rest. *(²³ And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, (Matthew 14:23)*



Currently, there are approximately 150 Indigenous clergy in the Anglican Church of Canada, most are non-paid. Many are elders and were called to serve the community they live in. Clearly, there needs to be more effort in church leadership development. There are two young men and one woman, that we know of who are in training for ordination. On a brighter note, Mishamikoweesh has ordained several deacons in the past few years.

A Proposal, “Circles of Faith: A Jesus Plan for Indigenous Leadership”

When Jesus gathered his disciples, it was most likely in a circle. The “last supper” depicted in da Vinci’s painting was at a long rectangular table. However, bible research shows that “In first century Israel, a feast would use a *triclinium* - a three sided table. People would have lain on cushions and leaned over rather than sat at the table. Actually no one can be absolutely sure what the Last Supper table looked like, but this is what we think based on our research.



Jesus plan . . .

Jesus spent much time in equipping the disciples to take the message out into the world. Each disciple, made disciples and we are disciples because of the time Jesus took to teach, preach, heal and pray. Jesus taught the Gospel before it was written. And for us, it is important to engage the Gospel on a daily basis. This is essential for a Jesus Plan to make disciples in our diverse communities. We have spent much time in trying to figure out what to call our spiritual leaders because we want to use terms and titles that respect and honor who we are as Indigenous people.



Fire has taken on significant meaning in our history as Indigenous Anglicans. The Sacred Fire is always present in our meetings, sometimes present by candles but nonetheless present. Therefore it makes sense to call our NIAB the "Fire Keeper." The fire at Sacred Circle has become a place for story - telling and sharing faith stories in both or Christian and Indigenous traditions. It is a place to learn, a place to sing, a place to pray and a place to laugh. One young person said that "he was astonished at how much he grew spiritually at the Sacred Fire." Also, fire is the symbol of the Holy Spirit!

The Fire Keeper with consultation of community leaders selects “Faith Keepers.” Faith Keepers are disciples and catechists who follow the Jesus plan, create a Rule of Life and come together to learn from the Fire Keeper. They form a community of faith and work with the community to develop a ministry plan. A Faith Keeper is always looking for potential leadership and is a teacher of the faith. A Faith Keeper could be a priest or deacon. In communities that have a priest, a Faith Keeper would work with the priest in a complimentary manner. Fire Keepers would receive training before taking on this ministry.

Faith Keepers . . .

Faith Keepers then recruit at least one “Fire Starter” In the community. Fire Starters motivate the community to take responsibility for the ministry in the community. For example, a Fire Starter might look for people to take care of the altar and then teaches them how to do that. A Fire Starter looks for the gifts that each person brings to the community. In our communities where the fire has to be started Saturday evening for Sunday worship, a Fire Starter takes on significant meaning. They warm the building for people to gather and make sure that there is wood or oil to burn. There could be several Fire Starters in a community, one to coordinate Sunday School, one to look after maintaining the building(s), one to train lay readers and preachers, etc.



Fire – Mission and Ministry

Attributes of *FIRE*, “vigorousness, zeal, enthusiasm, courage, creativity,” can be found in our call to mission and ministry or God’s purpose for us as Indigenous people. It is doing God’s work, being the living arms and heart of God on Mother Earth. The sacred fire sits in the center, this is where we get our energy – it can be a gentle burning or it can be a bonfire! We must also live into the Five Marks of Mission of the Anglican Communion. They are not contradictory to our traditional teachings but may need to be interpreted in an Indigenous context. The ministry we do in our communities is our fire, it is the Holy Spirit working in us to get God’s work done.





Questions to Ponder

What do you do in your community to live into the Marks of Mission?

What is the Mission of your Church?

What are some examples of ministry?

What ministry is needed in your community?

How will an Indigenous Province be good for your ministry?

Who funds your ministry?



Ministry is . . .

Helping elders

Suicide Prevention Programs

Teaching Sunday school

Cleaning the church

Feeding those in need

Taking care of the altar

Chalice bearer Acolyte

Singing in the Choir

Playing Gospel songs and hymns

*Cooking and baking for
potlucks Serving on the
Vestry or church committee*

*Visiting those in hospital
or the “shut – ins”*

*Serving as a deacon, priest or
bishop*

- What are some other ministries?
- The type of ministry we do varies from community to community; it can be different from rural to urban. But, one thing is for certain. We do it because we have passion to do it and we have the gifts and talents to do that ministry.
- The People are the Church!

EARTH - SUSTAINABILITY

Earth has been abused in many ways and as Indigenous people we have a responsibility to protect earth. Earth is our sustainer, provides food and other minerals needed for our existence. One of our core teachings is to take only what we need but there are many who take more than they need for their own power and greed. Bishop Mark has talked much about idolatry and the use of earth is an idol for many. When we take something from the earth, it is done with reverence and respect. Prayer is offered from the beginning of the harvesting through to the end. The harvest is shared with those who are not able to hunt, fish, and gather.

Earth represents “consistency, conscientiousness, perseverance, respectfulness and responsibility.”



EARTH . . .

There was a time when we were self – determined and we all know the history of why we are now fighting to regain our self – determination. As self – determined people we were also self – sustained. As we move to toward full self – determination we have to think about sustainability as it will impact our success. There are many who will say, “the Church owes us (for whatever reason)” and if so, we have to make the case and lay out our expectations. We also need to consider everything we need to have in place before becoming an Indigenous Province.



SUSTAINABILITY . . .

Here's a story. A long time ago there was an urban "Indian" Center. The government came along and said, we have money to weatherize homes, please apply. So, they did. They were successful in getting the grant but not in providing the program. The money could only be used for materials, not for labor or equipment. They didn't think it through and ended up giving the money back to the State. However in the next round of funding, they thought about labor and equipment and found sources of funding to provide labor and equipment. Then they were then able to weatherize forty homes with trained Indigenous labor. In other words, we need to think about the future. "In every deliberation, we must consider the impact on the seventh generation... even if it requires having skin as thick as the bark of a pine."



"The Seventh generation is coming. They're going to help save the world, the human heart and our spirituality."

- Chief Blue Star Eagle

***Oren Lyons, Chief of the Onondaga Nation,
writes: "We are looking ahead, as is one of the
first mandates given us as chiefs, to make sure
and to make every decision that we make
relate to the welfare and well-being of the
seventh generation to come. ... What about
the seventh generation? Where are you taking
them? What will they have?"***

Questions to ponder

Questions to ponder:

What are we given from the earth to sustain our being?

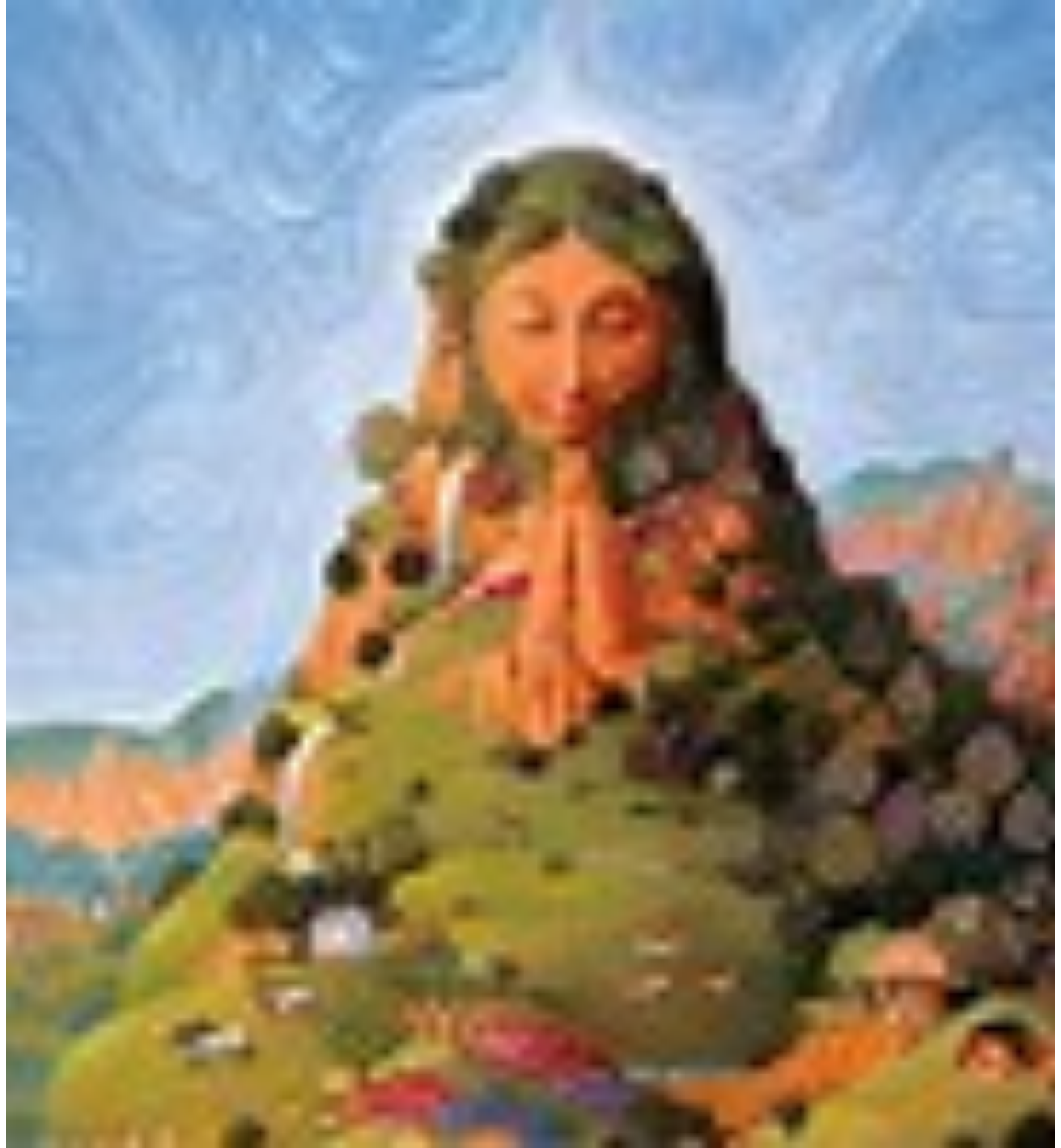
What has been taken away from us?

What do we need to get back?

What do you think about this statement: "We are not self-determined until we are fully sustainable?"

What covenant do we want the Anglican Church of Canada to make with us that would support sustainability?

Who else will support our sustainability? Who will ask?



How do we get there?

- ***Appoint a focus group to sort out details and ideas, Co – chairs are Larry Beardy and Donna Bomberry***
- ***Keep the Sanderson proposal as the overall “big” vision***
- ***Start small, like Jesus did, with three or four areas that want self – determination; plan and equip for mission and ministry***
- ***Consult with Harry Huskins for direction on incorporation***

- ***focus on ministry to the “poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind.” Luke 14:12-14***
- ***the office of the NIAB needs help....the NIAB should install an Archdeacon who is an Admin Assistant, (and/or Assistant Bishop), someone who can assist in pastoral and program work.***
- ***Office of the NIAB location will remain in the Office of General Synod.***

- ***Vince, Lydia and Mark will draft up the 'roles and duties' of the NIAB.***
- ***Vince, Donna and Ginny will develop a Regional Model that has both Indigenous Community and Urban ministry.***
- ***Donna to assist in the financial plan to expand the office of the NIAB, to include an Archdeacon, programs funding and staff.***
- ***develop Financial Management for capital and O&M, ministry plans for regions and for the national office. The church is based on First Nation Sovereignty and Treaty Rights.***

- ***Mark, ACIP Co - Chairs, Larry, Donna, Primate, General Secretary and Officers of General Synod to meet.***
- ***Mark to send out a 'pastoral letter' to all Indigenous parishes to inform them that the work of this Focus Group has begun.***
- ***Keep the Gospel at the center and pray!***

Nia:wenh and Skennen:kenh!

