Faith in Place Strategic Plan (2023 – 2027)

Adopted By Board of Directors 2.15.2023

Introduction

The 2017 to 2022 Strategic Plan of Faith in Place didn’t anticipate a global pandemic, but it’s focus on prioritizing relationships with Green Teams proved wise. This new Strategic Plan (2023-2027) builds upon the focus of serving our Green Teams to advance our vision and mission. As the climate crisis gets worse, Faith in Place will continue to build mutual relationships that are rooted in the community through the implementation of Faith in Place’s Green Team Coaching Model. A vibrant and healthy network of Green Teams with strong relationships with Faith in Place Coaches and with each other is foundational to our vision and mission. Strong relationships with Green Teams allow us to build climate resilience and adaptation while advancing climate mitigation measures. Robust connections with Green Teams allow us to address environmental racism and advance environmental justice. Strengthening our network in these ways creates healthier communities. Our relationship with Green Teams means we meet their environmental and racial justice needs through our programming that builds on the assets of their communities in doing so. This strategic plan continues to prioritize network empowerment by focusing on deepening Faith in Place’s relationships with Green Teams not only at Houses of Worship but also further in the communities of Illinois, Indiana, and Wisconsin.

The definition to be considered an active Green Team of Faith in Place:

- Meeting monthly to advance programming and advocacy efforts.
- In monthly communication and in relationship with assigned Green Team coach.
- Participating in broader Faith in Place network webinars and events.
- Sharing the conviction that the ecological crisis is a spiritual crisis of disconnection and that our diverse spiritualities bring wisdom of reconnection together for healing our relationship with ourselves, each other, and Earth.
- Being in Illinois, Indiana, or Wisconsin.¹

¹ If an individual, community, or Green Team are located outside IL, IN, or WI, then they are referred to a partner organization such as a local Interfaith Power & Light Affiliate. All are welcome and invited to participate in our online educational events and meetings, regardless of geographic location.
Review of Process

At the writing of this Strategic Plan, Faith in Place has numerous and routine structures in place to keep feedback and dialogue active throughout the entire Faith in Place network. These ongoing, active, and lively conversations have shaped the strategic direction in this document.

External – our focus is serving our audience!
- Monthly Online Meetings of Green Teams, Partners, and Interested Individuals – these meetings start with an inspirational speaker and then breakout into regional groups for networking and planning to implement programing and advocacy.
- Annual Green Team Summit where folks gather around an inspirational theme to hear speakers, share ideas, and increase the health of the network.
- Regularly scheduled webinars and in-person events to serve Green Teams, Youth, and interested folks to accomplish program and advocacy goals.
- Green Team Coaching – outreach staff who coach Green Teams throughout our diverse regions reach out to their assigned Green Teams twice a month, prioritizing two-way communication with those Green Teams so that information and resources are shared in a mutual way.
- Faith in Place staff currently teach two seminary courses where graduate students learn the Faith in Place model and give feedback and reactions. These conversations keep Faith in Place on the cutting edge of academic thought and in relationship with future faith leaders.

Internal – we must model internally the community we what we want to grow externally.
- Monthly Case Studies with Staff – staff are invited to bring experiences from working together and in community that are challenging. Staff present the situation and then ask questions of colleagues to explore various ways to address or alternatively engage in the case.
- Quarterly half day staff meetings – agendas prioritize broader issues facing the organization.
- Quarterly staff retreats – outreach staff from each region take turns hosting the entire staff to do teambuilding that also showcases the local environmental beauty, assets, challenges, and injustices.
- Weekly staff meetings where each staff member reports on a celebration, challenge, and next steps in the way forward for their weekly work.
- Quarterly Board meetings where attention is given to not only governance matters but also relationship building and at least one strategic level conversation per Board meeting.
- One Quarterly Board meeting is extended time for Board and Staff members to get together to talk through challenges and opportunities facing the organization.
- Regular utilization of consultants to improve necessary processes, thinking, and strategy. Examples from last Strategic Plan include consultants that:
  - Lead regular Antiracism and JEDI (Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion) focused workshops for staff and board members.
  - Captured best practices of Green Team Coaching in an orientation document for outreach staff that incorporated both staff and Green Team members’ feedback.
Guided staff on how to improve internal technology to streamline efficiencies across the organization.

Provided market feasibility studies by gathering community input for expanding into additional states, widening our audience, and exploring mission-related social enterprise opportunities.

Lead monthly sharing circles where the facilitator brings prompting questions to allow for staff to share more authentically with one another in this work.

- Project teams are formed to provide leadership on specific projects as needed.
- Weekly meeting of Staff Leadership Team where Directors bring their perspectives to pressing issues and decisions such that leadership is shared throughout the organization.
- Accountability through 360 annual reviews.
- Board Committees: each Board member serves on at least one committee along with staff and other volunteers to help advance the mission of the organization through specific committees. Examples include Communications, Fundraising, Programs, Policy, and more.
- Advisory Boards: these are set up as needed to make sure community voice is given to important projects. Examples include setting up Hoosier and Wisconsin Advisory Board to make sure Faith in Place is truly a tri-state organization and an Advisory Board that gives community voice to make sure the organizations Policy Platform reflects the priorities of the communities we serve.

Vision - the world we want to see.

*People of diverse faiths and spiritualities are leading the environmental movement to create healthy, just, and sustainable communities for all.*

Mission – how we are creating that world.

*We empower people of diverse faiths and spiritualities to be leaders in advancing environmental and racial justice by providing resources to educate, connect, and advocate for healthier communities.*

Organizing Methodology – the wisdom we bring.

Our 20 plus years of doing this work has taught us that the key to achieving our vision is a well-coached Green Team. Green Teams are groups of three or more people from a spiritual community or area who join to create healthier communities by advancing environmental and racial justice. Green Teams work within the context of their community’s unique culture, history, and spiritual practices.

Green Teams are trusted messengers, mobilizing members of their broader community for environmental action. Without effective coaching, a Green Team can often struggle to enact the change desired. The loss of a strong leader, the completion of an energizing or exhausting project, or tensions over divergent interests can derail a team operating on good intentions alone. Effective outside coaching is critical to maintaining momentum.
Faith in Place’s Green Team Coaches bring decades of experience working with people of diverse spiritualities across various regions, races, and religions. We provide coaching adapted to each team’s unique circumstances. A well-functioning Green Team works with their designated Green Team Coach – a trained Faith in Place staff person - to implement our programs in our five program areas: Climate Change & Energy, Sustainable Food & Land Use, Water Preservation, Advocacy, and Youth Empowerment.

**Theory of Change** - what we believe.

When people of diverse faith and spiritualities engage with a well-coached Green Team, they are empowered to take action to address environmental and racial injustices within their communities. These actions result in healthier, more equitable, and resilient communities.

**Guiding Principles** – what we orient towards.

**Get in Where you Fit In:** Faith in Place meets people where they are through mutual partnership. We learn what they are passionate about and provide support and resources to take the next measurable step towards environmental, climate, and racial justice. We have a wide array of program offerings across 5 different areas for Partners and Green Teams to get engaged where their passion and energy resides. We call this: “Get in Where you Fit In!”

**The Messenger Matters:** The Green Team Model is based on this principle – the local messenger is trusted to meet people where they are and empower them with resources and support. This principle is the reason why Faith in Place hires from within the communities we serve. This principle is also the reason why Faith in Place seeks to start Green Teams made up of local volunteers in the places we implement our mission.

**Celebrate!** We seek to create a shared culture both within our team and with our Green Teams that shares both successes and mistakes and celebrates how each moves us forward. Celebrating in this way helps us confront the broader white supremacy culture of perfectionism. One way we do this is by honoring and extolling the work of our Green Teams at our Annual Green Team Summit. Green Teams from across the world gather to share what they are learning and how they are growing in an atmosphere characterized by shared joy and discovery.

**JEDI (Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion):** Striving for justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion is at the core of all that we do. We believe the better we embody this principle internally, the more we increase our ability to empower a shared sense of belonging together in community. We are committed to being the transformation we seek. We recognize that environmental justice communities, frequently communities of color, bear a disproportionate burden caused by environmental degradation and a changing climate. Our motivating belief is that society has an obligation to right past wrongs and create just and healthy communities. To this end, we listen, respect, and prioritize the involvement of these communities as full participants in our program and public policy decision-making.

**Everything is Connected:** The ecological crisis is a spiritual crisis. Our individual and collective work is healing and restoring communities to mutual relationship with one another and all the Earth. We take responsibility for the ways our lives intersect with the lives of all beings. Our
spiritual traditions offer wisdom and insight to understand the ways that everything is connected and how each of us plays our unique part in the broader whole.

Mutual and Empowering Relationships are Our Priority: We strive for mutuality. We resist inferiority and superiority in individual and systemic relationships. We prioritize the voices of those marginalized, seeking to see and hear one another clearly and empowering each other in our shared work for equity and justice.

Strategic Issues (2023-2027) Please see this link for a tracker of these issues, related goals, and activity and reporting.

A. Outreach and Communications
B. Green Teams
C. Programs
D. Fundraising
E. Operations
F. Board

A. Outreach and Communications – bringing people and organizations into Faith in Place

Goal 1: Faith in Place is well known as the leader in bringing together a powerful and active network of diverse voices for environmental and racial justice.

1a. Activity and Reporting: Annual Outreach Plan Tracks Location & Numbers of:
   - Participants.
   - Events.
   - Green Teams.

1b. Activity and Reporting: Annual Communications Plan with accepted industry benchmarks adopted and annual progress reported, and future benchmarks shared annually with Board.

1c. Activity and Reporting: After or during program updates, re-visiting Faith in Place’s Vision and Mission statements to make sure they are reflecting the work done.

Goal 2: Each IL, IN, WI region has a robust Green Team network supported by Faith in Place Staff.

Activity and Reporting: Annual Green Team Plan tracks Green Team data for these regions:

- IL
  - Northern
  - Chicago
  - North & West Suburbs
  - Central
Goal 3: Each region's staff to Green Teams coached ratio is maintained at 25-35 Green Teams per full-time staff member.

3a. Activity and Reporting: Ratio is regularly monitored by staff and reported on for each region on an annual basis to the Board.

Goal 4: Green Teams are super proud that they are an Active Green Team with Faith in Place, and they have a deep relationship with their assigned Green Team Coach.

4a. Activity and Reporting: Green Team engagement and relationship metrics are updated and maintained regularly by staff and reported on annually to the Board.

Goal 5: Community Green Teams are added to Faith in Place that are spiritually rooted but not located at a House of Worship.

5a. Activity and Reporting: Research and pilot coaching a small number of Community Green Teams and report findings to Board.

B. Programs: our Green Teams are actively implementing our programs.

Goal 1: Faith in Place programs are relevant and updated to reflect the latest science of climate change, environmental knowledge.

Goal 2: Faith in Place programs incorporate the principles of intersectional environmentalism and address environmental racism.

Goal 3: Faith in Place has robust programs available for each region.

Goal 4: Faith in Place programing takes advantage of our coaching and internal organizational change process and utilizes outside experts for technical implementation.

Goal 5: Program staff are actively getting professional development to increase their knowledge in program areas and expertise.

Goal 6: Faith in Place programs embody the principles of justice, diversity, and inclusion (JEDI).
**Activity and Reporting:** Staff lead a community-informed process and resulting report to Board of Directors:

- Perform Program Audit.
- Update overall program areas.
- Establish program plans for each program area.
- Launch in communication materials new program areas and corresponding program activities.
- Regularly monitor program impact and adjust programs given Green Team feedback and updates in science data and best practices.

C. **Fundraising**

**Goal 1:** All regions (section A) have funding for supporting one full-time outreach staff member to coach 25-35 Green Teams.

**Goal 2:** Funding is secured to provide necessary operations, communications, development, and program staff to support the Green Team Coaches in each region.

**Goal 3:** A healthy ratio of Outreach Staff and administrative/support staff is monitored and maintained.

**Activity and Reporting:** Staff map out:

- Estimated cost of full regional activities as outlined in Section A.
- Hire necessary Development staff to raise required money.
- A healthy ratio is considered in annual budgeting and reported out to staff leadership and Board of Directors.

D. **Operations**

**Goal 1:** We attract, retain, and support great environmentalists by embodying the belonging found by prioritizing Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI).

**Activity and reporting:** Operations staff drive ongoing improvement in the following areas:

- Ongoing auditing and updating handbook.
- Regular monitoring of organizational policies and employee benefits and updating as needed.
- Ongoing updating of accounting, procurement, and other operational procedures.
- Monitor staffing, conduct research, and provide recommendation to Board of Directors on pros and cons of an internal HR specialist.
- Increasing onboarding and hiring processes.
- Professional Development and Employee satisfaction.
- Management and supervision.
- Maintaining and growing a robust culture that fosters relationships and professional development with staff.
**Activity and Reporting:** Operations staff lead a community and best-practices informed process:
- Research and report out to Board on pros and cons of moving towards a shared Executive Director leadership model.
- Implement, if any, Board approved shared Executive Director leadership model.
- Pilot a four-day work week, evaluate, and report-out to Board pros and cons of adopting long-term.

**E. Board**

**Goal 1:** Faith in Place Board is engaged in bringing their diverse skillsets to governing the organization.

**Goal 2:** Of the 16-20 Board seats, 3-5 are Board members from Indiana.

**Goal 3:** Of the 16-20 Board seats, 3-5 are Board members from Wisconsin.

**Goal 4:** More than 50% of Board of Directors are people of color.

**Goal 5:** 100% of Board members make a meaningful donation annually.

**Goal 6:** Board members have annual opportunity to participate in training and professional development.

**Goal 7:** Recruit more youth to the Board of Directors.

**Activity and Reporting:** Annual data is gathered from Board of Directors:
- Annual demographics survey results.
- Committee commitments and ways each Board member would like to engage further.
- Monitoring of what is working and what is not and adjusting as needed.

**Conclusion**

Faith in Place's Strategic Plan for 2023-2027 embodies a relationship-grounded and adaptable approach to addressing the pressing challenges of environmental and racial justice. Grounded in the principles of justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion, this plan not only builds upon the organization's past successes but also navigates the evolving landscape with resilience and adaptability. By prioritizing strong relationships with Green Teams, fostering community engagement, and incorporating the latest science and principles of intersectional environmentalism, Faith in Place aims to empower diverse voices of faith in leading the environmental movement. The comprehensive goals and strategies outlined in this plan reflect a commitment to transparency, accountability, and continuous improvement, ensuring that the organization remains at the forefront of positive change in the coming years. Through the implementation of this strategic plan, Faith in Place aspires to create healthier, just, and sustainable communities, where the interconnectedness of environmental and social justice is embraced and celebrated.