

Discernment...a way God leads us

This last week you received a proposal to worship together in one service for the season of Pentecost. Several community conversations have taken place...in worship team, in council, in Bible Study as well as after each worship service. There have also been many conversations in the parking lot, the fellowship hall, the narthex, the pastors' office, and neighboring restaurants! This proposal has gotten us talking!

On Sunday, people asked if this decision was going to come to a vote. I said "no". Why? "I want this to be a process of discernment," I said. So, what is a process of discernment?

Discernment in a faith community or in a life of faith is the process of determining God's desire for our life together. What is the life God is calling us to? What is our call or vocation?

How do we determine this?

I find it helpful to use the Ignatian principles of *consolation* and *desolation*.

Consolation is the movement towards God's active presence in the world. We know we are moving in this way when we sense the growth of mercy or faith or hope or any qualities of the Holy Spirit.

Desolation is moving away from God's presence and we recognize that we are desolate when we are resentful, ungrateful, selfish, filled with doubt or fear.

Here are two lists I use as a guide

(thanks to writer Margaret Silf)

Consolation

- Directs our focus outside and beyond ourselves
- Lifts our hearts so that we can see the joys and sorrow of other people
- Bonds us more closely to our human community
- Generates new inspiration and ideas
- Restores balance and refreshes our inner vision
- Shows us where God is active in our lives and where God is leading us
- Releases new energy in us

Desolation

- Turns us in on ourselves
- Drives us down the spiral ever deeper into our own negative feelings
- Cuts us off from community
- Makes us want to give up on the things that used to be important to us
- Takes over our whole consciousness and crowds out our distant vision
- Covers up all the signs of our journey with God so far
- Drains us of energy

In order to make a decision, **we use our heads** by considering the advantages and disadvantages of the proposal. **We listen to our hearts** and how we feel as well as how others who are not our friends feel. **We invite God's Spirit** to stir feelings of spiritual consolation that we may be guided to God's desire for all of us.

We will take the time we need to discern. We will keep conversing. Meetings will be held again this weekend after each worship service. Come and share your thoughts, your feelings and the ways you sense God is leading.

Thank you!
Pastor Kari Reiquam

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