

## 2011-09-13 Description of the Presbytery Detox Project Team

### Title Slide With Team Member Names

Dear Friends of Presbytery,

I've been asked by the bluntly-named Detox Project Team to describe why the team has come together and what it hopes to facilitate for the health of our Presbytery. This project team was formed as a response to a growing sense among many of us that the rancorous spirit and contentious environment within our Presbytery is not sustainable and, frankly, **toxic**. With each passing meeting, we seem to find ourselves

- Talking past one another;
- Engaging in debate with deep suspicion of one another's motives and agendas; and
- Leaving the meeting feeling exhausted, angry, disrespected and discouraged.

### Frog in the Pot Slide

I must be candid and say that I feel like a frog freshly tossed into this pot, wondering "Does anyone else realize we're boiling up?" But as the team has met and begun to unpack the emotional content of our Presbytery, the answer is, "Yes, a lot of us are feeling this way." It was a sobering moment for me when one member asked the others, *Do you feel that you belong in this Presbytery?* And no one in the room did. This affects all of us, regardless of age, gender, background, theology or length of service here.

Although the Detox Team is just beginning to find its way forward, tonight we want to express some core convictions, pose some key questions, and suggest a loose framework how the Team may serve the presbytery.

Cal began the last Team meeting with a meditation from Ephesians 4:1-3, heard afresh through *The Message*:

### Scripture Slide part 1

In light of all this, here's what I want you to do. . . .I want you to get out there and walk—better yet, run!—on the road God called you to travel. I don't want any of you sitting around on your hands. I don't want anyone strolling off, down some path that goes nowhere.

### Scripture Slide part 2

And mark that you do this with humility and discipline—not in fits and starts, but steadily, pouring yourselves out for each other in acts of love, alert at noticing differences and quick at mending fences.

## Convictions Slide

With this in mind, the Detox Team members have some shared convictions:

- No single issue defines the nature of our discord, therefore no single solution will solve it.
- For too long we've been our business in terms of *regulation*—seeking to prevent the behavior of others we call wrong. It's time to rediscover what it means to conduct our work on the basis of *relationship*—setting one another free to pursue the mission God has called us to accomplish.
- We must support one another in being faithful to God's call. This includes determining how we shall *stay connected*, and how we must acknowledge the need for *different covenants*. Speaking the truth in love will be required.
- As things are now, no attempt at policy work will lead to a good or constructive end. The subtexts of our debates need brought to the top. Until then, we will continue to be hurt people who hurt each other.

## Key Questions Slide

Some questions we are asking:

- What is the next right thing for SF Presbytery to do unto detox?
- Who are the conversation partners we need to do this work well?
- What kind of experiments can the Detox Team try that can then serve as a model that includes the rest of us?

These questions make it clear that the Detox Team does not live under the illusion that we can “fix the problem” on our own. Instead, the team wants to create a context in which each of us can own our contribution to the breakdown, and then work as a whole toward reconciliation and ultimately, *renewal*.

The Detox team believes that God is up to something, such that we in the San Francisco Presbytery may—for the first time in a *long* time—reflect an authentic witness of Christian unity in the Bay Area that declares: “We are one in Christ. I stand for my Presbyterian brothers and sisters, even if I do not stand for everything they stand for. We have seen the differences, we are mending fences. For the sake of Jesus and his glory, we will pour ourselves out in love for each other.”

## How is God calling you to be part of Detox? Slide

Thanks for praying for us, and for prayerfully considering if you would like to be a part of this experiment.