

Spiritual Discernment Process for Leadership Selection

This Process was developed by Rev. Ken Marston, Associate Region Minister for the Christian Church in Kansas

1st meeting of committee:

Pray, seeking God's guidance for the committee's work.

Describe entire process. Emphasize that potential candidates are not named or discussed until meeting #3, because doing so could affect the prayerful process.

Using Lectio Divina (below), share in Day 1 of the Prayer Journal guide.

Dismiss: Ask committee members to use Days 2-6 during the coming week.

2nd meeting of committee, one week later:

Share prayer experiences, including responses to each day's Scripture readings. Compile responses for use in next step.

Using the week's prayer responses and the congregation's constitution or bylaws, develop list of personal characteristics for each office.

Dismissal: ask members to pray, seeking God's Spirit to identify people who have the needed characteristics for office.

Between meetings 2 and 3:

Communicate to the congregation in the newsletter &/or verbal announcement—share the process and the discerned characteristics for each office. Solicit suggestions from the membership at large.

3rd meeting, 2-3 weeks after 2nd meeting:

For the first time, each member shares names for all offices as discerned in prayer, ***without comment or evaluation***. List names with possible offices so that all can see. Add names received from congregation.

When all names have been shared, committee evaluates whether each person meets the criteria for the office. Those who do not are removed.

Rank candidates according to closeness of fit to the discerned criteria.

Committee members are assigned to contact candidates in person. Ask candidates to pray about the leadership role for which they have been named, and if appropriate, to discuss with their families any possible effect on family life before rendering a decision.

After a week, committee members follow up for candidate responses and make further contacts as needed, following the same process.

Finally, develop congregational ballot.

Lectio Divina, a process of prayerful reading of Scripture:

1. Enter a prayerful and meditative state. Deep breathing, intentional relaxation, and letting go of concerns may be helpful. Begin with a prayer such as, “O God, help me to hear your word for our life together at (name of church). I open myself to your spirit. Observe silence for a minute or two.
2. Read text slowly, preferably aloud. As the text is read, listen for the word or phrase that holds your attention. After the reading, observe a short silence.
3. Repeat step two. After silence, write (if alone) or speak (if in a group) the word or phrase that spoke to you, without additional comment.
4. Prayerfully, read text again and ask God to reveal why that word or phrase caught your attention. Listen for what God wants you to do in response to that phrase. After the reading continue to meditate patiently, so that you may fully hear what God wants you to hear. At first it is normal to feel that you are projecting your own thoughts onto God. As you earnestly listen for God’s still small voice, a word or thought will come that is more than your own thoughts, and will resonate within your spirit as an authentic word from God. It will touch in some way the life and teachings of Jesus. This may be a word of comfort and encouragement, or it may be a challenge to an attitude, thought, or behavior that needs to change.
5. Give thanks for the time spent in God’s presence.

Prayer Journal Guide: Day 1

Theme: Preparing to Discern God's Will

Process:

1. Begin with progressive relaxation.
2. Read I Kings 19:9-18 in the Lectio Divina prayer process.
3. Prayerfully reflect upon your experience.

Questions to consider:

What word or phrase is speaking to you?

What is God saying to you through this word or phrase?

“What are you doing here?” appears twice in this passage. What reaction do you have to this question?

Prayer Journal Guide: Day 2

Theme: Preparing to Discern God's Will

Process:

1. Begin with progressive relaxation.
2. Read I Samuel 3:1-9 in the Lectio Divina prayer process.
3. Prayerfully reflect upon your prayer experience.

Questions to consider:

What word or phrase is speaking to you?

What is God saying to you through this word or phrase?

How does God speak to us?

Prayer Journal Guide: Day 3

Theme: Preparing to Discern God's Will

Process:

1. Begin with progressive relaxation.
2. Read Matthew 20:20-28 in the Lectio Divina prayer process.
3. Prayerfully reflect upon your prayer experience.

Questions to consider:

What word or phrase is speaking to you?

What is God saying to you through this word or phrase?

How does the world define leadership?

How does Jesus define leadership?

When looking for leaders, what characteristics do we need to see in people?

Prayer Journal Guide: Day 4

Theme: Preparing to Discern God's Will

Process:

1. Begin with progressive relaxation.
2. Read Acts 6:1-16 in the Lectio Divina prayer process.
3. Prayerfully reflect upon your prayer experience.

Questions to consider:

What word or phrase is speaking to you?

What is God saying to you through this word or phrase?

What roles are emerging in the early church?

Why did different roles emerge in the early church?

How were people selected to fill the various roles in the life of the early church?

Prayer Journal Guide: Day 5

Theme: Preparing to Discern God's Will

Process:

1. Begin with progressive relaxation.
2. Read I Timothy 3:1-7 in the Lectio Divina prayer process.
3. Prayerfully reflect upon your prayer experience.

Some questions to reflect upon:

What word or phrase is speaking to you?

What is God saying to you through this word or phrase?

What roles in the life of the church are discussed here?

What are the characteristics people need to exhibit for the various roles?

Are these characteristics realistic?

What people in your congregation have gifts for the leadership roles needed? List them by office.

Prayer Journal Guide: Day 6

Theme: Preparing to Discern God's Will

Process:

1. Begin with progressive relaxation.
2. Read I Timothy 3:8-13 in the Lectio Divina prayer process.
3. Prayerfully reflect upon your prayer experience.

Questions to consider:

What word or phrase is speaking to you?

What is God saying to you through this word or phrase?

What roles in the life of the church are discussed here?

What are the characteristics people need to exhibit for the various roles?

Are these characteristics realistic?

What people in your congregation have gifts for the leadership roles needed? List them by office.