

BOARD DISCERNMENT

adapted from Pursuing God's Will Together by Ruth Haley Barton

GATHERING

Gathering as a team to be personally transformed through this collective discernment process. Collectively affirm the church's mission, vision and values. Take the time to define the question that is being brought forward. If the question has previously been decided, take the time to make sure that everyone knows what is being asked at not asked.

- Group Values and Commitments
- Defining the Question
- Personal Transformation

PREPARING THE HEART

One of the differences between a spiritual discernment process and one that might happen in a corporate or different setting is the high responsibility of seeking God's direction. This includes praying for indifference on our part and even testing our desire to be indifferent to anything other than God's leading including praying for wisdom and trust.

- Prayer of Indifference
- Test for Indifference
- Prayer for Wisdom
- Prayer for Trust

GATHERING INFORMATION

It may be valuable to gather and provide the pertinent facts and information before assembling together and to brainstorm others whose voice from the community may provide insight. It is valuable to discern how this decision connects with the direction and tradition of the church, the Life of Christ, the Fruit of the Spirit and the love and unity of the community. One of the powerful insights of this process is naming the consolations and desolations that people are experiencing through the process.

- Pertinent Facts & Information
- Voices from the Community
- Direction & Calling
- Life of Christ
- Fruit of the Spirit
- Consolation & Desolation
- Tradition
- Love & Unity

DISCERNING COLLECTIVELY

Moving from gathering information to collective discernment includes listening intently and deliberately. Often by this part of the process selecting the options, weighing them and agreeing together flows easier because of the preparation work done earlier. Often the process will require some kind of formal decision and follow-up.

- Listening in Silence
- Selecting an Option
- Weighing the Options
- Agree Together
- Seek Inner Confirmation in Peace
- Make a Formal Decision

Gathering

Personal Transformation	-	Devotional or Listening to Scripture or Time of Silence
Group Values & Commitments	-	Re-affirm the church's mission, vision or values statements by going around the room having each person read one statement
Defining the Question	-	What is it that is being asked? (Plan for this to take some time)

Preparing Hearts to Hear from God

Prayer of Indifference	-	Pray that God will set aside preconceived agendas and anything blocking us from God's leading. "God may I be indifferent to anything but your will."
Test for Indifference	-	"What needs to die in me in for God's will to come forth in my life?"
Prayer for Wisdom	-	Have one person pray for wisdom for the group
Prayer for Trust	-	Have someone pray for trust and take time for people to pray for quiet trust that God's Spirit will lead

Gathering Information

Pertinent Facts & Information	-	What can we learn using human wisdom: history, financial reports, research and statics, etc.
Voices from the Community	-	Seek the opinions of those affected by the decision, those with particular expertise or experience
Direction & Calling	-	Does the decision line up with our values and goals?
Scripture	-	Is God bringing to mind Scripture that has direct bearing on what we are discussing? Do the larger themes of Scripture provide a context for this decision?
The Life of Christ	-	Does this decision reflect the mind of Christ as described in Phil. 2?
Fruit of the Spirit	-	Would the choice nurture the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-26) in the church community?
Consolation & Desolation	-	Does a decision carry either a sense of life and peace or distress and confusion with it? What is the source of these feelings?
Tradition	-	Has the church developed spiritual or missional authority in a certain area that would provide a foundation for the decision?
Love & Unity	-	Since our ability to love one another and to join in unity is Jesus' desire for us and glorifies him, which alternative fosters the greatest unity among us?

Discerning Collectively

Listening in Silence	-	After all information has been gathered and discussed, provide time for the Spirit to speak into the decision
Selecting an option consistent with what God is doing		
Weighing the Options	-	Consider the options using the criteria above, especially consolation & desolation
Agree Together	-	A decision does not have to be unanimous but it should allow for unity to continue
Seek Inner Confirmation in Peace	-	Take the time to "walk around" with each side of the decision before committing to a final answer
Make a Formal Decision	-	Formally affirm decision and record in minutes Take more time to discern Appoint a subgroup for more work Name areas of agreement Identify issues to deal with later Vote by majority vote Drop the matter