
Exploring Amalgamation Faithfully

A Leader's Guide for Amalgamation Conversations



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A Leader's Workshop Agenda

© Purpose:

This is a **Leader's workshop agenda** designed to help governing bodies, amalgamation teams and congregations **explore amalgamation as a spiritual discernment process**—with a strong emphasis on **relationship-building, trust, transparency, and pastoral care**, rather than rushing to an outcome.

Components:

1. Facilitation with accompanying workbook
2. Expanded facilitation with Digging Deeper activities

This guide can be adapted as necessary.

Audience:

- Governing Body members (including ministry personnel) – along with Participant Workbook
- Joint exploratory group members (Amalgamation Teams) - along with Participant Workbook and using Digging Deeper Activities.
- Congregations - along with Participant Workbook and using Digging Deeper Activities.

What you will need

- Participant workbooks (plus a few extras)
 - Pens for participants
 - Flip chart pads or large chart paper
 - Easel(s) or wall space for posting chart paper
 - Thick markers or large markers (assorted colours)
 - Sticky notes (multiple colours)
 - Painter's tape (or removable adhesive) for posting notes and chart paper
 - Index cards or small paper slips (optional)
 - Timer or phone timer to help keep exercises on track
 - Community of Faith Profile materials, prepared in advance
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1. Opening & Framing the Conversation

For: Governing Body Members or Amalgamation Teams

⌚ Time: 20 minutes

✓ Needed: Participant workbooks; pens

🎯 Purpose

To frame amalgamation as **shared spiritual discernment**, not a technical or predetermined decision.

Leader Inputs

- Amalgamation is a change in the **covenantal relationship** between congregations and the Regional Council.
- It is **spiritual, relational, and structural** — not merely administrative.
- The quality of the process, how we walk together, matters as much as the outcome.
- A faithful process increases the likelihood that *any* decision (to amalgamate or not) will be sustainable and life-giving.

Ground Rules

- No decisions today
- No motions or minutes
- Speak from lived experience
- Listen for God and for one another

◆ Explain:

Aside from everything in this “getting to know each other process”, you should engage in activities together as a group or whole church such as worshipping together, sharing an outreach initiative, supporting each others’ programs, or engaging in joint walks, meals, etc.

Amalgamation takes time. (Please see “**Healthy Amalgamation Timeline**”)

Opening Prayer (Leader or Ministry Personnel)

*Holy and Loving God,
We gather at the beginning of this process with open hands and open hearts.
Quiet our anxiety and soften what is guarded in us.
Give us the courage to speak truthfully, the humility to listen deeply,
and the patience to let relationship grow at the pace of your Spirit.
Bless each congregation, each leader, and each story we bring.
As we explore what it might mean to walk more closely together,
keep us rooted in love, guided by wisdom, and faithful in our discernment -
without presuming the outcome.*

*Lead us in the way of Christ, who makes us one body with many members.
Amen.*

Workbook Exercise – Personal Reflection

► **Say:** Write your thoughts in your workbook, Section 1.

? **Prompt:** What do you hope will be honoured in this process, regardless of the outcome?

↗ **Follow-up:** After adequate time invite people to share.

2. Entering the Conversation Well

For: Governing Body Members or Amalgamation Teams

⌚ Time: 30 minutes

✓ Needed: Participant workbooks; pens

🎯 Purpose

To help leaders assess whether congregations are ready to engage this conversation faithfully.

Key Perspectives (Brief Teaching Input. Expand as wanted.)

- **From urgency to discernment**
- **From preservation to purpose**
- **From comparison to curiosity**
- **From efficiency to relationship**

► **Say:** Before we discuss structures or solutions, it helps to name a few perspective shifts that make this conversation healthier and more faithful. These invitations move us from

- reacting out of pressure to listening for God's guidance;
- from trying to save what has been to clarifying the purpose we are called to now;
- from comparing congregations (and keeping score) to practicing curiosity about one another's stories; and
- from seeking quick efficiency to investing in relationship, trust, and shared understanding.

Holding these perspectives does not predetermine the outcome—rather, it shapes the spirit in which any outcome can be discerned.

Workbook Exercise – Personal Reflection

► **Say:** Write your thoughts in your workbook, Section 2.

? Prompt: “Which of these perspective shifts feels most difficult right now - for you or your congregation? Why?”

↗ Follow-up: After adequate time invite people to share.

3. Preparing the Ground: Naming the “Why” and Setting the Tone

For: Governing Body Members or Amalgamation Teams

⌚ Time: 40 minutes

✓ Needed: Participant workbooks; pens

🎯 Purpose

To establish shared expectations, values, and emotional honesty early.

Leader Actions

- Clarify that this is a **discernment-first** process.
- Name that exploration does not obligate amalgamation.
- Introduce shared process values:

Transparency: Sharing information, assumptions, and constraints openly so trust can grow and rumours do not shape the process.

Patience: Allowing time for prayer, questions, grief, and relationship-building because lasting decisions are rarely rushed decisions.

Pastoral care: Attending to the human and spiritual impact on people—not just the tasks—so no one is left carrying this change alone.

Respect for different outcomes: Honouring that faithful discernment may lead to amalgamation or not, and we commit to treating one another with dignity either way.

Workbook Exercise #1- “Why We’re Here” Reflection

▶ Say: “Write your thoughts in your workbook, Section 3.”

? Prompt: “I am willing to explore amalgamation because...”

↗ Follow-up: After adequate time invite people to share.

Workbook Exercise #2 - Hopes & Hesitations Reflection

▶ Say: Write your thoughts in your workbook, Section 3.

? Prompt: As you enter this conversation, what feelings are present for you?

↗ Follow-up: After adequate time invite people to share.

4. Sharing Stories Before Solving Problems

For: Governing Body Members or Amalgamation Teams

⌚ Time: 75 minutes

✓ Needed: Participant workbooks; pens

🎯 Purpose

To build trust and understanding through story rather than analysis.

Leader Guidance

- Equal time for each congregation
- No interruptions or corrections
- Document themes so people feel heard

▶ **Say:** Before solving problems or discussing structures, we begin with story. Stories build relationship.

Stories help others understand:

- who we are
- where we have come from
- what matters most to us

Workbook Exercise #1 – Sharing Our Stories

▶ **Say:** We are going to give everyone a chance to tell the story of their church from their experience. Share about

- Who you are as a church?
- Where you have come from?
- What matters most to you?
- What are your hopes and fears?

▶ **Say:** As you listen to each story write your thoughts in your workbook, Section 4.

- Notice Moments of **joy**
- Experiences of **loss**
- Times of **change**
- Hopes and fears for the future

? Prompt: Tell me about your experience in your church?

↗ Follow-up: After adequate time invite people to share some of what they noticed in the stories.

Workbook Exercise #2 – “What We Need You to Know”

▶ **Say:** Write your thoughts in your workbook, Section 4.

? Prompt: What are 3–5 things other congregations need to understand about yours in order to work well together?

↗ **Follow-up:** After adequate time invite people to share.

5. Understanding Congregational Culture & Decision-Making

For: Governing Body Members or Amalgamation Teams

⌚ Time: 60 minutes

✓ Needed: Participant workbooks; pens; flip chart; large markers (variety of colours); painter's tape

🎯 Purpose

To surface differences before they become conflicts.

Key Question

How do we tend to make decisions when things are uncertain or difficult?

Workbook Exercise #1 - How We Make Decisions

▶ Say: Write your thoughts in your workbook, Section 5.

! Caution: The questions can touch on past conflicts, power dynamics, and experiences of not being heard. Invite people to write from their own experience, avoid naming individuals, and keep the focus on patterns (not blame).

? Prompt: Answer the following questions:

- How are decisions usually made?
- Who is involved?
- What builds trust?
- What creates tension?

↗ Follow-up: After adequate time invite people to share.

i Note: Remind participants they may “pass” on any question, and be prepared to pause for prayer or a brief break if emotions rise.

Workbook Exercise #2 - Worship & Community Life

▶ Say: Write your thoughts in your workbook, Section 5.

? Prompt: What feels especially important in your congregation's worship and community life?

↗ Follow-up: After adequate time invite people to share. Note themes on a flip chart.

6. Discerning Shared Purpose Before Structure

For: Governing Body Members or Amalgamation Teams

⌚ Time: 60 minutes

✓ Needed: Participant workbooks; pens; flip chart; large markers (variety of colours); painter's tape

🎯 Purpose

To explore whether a shared sense of calling is emerging.

Workbook Exercise #1

▶ **Say:** Write your thoughts in your workbook, Section 6.

? **Prompt:** God may be calling us together so that...

↗ **Follow-up:** After adequate time invite people to share. Note themes on a flip chart.

Workbook Exercise #2

▶ **Say:** Write your thoughts in your workbook, Section 6.

? **Prompt:** As you think about the future, which areas feel most essential?

↗ **Follow-up:** After adequate time invite people to share.

7. Exploring Structures, Property & Finances (When Ready)

For: Governing Body Members or Amalgamation Teams

🕒 Time: 60 minutes

✓ **Needed:** Participant workbooks; pens; flip chart; large markers (variety of colours); painter's tape; Community of Faith Profile materials, prepared in advance

🎯 Purpose

To ground discernment in honesty — without letting structures lead.

★ **Guiding Principle**

Structure follows relationship and purpose, not the other way around.

Workbook Exercise #1

▶ **Say:** Write your thoughts in your workbook, Section 7.

? **Prompt:** As you think about finances, property, and leadership:

- What excites you?
- What feels tender or difficult?
- What questions do you carry?

↗ **Follow-up:** After adequate time invite people to share. Note themes on a flip chart.

Workbook Exercise #2

▶ **Say:** Write your thoughts in your workbook, Section 7.

? **Prompt:** Imagine a newspaper headline five years from now: "Local church celebrates...". Finish the sentence.

↗ **Follow-up:** After adequate time invite people to share. Note themes on a flip chart.

8. Caring for People Through Transition

For: Governing Body Members or Amalgamation Teams

⌚ Time: 30 minutes

✓ Needed: Participant workbooks; pens; flip chart; large markers (variety of colours); painter's tape

🎯 Purpose

To name grief, fatigue, and pastoral responsibility.

★ Guiding Principle

Care for all the staff

Workbook Exercise

◆ Explain: Discernment processes involve:

- grief and gratitude
- fatigue and hope
- anxiety and anticipation

All of these deserve care.

▶ Say: Write your thoughts in your workbook, Section 8.

? Prompt: What support do you — or others in your congregation — need during times of transition?

↗ Follow-up: After adequate time invite people to share. Note themes on a flip chart.

Side Note: Staffing Decisions

Consideration must be given to all of the staff (Minister, Administrator, Musician, Caretaker, etc.)

Staffing scenarios

Scenario 1: End all current positions and run a new hiring process

When this scenario fits: When amalgamation creates a substantially new staffing model (new hours, new role design, changed accountabilities), or when there are multiple staff in the same role and the new community can support fewer positions. This approach treats the new community as a new employer structure and invites a transparent, consistent process for everyone.

1. **Name the pastoral frame and commitments:** honour people's contributions, communicate early, avoid rumours, and ensure dignity and confidentiality.
2. **Clarify the future staffing model first:** agree on required roles, hours/FTE, key responsibilities, reporting relationships, and budget capacity (without discussing names).
3. **Set a timeline and decision points:** include dates for posting roles, application deadline, interviews, offers, and transition/last day for current roles.
4. **Create a fair selection process:** consistent job postings, clear criteria, the same interview questions. The Ministry Personnel Committee can seek Pastoral Relations/Human Resources Commission support as needed.
5. **Ministry Personnel:** A search team will need to be appointed and trained in consultation with the Pastoral Relations/Human Resources Commission.
6. **Invite all current staff to apply (if eligible):** provide role descriptions, offer a Q&A meeting, and allow time for discernment and preparation.
7. **Communicate outcomes pastorally:** tell staff first (in person where possible), then communicate to the congregations with gratitude, clarity on start dates, and next steps.
8. **Plan transition and care:** handover plans, access to pastoral support, blessings/rituals of letting go, and clear boundaries about who does what during the transition.

i Leader note: Staffing changes have employment, policy, and human impacts. Ensure the Governing Bodies receive appropriate guidance from the Regional Pastoral Relations/Human Resources Minister, and keep the workshop focused on process and care rather than negotiating employment details in the room.

Staffing scenarios

Scenario 2: Retain staff when there is only one person in a particular role

When this scenario fits: When both congregations agree the future structure is largely continuous and there is *not* overlap in a role (e.g., one administrator total, one custodian total). This approach reduces disruption while still requiring clear agreements about accountability, hours, compensation, and supervision in the new structure.

1. **Confirm the staffing principle in writing:** "Where there is one person in a role, we intend to retain and transition them into the new structure, subject to role clarity and sustainability."
2. **Map the future job reality:** confirm duties, hours/FTE, work location(s), seasonality, required skills, and what will change (and what will not).
3. **Ministry Personnel:** Contact Regional Pastoral Relations/Human Resources Minister for process for new Record of Call/Appointment (ROCA), if applicable.
4. **Clarify supervision and evaluation:** who the staff member reports to, how priorities are set, and how feedback/concerns are handled in the new governance structure.
5. **Hold a transition conversation with the staff member:** share the proposed role, invite questions, name anxieties, and confirm supports (pastoral care, onboarding, training).
6. **Communicate to the congregations:** announce the intention to retain/transition staff with gratitude and clarity about the new role and start date.
7. **If there is overlap in any role:** do not "assume" retention. Name the overlap early and use a transparent discernment/hiring process (often Scenario 1) or an agreed transition plan (e.g., time-limited continuation, reduced hours, or redesigned roles) with appropriate guidance.

! Pastoral caution: Even when retaining staff, name that change is stressful. Attend to workload creep, clarify boundaries, and ensure any staff affected by overlapping roles are treated with dignity and supported through transition and closure.

9. Deciding, Covenanting, and Celebrating (or Releasing)

For: Governing Body Members or Amalgamation Teams

⌚ Time: 30 minutes (when appropriate)

✓ Needed: Participant workbooks; pens; flip chart; large markers (variety of colours); painter's tape

🎯 Purpose

To conclude faithfully, regardless of outcome.

Workbook Exercise

▶ Say: Write your thoughts in your workbook, Section 9.

? Prompt: In what ways do you feel the process was done faithfully?

↗ Follow-up: After adequate time invite people to share. Note themes on a flip chart. Give thanks.

10. Closing Reflection & Guiding Principle

For: Governing Body Members or Amalgamation Teams

⌚ Time: 15 minutes

✓ Needed: Participant workbooks; pens; flip chart; large markers (variety of colours); painter's tape

Closing Statement:

"A healthy amalgamation is one where people can later say: *We did this faithfully - even when it was hard.*"

Workbook Exercise – Closing Reflection

▶ Say: Write your thoughts in your workbook, Section 10.

? Prompt: What feels clearer now than when you began?

↗ Follow-up: After adequate time invite people to share. Note themes on a flip chart.

Next Steps

- **Confirm the discernment path:** (a) continue exploring amalgamation, (b) pause and gather more information, or (c) release one another with blessing.
- **Name the 3–5 themes** you heard most clearly (shared purpose, key hesitations, non-negotiables) and share them back to both congregations.
- **Form/confirm a joint exploratory team** (with clear mandate, membership, and decision-making authority) and set meeting dates for the next 8–12 weeks.
- **Create a communication plan** (who updates whom, how often, and through which channels) to reduce rumours and increase trust.
- **Identify information still needed** (finance, property, demographics, governance, staffing) and assign owners + due dates for gathering it.
- **Pilot 1–3 “low-stakes” shared ministries** (joint worship experiment, shared outreach event, combined study group) and set a date to reflect on what you learn.
- **If moving forward, draft a shared covenant** for the next phase and commit to reading it at the start of each joint meeting.
- **If considering amalgamation**, book a consultation with Regional Council Congregational Support Minister (CSM) and Pastoral Relations/Human Resources Minister to clarify required steps, documents, and timelines.
- **Develop a draft timeline** (with decision points) for congregational conversations, required approvals, and a target date for any formal vote.
- **Plan pastoral care:** paired listening visits, opportunities for grief/closure, and support for leaders/staff during the next phase.

Closing Prayer (Optional)

*God of new beginnings and faithful endings,
Give us patience, courage, and grace
As we listen, discern, and walk together.
Amen.*