

Discerning Your Congregation's Call

“Discern” comes from the Latin *discerne*; *dis*, apart + *cernere*, to sift. It means to separate, to distinguish between. Discernment involves thinking (sifting) through and distinguishing ideas, images and visions from one another. To discern means to detect, to discriminate between what might be a strong desire, or an interesting idea, or an escape from boredom, and God’s call to you which requires certain gifts and their validation by the community of faith.

Questions to get you started:

Where does your congregation already have connections both near and far?

Where are members in your congregation from?

Where are members in your community from?

Does your church have historic connections to mission in a particular place?

Are members of your congregation connected now to mission in a particular place?

What does your congregation bring to mission involvement (gifts and needs)?

What makes your congregation unique?

What skills do members of your congregation have to share?

What’s missing in the life of your congregation?

What burdens are on the hearts of people in your congregation?

Is there a concern for a particular place in the world?

Are members of your congregation interested in responding to the needs of particular groups, such as vulnerable children, abused women, those who are hungry, or people living in fragile ecosystems?

Discernment Signs (Taken from *Grounded in God: Listening Hearts Discernment for Group Deliberations* by Suzanne G. Farnhan, Stephanie Hull and R. Taylor MeLean)

Looking for these signs can help you find God’s calling for you.

1. God’s Peace: A sense of confidence at a very deep level indicates that we are moving in the right direction.
2. Joy: This indicates the presence of the Spirit. On occasion this joy carries with it a great surge of energy that brings momentum to the group and helps move it into action.
3. Persistence: When the same message keeps coming to a group from different places and in various ways, it may be God trying to get through. Take notice!
4. Convergence: Various things that the group has been thinking about and doing over a period of time – things that had seemed unrelated – suddenly come together and make sense. Or the skills and resources of a group may uniquely fit together with a particular need that comes to the fore.
5. Fruitfulness: This gives us encouragement. But do not declare a tree barren too hastily.