

# Listen! Tuning In to the Voice of God

## An Invitation to a Year-Long, Congregational Practice of Discernment

*“We can never achieve wholeness simply by ourselves but only together with others.”  
~Suzanne Farnham et al.*

*“Through questioning, challenging, or simply being present in prayer, the other blows the dust from our eyes so that we might come to recognize the leading of God’s Spirit within us.” ~Rose Mary Dougherty*

*“Discernment often depends on gifts that we do not have. We need one another’s insights, resources, and prayer.” ~Jeannette Bakke*

### **For Your Reflection:**

Focus on the “kingdom pearl” buried within your own soul. How might this precious gift be harvested in order to discover or recover the Spirit-knowledge or God-connection deep within?

Who might you trust enough to gather around you, to prayerfully “blow the dust” away, and uncover this “kingdom pearl” within you?

### **Consider. . .**

- gathering 2-4 trusted friends, independently or together, to discern with you. A simple process for this is outlined below.
- seeking out a Spiritual Director to be a companion on your spiritual journey. They are particularly helpful around discernment. Go to [www.sdiworld.org](http://www.sdiworld.org) for much more information, including help with finding one.
- asking Pastor Jenny to help you convene a Clearness Committee to help you discern a decision, or direction. This comes from the Quaker tradition, and offers a process for a group to help an individual find clarity through silence, questioning, listening, and prayer.

### **Creating a Climate for Communal Discernment:**

*As you consider gathering people to help you discern, look for people and groups who are growing in these qualities. Grow in these qualities yourself to be increasingly ready to help others discern.*

- The presence and practice of personal discernment - we must be about our own ongoing practice if we are to be of any use to anyone else in theirs.
- An abiding, shared trust in the leadership of the risen Christ - relinquish our urge to offer the best idea or insight or make our impact. Instead we realize that discernment comes not through our efforts but from the risen Lord.
- A growing trust in one another - worshiping together, sharing faith stories, and praying together can foster mutual trust.

- A clear identity as part of the body of Christ in the world - we are unified in Christ and with Christ, loving one another, bearing one another's burdens, offering God's healing love and justice to the needs around us.
- Willingness - to choose God's will over our own, to wait upon the Spirit, to open our minds, hearts, souls, and selves to the Spirit's leading.

**Discerning God's Prayer in Us for Another:**

*The following is based on a group spiritual direction process developed by Rose Mary Dougherty of Shalem Institute and adapted by Nora Gallagher for The Way of Discernment © 2008 by Upper Room Books. Gather a group of 2-5 others, who are growing in the qualities described above, and try this.*

- Choose someone to be the group leader, who will keep time and remind the group of the process.
- Begin with three minutes of silence. During this time, the group prays with open hearts for the discerner, and the discerner asks God questions such as:
  - How have you been present in my life recently?
  - What have you been telling me or trying to teach me about you? About myself?
  - What is your prayer for me now?
- After three minutes, the Discerner shares what happened to him or her during the silence. She or he may speak for up to five minutes. Others in the group simply listen without interrupting or giving advice. Questions of clarification are allowed.
- The group enters silence for another three minutes. During this time the discerner remains in receptive prayer while members of the group hold in mind the following question for the discerner: What is God's prayer in me for you?
- After three minutes, group members begin to share what they have heard in the silence with the discerner. Again the rule is no advice giving; just focus on the prayer they hear in themselves for the discerner.
- After five to seven minutes for this feedback, gratefully receive all that has taken place. One of the group members closes in prayer or another minute of group silence.

**Book suggestion: *Discernment* by Henri Nouwen**

*“You desire truth in the inward being; therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart.”  
~Psalm 51:6*