

# Case Study: Fellowship Reformed Church

Growth at Both the Individual and  
Congregational Levels

2024

EffectX

## Introduction

This WayFinder case involves a medium-sized church that has integrated WayFinder tools into congregational life using a number of different avenues. Today leaders and congregants alike are experiencing conflict in more productive ways and coming to view conflict as a means of spiritual formation.

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## The Challenge

Located near Lake Michigan's shore in Holland, Michigan, Fellowship Reformed Church (FRC) is led by three co-pastors who share equal authority in overseeing the congregation. On any given Sunday morning, about 650 people gather for worship.

Tierra Marshall, Pastor of Formation and Strategic Leadership, heard about WayFinder and thought it sounded both "amazing and practical." Rather than being topic driven, it seemed like a way to "skill up around conflict" which could prove useful for FRC as they reframed some of their values.

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## The Change Process

Twenty people from FRC initially participated in the two-day WayFinder training including the three pastors, human resource leaders, elders, and deacons. They brought WayFinder practices to the additional leaders in the form of a two-hour training for their consistory – their board of pastors, elders and deacons.

All three pastors now share responsibility for WayFinder implementation, and their approach has been both creative and practical. In terms of teaching, they have completed a sermon series on the "5 Gs" – Go Toward, Go Godward, Get Curious, Go Deep, and Get Right – and have offered two three-hour WayFinder workshops for congregants.

Leaders also utilize WayFinder principles as they gather congregational feedback and plan for the future. For example, they:

- Have redesigned the staff performance evaluation to include the "5 Gs" as they explore the extent to which staff members have a posture bent on unifying.
- Conduct an annual congregational survey and include self-reflection questions that ask members what God is doing in them, such as "What is your primary response to conflict?" Based on one's answers, leaders may suggest WayFinder training. Survey responses are also used for annual strategic planning and budgeting based on where leaders see God at work within the congregation.

***"Go Toward.' That's particularly rich. It's a step people don't expect. The idea that you could go toward a person even if you don't agree with them on something."***

-Pastor Tierra Marshall



- Preemptively” contact congregants whose attendance has declined to have a “one-on-one Mining Meeting,” a conversation designed to surface concerns before the issues become significant sources of conflict or even a reason for departure.

## The Impact

The results of integrating WayFinder tools into congregational life are encouraging. Pastor Tierra shared, “As a shared leadership team, as we get into squabbles among the three of us, what are the fears and the hopes and the loves that are under the surface? That one [Get Curious] has resonated with our team.”

***“[Since the training, there’s been] an increase in active listening and courage to raise difficult topics at leadership meetings.”***

-Fellowship Reformed Church Congregant

Change is happening at the individual level as well. FRC congregants who participated in WayFinder training initially reported being less likely than participants from other organizations to approach conflict as an opportunity for spiritual formation (51% of FRC training participants vs. 60% of all participants viewed conflict this way). But that is changing.

Pastor Tierra shared a powerful story that resulted from self-reflection. “When we invited people for the 2-day WayFinder training, one guy said, ‘I’m traveling that weekend.’ But he did the survey and realized his primary response to conflict is rage. He told me, ‘I didn’t realize that until this survey. Not fear, not avoidance, it’s active anger. I want to do something with that so invite me again.’”

A female leader described WayFinder’s impact on her professional work. “I’m a teacher and I had a student that said something to purposely start a conflict. Rather than take it personally or disagree, I got curious and kept asking her to tell me more and more and more. She was taken off guard and felt heard.”

Finally, another congregant shared, “The 5 Gs are so useful in any situation. Even if not a faith environment, I can still ‘Go Godward’ in my heart. The 5 Gs are easy to remember and provide a framework to think through quickly in the moment and get me unstuck in where to go in the conversation.”

***“[WayFinder offers] a common language for how to lean into conversations when there are different points of view.”***

-Fellowship Reformed Church Congregant

**27%**  **Increased confidence in leading a community toward healthy conflict**

After the training, FRC participants rated their confidence level in dealing with conflict 27 percentage points higher than before the training. FRC leaders have converted that confidence to action through thoughtful ways of weaving WayFinder principles into sermons, surveys, and strategic planning. Congregants are also reporting improved attitudes and behaviors related to conflict. Authentic conversations around difficult topics, careful listening, and valuable self-reflection are just some of the fruit Fellowship Reformed Church is already enjoying as they continue to integrate WayFinder principles into their community.