



Community of Christ

# God, where is your Spirit leading next?

**Adult**

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# INTRODUCTION: WHAT SHALL WE DISCERN?

This resource is designed to form discerning community around an issue that matters most in your context. It is a way to practice together listening for the movement and invitation of God in our midst as we discern paths into God's preferred future. There are several options for facilitators of this material.

- 1) Choose a topic coming from World Conference that the community seems to have energy to explore or that has implication for your ministry context.
- 2) Choose a topic relevant to the community that has been on people's minds and hearts.
- 3) Engage the practices with a more general invitation by using the theme as a discernment question, "God, where is your Spirit leading next?"

Choosing a topic often can take more time in a group than one might imagine! We recommend having a good idea of the topic you'd like to discuss for the first class. Perhaps the group has the opportunity to participate in a pre-reunion poll, or you choose a topic based on conversations with leaders and members in the area as you get a sense of what would be most meaningful.

Regardless of the topic, this material seeks to provide space to practice becoming a discerning community and to engage practices of discernment that continue to open our availability to God's call and the wisdom of one another. It is not expected that the group will "answer" a question by the end of the week, but that together we will continue to move toward deeper understanding and faithfulness in the Holy Spirit.

This material also is intended to be a guide to *facilitate* experiences in spiritually formed community rather than content-heavy teaching. The "substance" of each class will come from the topic you choose, the wisdom in the group, and the responses to the practices. Facilitators can adapt as necessary to follow the movement of the Holy Spirit in the community as they maintain a discerning environment. The class goal is not to come to a particular outcome, but to invite the community to be formed together in the practices of discernment as it explores a topic of importance for the church.

# COVENANT FOR DISCERNING COMMUNITIES

*We are Community of Christ, and we are walking the path together. We sing “joy” in thousands of congregations. We say “hope” in scores of languages. We proclaim peace in almost sixty nations. We are one, and we are many. We are diverse, yet we are community, for we belong to Christ. Just as the first-century church often was pushed into an ever-expanding circle of cultures and identities, we often are called into struggle, constantly challenged to move into new understandings of the Creator’s steadfast and unreserved love. We acknowledge that Community of Christ is a culture in and of itself. At the same time, each of us is grounded in our own cultural identity; each congregation is steeped in the local culture. We are not called to abandon those identities. We struggle with issues of diversity. When does our diversity threaten our unity? How do we address issues that are critical in some areas but taboo in others? What issues can be decided locally without harming our worldwide fellowship? We do not have all the answers. Our shared community compels us to seek answers by listening until we understand.*

—Excerpts from “We Are One, We Are Many,”  
*Sharing in Community of Christ 4th Edition*, p. 68–70

1. Every person is of sacred worth, no exceptions. We commit to treating each other with dignity and respect in all conditions.
2. Different cultures and languages bring different assumptions, worldviews, and meanings, even when we use common words and phrases. We commit to a posture of curiosity toward each other’s contexts, asking clarifying questions and seeking deeper meaning before assuming we understand.
3. We commit to upholding spaciousness within the flow of dialogue. This includes not interrupting and pausing after each person has spoken. We commit to being conscious of those who need more time to process, hearing marginalized voices, and listening deeply before deciding how to respond.
4. In sacred community, we affirm that safety is not the same as comfort. We know that disagreement can be faithful when practiced in love. We commit to creating safe, brave, sacred space together where all feel free to be vulnerable, to be stretched and challenged, and to experience transformation with one another through the Holy Spirit.
5. In all things, we covenant to listen first for the Holy Spirit present among us and to maintain an attitude and desire of spiritual openness and freedom.

# ELEMENTS OF A DISCERNMENT PROCESS

<p><b>“Awaken to New Possibilities”:</b> What does freedom to follow God’s call look and feel like?</p>	<p><i>Pray to be open to God and one another.</i> Practice: Prayer for Spiritual Freedom, Community Covenant</p>
<p><b>“Ask and Dream”:</b> What does prophetic imagination reveal?</p>	<p><i>Clarify the heart of the matter and notice where God has been present with us throughout our sacred history.</i> Practice: Review Sacred History</p>
<p><b>“Pay Attention”:</b> What more is there to discover?</p>	<p><i>Gather relevant data from many sources and ways of knowing.</i> Practice: Describing the Current Situation, Six Lenses for Discovering God’s Will</p>
<p><b>“Listen and Pray”:</b> What is emerging in the community through the Holy Spirit?</p>	<p><i>Take it all to prayer to sift through what has been discovered and notice where the Holy Spirit is leading.</i> Practice: Prayer and Listening, Seeking Consensus</p>
<p><b>“Act”:</b> What steps will we next take together?</p>	<p><i>Identify the next faithful steps and pray for the <b>courage</b> to act.</i> Practice: Prayer of Examen</p>

# DISCERNING WHAT GOD IS UP TO

AUTHOR: STEPHEN M. VEAZEY

## Excerpts from *Boldy Venture*

The world is changing. Old forms are crumbling. New possibilities are emerging. We live between what was and what will be. We need faith, curiosity, openness, and boldness. God is challenging assumptions, shaking up structures, disrupting routines, and making connections.

The Holy Spirit breathes anew into our lives, the church, and creation. God's aim is a new creation in us, among us, and around us! And nothing is more important than discerning what God is up to and our role in it. Doctrine and Covenants 162:2c urges:

As a prophetic people...discern the divine will for your own time and in the places where you serve. You live in a world with **new challenges**, and that world will **require new forms of ministry**.

Discern the divine will...new challenges require new forms of ministry! Discernment is more than planning and/or asserting personal views. It is engaging in spiritual practices so we can be more aware of God's activity and how best to respond. Discernment is willingness to venture with God beyond the familiar. If you or your group need a discernment guide, some evangelists and those who have completed the Spiritual Formation and Companionship Program are available.

Recall Jesus's parable of the Samaritan... A traveler was robbed and beaten. Two religious figures—a priest and a Levite—passed the traveler but did not help. In fact, they crossed to the other side of the road. Then the Samaritan—assumed not to be so religious—saw the nearly dead man and had compassion. The Samaritan boldly moved toward the man, tended his wounds, took him to a safe place, and paid for his care.

Everyone “saw” the same situation. However, only one discerned what to do. The Samaritan perceived God's call and courageously responded. The others, captive to their human biases, were oblivious to God's call though they thought they were in harmony with divine will. The Samaritan saw as God sees and responded as God does. That's the heart of discernment!

A map of the future would be nice, but that's not possible, given this time of cultural shifts and disruptions. Neither can we go back to the past because that world no longer exists. We must keep venturing boldly with God, like people of faith and vision always have done.

Our journey is not left to blind faith. Like a reliable compass, the Holy Spirit guides and emboldens us. And that compass works best as we are moving in response to God's call. Jesus said the Holy Spirit “...will *guide* you into all the truth.” The guide is the pathway! The journey is the destination!

Throughout our history prophetic voices have urged us toward God's fullest vision for creation. Our journey has included processes of clarifying our sacred story, identity, and purpose. The results are found in our mission statement, Enduring Principles, and other documents. With scripture as our foundation, we take these vital sources of insight and focus with us as we journey.

The Holy Spirit guided us to an ideal name: Community of Christ. It's faithful to our heritage and vision of the gospel lived in Christ-centered community. It emphasizes God's revelation in Jesus Christ and the importance of experiencing Christ in sacred community. Our name provides direction and focus.

# “AWAKEN TO NEW POSSIBILITIES”: WHAT DOES FREEDOM TO FOLLOW GOD’S CALL LOOK AND FEEL LIKE?

## LESSON OVERVIEW

Learners will explore the connection between *The Way Forward* series and the invitation to continual discernment by engaging a topic for discernment and praying for spiritual freedom.

## PREPARATION

Read Article 1—“Discerning What God Is Up To”

## SUPPLIES

- *Community of Christ Sings*
- Journal books or blank paper and writing utensils (invite participants to bring their own journal)
- Meditative music during reflection (optional)

## GUIDING DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS

As you explore difficult topics in a group setting, it is important to talk meaningfully, welcoming all perspectives and honoring the Worth of All Persons. The following principles will help guide difficult conversations:

- Honor all perspectives and hold safe space for all to share. Vary opportunities for sharing, such as sharing in pairs, writing, drawing responses, or sharing in small groups. Pay attention to perspectives that challenge your own. Remember, the purpose is not to debate or change perspectives.
- Practice active listening by paraphrasing what has been stated to ensure each participant’s point is interpreted correctly.
- Encourage participants to speak as “I” instead of “we,” speaking for oneself instead of one’s “side,” and avoid generalizations.
- Approach divisive topics without a personal agenda to gain understanding of different perspectives. Stay true to the gospel and uphold Community of Christ identity, mission, message, and beliefs without diminishing the perspectives and life experiences of others.
- Uphold Unity in Diversity, recognizing oneness in Christ does not mean sameness.
- Recognize the Holy Spirit’s presence and movement through authentic sharing and holy listening.



# Gather

Activates background knowledge;  
prepares and motivates for lesson  
(15% of lesson time)

## Mission Prayer Meditation:

*God, where will your Spirit lead today? Help me be fully awake and ready to respond. Grant me courage to risk something new and become a blessing of your love and peace.*

*Rest into the presence of God's Spirit with us now.*

*(Silent pause)*

*Ask the Spirit to help you become fully awake here and now.*

*(Silent pause)*

*Notice where you need courage to risk something new today.*

*(Silent pause)*

*May we become a blessing this day of God's love and peace. Amen.*

**Opening Song:** "O God of Vision" CCS 78 or "Jesu, Tawa Pano" CCS 71

# Engage

Invites exploration  
and interaction  
(35% of lesson time)

Read the article, "Discerning What God Is Up To" by Stephen M. Veazey.

*"The Holy Spirit breathes anew into our lives, the church, and creation. God's aim is a new creation in us, among us, and around us! And nothing is more important than discerning what God is up to and our role in it."*

—Stephen M. Veazey, Boldly Venture

Why is discerning our role in what God is up to an important practice for disciples today?

**The Topic or Question:** Throughout this material is an invitation to engage in discernment practices around a topic or question. As a group, you are invited to identify the question or topic you will journey with in discernment over the next several sessions and write it here:

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**Community Covenant:** As we come into discernment, we start with community covenant, page 5. This covenant reminds us that even as we discern in our local context, we are part of the body of Christ across the world. Read the covenant together.

**Large-group Sharing:** Does anything else need to be added or addressed to create an environment of safety and trust in the discerning group?

**Personal Reflection:** Spend a few moments considering the significance of the topic or question identified for discernment by the group. While noticing how you feel, commit to staying open to the Spirit's guidance throughout the process.

**Small-group Sharing:** After a minute of reflection, share in small groups your feelings toward the question or topic, or why it matters in your life.

# Respond

Takes the learners from  
hearing to doing  
(35% of lesson time)

**Scripture Reflection:** In discernment, we cultivate the soil of our lives for availability to the life God desires to grow in us. Before we spend time in the Prayer for Spiritual Freedom, we dwell in the image of this familiar parable. As you hear these words, notice how you feel as you come into

this process and which landscape described might represent the state of your soul.

“Listen! A sower went out to sow.<sup>4</sup> And as he sowed, some seeds fell on a path, and the birds came and ate them up.<sup>5</sup> Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and they sprang up quickly, since they had no depth of soil.<sup>6</sup> But when the sun rose, they were scorched; and since they had no root, they withered away.<sup>7</sup> Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them.<sup>8</sup> Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.<sup>9</sup> Let anyone with ears, listen!”

—Matthew 13:3–9

## SEEKING GROUP SPIRITUAL FREEDOM

*What restricts a free and open response to God and one another through this process?*

We pray together for a “group heart large enough and free to follow God’s call as it becomes clear.”<sup>1</sup> This is a *continual* practice and is not “accomplished” all at once. We will return frequently to this prayer for spiritual freedom.

Examining biases, attachments, agendas, and assumptions can release us from embedded patterns and expectations. Through this practice, our perceptual field is widened, which makes us aware of possibilities we may not have considered. It is important to acknowledge that our assumptions are not inherently bad or good. They are what make up our worldview based on our experiences. Biases, agendas, attachments, and assumptions can be barriers to deeper discernment when they are unexamined.

**Personal Reflection:** Based on the context of the class, you may choose to take some time to walk in nature or find a quiet place to reflect on the following prompts for the amount of time in your schedule.

- In prayer, ask for awareness of what may be restricting your openness to God and each other in this discernment process. Ask God to help you see strong agendas, attachments, or resistances that need to be released for this time of seeking God’s will. (For some it may be helpful to physically embody this prayer by “holding” with a clenched fist those things to which they are attached and releasing them by opening their hands.)
- Name assumptions related to our question for discernment that impact our work together and can become barriers to creatively envisioning the future. What are we invited to set aside or release individually and collectively? What do we notice about our assumptions and how they impact our discernment?
- Prayerful Imagining: What might freedom or openness to God look like in us as a discerning group? What images or phrases help us move into a communal posture of freedom to discern and follow God’s call?

**Small-group Sharing:** Identify one person to be a scribe to share a summary of the conversation with the large group. Share together on the following questions.

- What was your experience with the prayer for spiritual freedom?
- What assumptions, agendas, or attachments might restrict our openness in this experience?
- What images or phrases helped us imagine a posture of spiritual freedom throughout this process?

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<sup>1</sup> *The Soul of Discernment: A Spiritual Practice for Communities and Institutions*, Elizabeth Liebert, p. 52.

# Send

Explores how the lesson  
might be lived  
(10% of lesson time)

**Large-group Sharing:** It is important to name together where we feel closed off and where we feel most open and free as we begin this process of discernment.

Each scribe is invited to share with the larger group.

**Optional Large-group Sharing** (if time permits):

- Where does the group notice themes or patterns emerging in response to the prayer for spiritual freedom?
- What important insight might these responses to prayer offer as we cultivate receptive soil for the life of God to grow in us?

Notice what you have heard so far today and how it has impacted your feelings about the topic. Commit to remaining open in the days ahead as we continue to embrace a “spirit of openness, adventure, and searching” (Doctrine and Covenants Section 161:1b).

# Bless

Time of prayer, praise,  
blessing, and help  
(5% of lesson time)

Invite participants to reflect on this time together as it draws to a close. Give thirty to sixty seconds in silence as they reflect on the question:

*How has the Spirit of God been present among us in this time together?*

Respond aloud in the group with a brief statement, word, or image.

**Closing Blessing: For Freedom**

A blessing for freedom  
For vastness and width and depth  
For release, exhale, and breath  
For dreams and visions and hopes  
For wisdom to pour forth unrestricted  
For tenderness and softness of heart  
For holding gently and lightly

A blessing for freedom  
Not dogged obedience  
Not more work to do  
Nor wearying demands  
But aliveness, fullness, readiness  
Wild, holy abandon  
To the deep call of God  
That promises even now  
In the letting go  
To make us whole.

AUTHOR: STEPHEN M. VEAZEY

The Holy Spirit is stirring *fresh* expressions of gospel community amid massive cultural changes and human need. Community of Christ is discerning what God is doing and our response. Doctrine and Covenants 162:2c states that we “live in a world with new challenges, and that world will require new forms of ministry.”

This series of messages grew from talks with the World Church Leadership Council and others about opportunities and challenges before the church.

In these messages, I’ll highlight major opportunities and challenges. The Council of Twelve Apostles and others will lead discussions in the apostolic fields about what is most important in each.

Of course, the unpredictability of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and other global maladies will be considered. With that said, let’s begin with a *major* opportunity!

## **A Great Door of Opportunity!**

Many opportunities to spiritually connect people to God and the gospel exist in Christ-centered community! God relates uniquely to each of us while inviting us into spiritual community fashioned in the love of Christ.

This is God’s way of redeeming and transforming the world. Inviting and being with others in this way is central to God’s nature as expressed through the church. The Holy Spirit is always fitting people together in Christ to become a dwelling place for God on Earth. (Ephesians 2:21–22).

Once, after I baptized three older adults, one said to me, “Why do you think it took us so long to find this church?”

Later, as I pondered that question, the Holy Spirit reframed it in my mind as, “Why did it take the church so long to find these people?”

How would *your* congregation or group answer that question?

There is a remarkable response to the gospel as shared by Community of Christ in some nations. Baptisms, confirmations, and ordinations occur frequently. The gospel is embodied in Christ-centered communities of invitation, generosity, and peace. Response to the cause of Zion is evident!

Let’s celebrate what the Holy Spirit is doing in these nations! It is like the Spirit-led growth of the early church depicted in the Book of Acts. Apostle Paul described it as “...a wide door for effective work has opened...” (1 Corinthians 16:9 NRSV).

To respond fully we need more culturally relevant disciple- and leader-formation (education, training) materials and experiences in local languages.

The gospel is shared most authentically through the languages, stories, symbols, music, and art of human cultures. It truly does not take root in people’s lives until that happens.

At the same time, the gospel transforms cultures as it becomes rooted in them. This is called “inculturation.” It is how the gospel is embodied in human lives and societies. The process is ongoing.

In response to our “great door of opportunity,” we must find ways to increase support for disciple and leader formation (education, materials, training) provided in local languages and cultural themes. The Holy Spirit is urging us to act before opportunities are lost. What will our response be?

# “ASK AND DREAM”: WHAT DOES PROPHETIC IMAGINATION REVEAL?

## LESSON OVERVIEW

Learners will continue their practice of discernment by reviewing the sacred history of the community and gathering data as they describe the current situation.

## PREPARATION

Read Article 2, “Challenges and Opportunities” by Stephen M. Veazey.

## SUPPLIES

- Journal books or blank paper and writing utensils (invite participants to bring their own journal, if they wish)
- Meditative music for reflection (optional)
- *Community of Christ Sings*

## GUIDING DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS

As you explore difficult topics in a group setting, it is important to talk meaningfully, welcoming all perspectives and honoring the Worth of All Persons. The following principles will help guide difficult conversations:

- Honor all perspectives and hold safe space for all to share. Vary opportunities for sharing, such as sharing in pairs, writing, drawing responses, or sharing in small groups. Pay attention to perspectives that challenge your own. Remember, the purpose is not to debate or change perspectives.
- Practice active listening by paraphrasing what has been stated to ensure each participant’s point is interpreted correctly.
- Encourage participants to speak as “I” instead of “we,” speaking for oneself instead of one’s “side,” and avoid generalizations.
- Approach divisive topics without a personal agenda to gain understanding of different perspectives. Stay true to the gospel and uphold Community of Christ identity, mission, message, and beliefs without diminishing the perspectives and life experiences of others.
- Uphold Unity in Diversity, recognizing oneness in Christ does not mean sameness.
- Recognize the Holy Spirit’s presence and movement through authentic sharing and holy listening.

# Gather

Activates background knowledge;  
prepares and motivates for lesson  
(15% of lesson time)

## Spiritual Freedom: The Parable of the Sower

For the remaining sessions, we will begin with a prayer for spiritual freedom using the parable of the sower. As you hear these words, consider the state of your own soul as you come into this discerning community.

“Listen! A sower went out to sow.<sup>4</sup> And as he sowed, some seeds fell on a path, and the birds came and ate them up.<sup>5</sup> Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and they sprang up quickly, since they had no depth of soil.<sup>6</sup> But when the sun rose, they were scorched, and since they had no root, they withered away.<sup>7</sup> Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them.<sup>8</sup> Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.<sup>9</sup> Let anyone with ears listen!”

—Matthew 13:3–9

Our hearts are like the ground, and God is like the sower. Turn your gaze inward and notice which landscape reflects the condition of your soul at this time.

**The Path.** We can get busy or stuck on the surface of things and forget to think about what really matters. Without places of depth in us, the seeds of deep life can get washed away or eaten by birds.

**Rocky Ground:** It can feel like there are boulders and barriers. Sometimes we feel scorched and withered. It’s hard when we don’t take care of ourselves and can’t sustain what wants to grow in us.

**Thorns:** Too much crowds and chokes out who God invites us to be. Too many opinions. Too many voices. Too much happening at school, in our lives, at home, in the world.

**Good Soil:** We thrive when we have the space to discover who we really are and let God tend our lives.

**Reflect:** What does the ground of your life feel like now?

After reflecting, turn to a neighbor and briefly share how you come today.

# Engage

Invites exploration  
and interaction  
(35% of lesson time)

**Review Sacred History:** *Place a large piece of paper on a wall to represent a timeline of the community’s life. Some may be coming into the community for the first time, and others have been present many years. Reflect on the period that makes the most sense for each participant.*

Using sticky notes, write two or three memories of a time the community (or you personally) experienced the following signals of the Spirit. These are expressions of spiritual **consolation**.

## Spiritual Consolation:

- Sense of nearness, turning toward God
- Life-giving energy of the Holy Spirit
- Experience of divine grace/affirmation
- Fresh vision and inspiration
- Sense of living in the natural flow of God’s movement
- A “deeper down peace” even if circumstances are challenging
- Widened capacity for love and compassion

Take a couple of minutes to consider and write brief responses and then place them on the timeline.

## Small-group Sharing

- What memories of consolation did you share on the timeline?

- How can these memories help us pay attention to God’s presence with us now and in the future?

## Respond

Takes the learners from hearing to doing  
(35% of lesson time)

**Describing the Current Situation:** God’s vision is revealed not where we think we ought to be, but in the realities of where we actually are. The following practice invites the community to consider the economic, relational, social, and systemic implications of this topic or question as an important part of “gathering data” in discernment.

**Small Group:** As a small group, reflect on the question or topic that you are bringing into discernment by considering the questions assigned to each group. It’s OK if a couple of groups have the same question, based on the number of participants. Each group will designate a scribe to summarize responses to the three questions received.

**All Groups:** How would you describe the current situation of the community in relation to this topic or question?

**Group 1:** What will happen if nothing changes in five years?

**Group 2:** What assumptions or questions do people in the community have around this topic or question?

**Group 3:** How do power dynamics or roles in the community impact the group’s response to this topic or question?

**Group 4:** What role does money have?

**Group 5:** How is this topic or question related to God’s vision for creation?

**Group 6:** What people and systems, including creation, are impacted by how the community responds to the question or topic?

**All Groups:** Where do you sense the creativity and hope of the Holy Spirit as you discern this topic or question?

These questions are adapted from, “Social Analysis: A Simpler Version,” p.96, *The Soul of Discernment: A Spiritual Practice for Communities and Institutions* by Elizabeth Liebert, Westminster John Knox Press, 2015.

## Send

Explores how the lesson might be lived  
(10% of lesson time)

**Large-group Sharing:** Each scribe shares a summary of responses from the group.

**Optional Large-group Sharing** (if time permits):

- Where does the group notice themes or patterns emerging in our responses?
- What important insight might that offer as we cultivate receptive soil for the life of God to grow in us?

Notice what you have heard today and how it has impacted your feelings about the topic. Commit to remaining open in the days ahead as we continue to embrace a “spirit of adventure, openness, and searching” (Doctrine and Covenants Section 161:1b).

## Bless

Time of prayer, praise, blessing, and help  
(5% of lesson time)

Invite participants to reflect on this time together as it draws to a close. Give thirty to sixty seconds in silence as they reflect on the question:

*How has the Spirit of God been present among us in this time together?*

Respond aloud in the group with a brief statement, word, or image.

**Closing Blessing**

**Sing Together:** “We Limit Not the Truth of God”  
*CCS 69*



# DISRUPTIVE TRENDS AS CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

AUTHOR: STEPHEN M. VEAZEY

Challenging trends are affecting the church in more-affluent nations, where the church has its longest history.

Movement from traditional forms of church is obvious as post-modern, individualistic, consumption-driven culture spreads. This is a “*seismic shift*” in how people view church relevance and involvement. It’s been happening for decades.

The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated this trend. People have left regular church participation in even greater numbers and are seeking other ways to express spirituality.

We truly are living in a *new* world that requires *new* forms of ministry. Simply doing what is familiar and hoping for the best will not suffice in these nations.

But there is opportunity! Amid shifts from formal church involvement, people continue to search for authentic spiritual connections with God, others, and creation. They are searching for meaningful “relatedness” as opposed to rigid doctrine and structure.

Community of Christ has been gifted for such a time as this! We must not miss this opportunity. People are responding as we connect the timeless practices of Christian spirituality with our emphasis on togetherness that fosters Christ-like community and ministry.

Innovation on the scale of metamorphosis is creating fresh expressions of the church. More of this is needed.

I want to emphasize the *gravity* of our situation in more-affluent nations. We are expending massive amounts of effort and money, trying to preserve what was designed for another time. We need to pivot to a future that involves openness to

innovation in how we bring ministry in rapidly changing contexts.

The first step is to accept this reality. Then, we must concentrate our efforts to discern pathways into the future. Remember, in the gospel cycle of birth, death, and resurrection, things can appear bleak before new life arises. This is the meaning of transformation or metamorphosis as propelled by the Holy Spirit.

There is no one best model. However, there are approaches that may be used to reenergize ministry and relate to more people.

One approach focuses on “The Mission Prayer”:  
***God, where will your Spirit lead today?  
 Help me become fully awake and ready to respond. Grant me courage to risk something new and become a blessing of your love and peace. Amen.***

“The Mission Prayer” highlights three spiritual movements for individuals and groups:  
*Become fully awake* through spiritual practices.  
*Courageously risk something new* through group discernment and action.  
*Become a blessing of God’s love and peace* through Christlike ministry.

This approach opens individuals and groups to more awareness of the Holy Spirit’s activity in and around them. The key is to *live*—not just recite—“The Mission Prayer”!

Living this prayer creates constant opportunities for spiritual growth, ongoing discernment of God’s call, faithful response, and adaptation to what is learned through reflection and innovation. How could the “movements” of the prayer be used to focus and energize ministry in your group? What are you willing to let go of to respond better?

How would you like church life that didn't leave you feeling overburdened with tasks? Some approaches stress simplicity and focus instead of just working harder. They emphasize basic spiritual practices; deepening loving relationships in Christ in less-formal settings; discerning God's call together; offering ministry aligned with that call; and sharing sacraments.

This simplified approach is especially suited to smaller gatherings or those leaving a building. It emphasizes the most basic form of discipleship in community. Ironically, this approach might be a more authentic expression of the gospel than others that have evolved over time in complexity, internal focus, and cost.

# “PAY ATTENTION”: WHAT MORE IS THERE TO DISCOVER?

## LESSON OVERVIEW

Learners will go deeper in exploring a topic through communal discernment practices.

## PREPARATION

Read Article 3, “Disruptive Trends as Challenges and Opportunities” by Stephen M. Veazey

## SUPPLIES

- Journal books or blank paper and writing utensils (invite participants to bring their own journal, if they wish)
- Meditative music for a time of reflection (optional)
- *Community of Christ Sings*

## GUIDING DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS

As you explore difficult issues in a group setting, it is important to talk meaningfully, welcoming all perspectives and honoring the Worth of All Persons. The following principles will help guide difficult conversations:

- Honor all perspectives and hold safe space for all to share. Vary opportunities for sharing, such as sharing in pairs, writing, drawing responses, or sharing in small groups. Pay attention to perspectives that challenge your own. Remember, the purpose is not to debate or change perspectives.
- Practice active listening by paraphrasing what has been stated to ensure each participant’s point is interpreted correctly.
- Encourage participants to speak as “I” instead of “we,” speaking for oneself instead of one’s “side,” and avoid generalizations.
- Approach divisive topics without a personal agenda to gain understanding of different perspectives. Stay true to the gospel and uphold Community of Christ identity, mission, message, and beliefs without diminishing the perspectives and life experiences of others.
- Uphold Unity in Diversity, recognizing oneness in Christ does not mean sameness.
- Recognize the Holy Spirit’s presence and movement through authentic sharing and holy listening.

# ENGAGING THE SIX LENSES FOR DISCOVERING GOD'S WILL

<b>Knowledge and Reason</b>	<p>“Consideration of available information through reason and study is not the opposite of trusting in the Holy Spirit. Study and thinking are how we love God with our hearts and our minds.”</p> <p><b>What available information sheds light on this discernment process? What am I thinking about this? What more do we need to know? What might we need to study to deepen our knowledge?</b></p>
<b>Continuing Revelation</b>	<p>“Continuing Revelation involves ongoing encounter with God and Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit. It provides added insight or deepens understanding of formative experiences. It ‘unveils’ dimensions of earlier encounters with God that have been unrecognized or perhaps even misunderstood.”</p> <p><b>How is the Holy Spirit showing up in surprising ways and places? Are you open to experiencing the new thing God is doing within and around you? What have you not yet thought to ask or imagine?</b></p>
<b>Tradition</b>	<p>“Tradition is the body of belief, wisdom, and practices produced over the years by the faith community as it seeks to live the gospel in various times and places.”</p> <p><b>What aspects of tradition shed light on this discernment process? Was there a time when you or your ancestors faced a similar situation? What rituals, sacraments, scriptures, practices, sacred story, or gifts of wisdom, are present within the tradition to guide you as you seek understanding?</b></p>
<b>Personal and Communal Experience</b>	<p>“We bring aspects of our personal experiences, culture, beliefs, feelings, and personalities to our quest to better understand God’s will. The most reliable spiritual discernment occurs in association with others.”</p> <p><b>What aspects of your own culture and personal experience help this discernment process? What have you learned that can be applied now? What can you learn from the diversity of other people’s experiences?</b></p>
<b>Scripture</b>	<p>“The Living Word is presented and received as good news in the lives of hurting people. It draws people to God’s revelation in Jesus Christ. It bears the fruit of love, reconciliation, healing, and hope for all.”</p> <p><b>What images, words, or phrases from sacred text affirm or confront you on this journey of discernment? If you were to locate yourself in a story or parable, what would speak to where you are now? What might it be saying?</b></p>
<b>Common Consent</b>	<p>“Common Consent at its best is a process of education, discussion, prayer, and consideration that requires patience, cooperation, and spiritual sensitivity. It encourages minority or opposing voices that may contribute vital insights or strengthen proposals.”</p> <p><b>What insights from prayerfully listening to my community shed light on this discernment process? Who will be impacted by this decision? How might it influence your discernment to listen to the voices that make you uncomfortable or to the perspectives you may resist? How are you invited to discern in a way that contributes to the well-being of the whole community?</b></p>

# Gather

Activates background knowledge;  
prepares and motivates for lesson  
(15% of lesson time)

## Spiritual Freedom: Parable of the Sower

As you hear these words, consider the state of your own soul as you come into this discerning community.

“Listen! A sower went out to sow.<sup>4</sup> And as he sowed, some seeds fell on a path, and the birds came and ate them up.<sup>5</sup> Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and they sprang up quickly, since they had no depth of soil.<sup>6</sup> But when the sun rose, they were scorched, and since they had no root, they withered away.<sup>7</sup> Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them.<sup>8</sup> Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.<sup>9</sup> Let anyone with ears listen!”

—Matthew 13:3–9

Our hearts are like the ground, and God is like the sower. Turn your gaze inward and notice which landscape reflects the condition of your soul.

**The Path.** We can get busy or stuck on the surface of things and forget to think about what really matters. Without places of depth in us, the seeds of deep life can get washed away or eaten by birds.

**Rocky Ground:** It can feel like there are boulders and barriers. Sometimes we feel scorched and withered. It’s hard when we don’t take care of ourselves and can’t sustain what wants to grow in us.

**Thorns:** Too much crowds and chokes out who God invites us to be. Too many opinions. Too many voices. Too much happening at school, in our lives, at home, in the world.

**Good Soil:** We thrive when we have the space to discover who we really are and let God tend our lives.

**Reflect:** What does the ground of your life feel like now?

After reflecting, turn to a neighbor and briefly share how you come today.

# Engage

Invites exploration  
and interaction  
(35% of lesson time)

**Option:** Depending on time, consider sharing part of the Six Lenses video in English by Stephen M. Veazey ([www.youtube.com/watch?v=50wS1LB7MHg](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=50wS1LB7MHg)).

## Six Lenses for Discovering God’s Will

*Place six large pieces of paper or posterboard on walls or tables with markers or crayons. Ideally, these are large enough that multiple people can work at the same time.*

*Write each of the six lenses on the paper with space around them for the group to write or draw reflections. Invite participants to refer to the practice on the previous page for reference for each lens.*

*As music plays quietly, invite the group for fifteen to twenty minutes to engage the discernment question or topic through each lens by moving slowly around the room, contributing reflections by writing or drawing. If people finish early, they are invited to reflect prayerfully on the experience.*

*After the reflective experience, create six groups and give each one of the posters.*

# Respond

Takes the learners from hearing to doing  
(35% of lesson time)

**Small-group Sharing:** Identify a person to share a summary of the group's responses in the large group.

1. What was your experience of this practice?
2. Where do you notice themes or patterns in the responses to this lens?
3. What might this lens be revealing about our discernment topic or question?

**Large-group Sharing:** Each scribe shares a summary of responses from the group.

# Send

Explores how the lesson might be lived  
(10% of lesson time)

**Large-group Sharing** (if time permits):

- Where does the group notice themes or patterns emerging in the responses?
- What important insight might that offer as we cultivate receptive soil for the life of God to grow in us?

Notice what you have heard so far today and how it has impacted your feelings about the topic. Commit to remaining open in the days ahead as we continue to embrace a “spirit of adventure, openness, and searching” (Doctrine and Covenants Section 161:1b).

# Bless

Time of prayer, praise, blessing, and help  
(5% of lesson time)

Invite participants to reflect on this time together as it draws to a close. Give thirty to sixty seconds in silence as they reflect on the question:

*How has the Spirit of God been present among us in this time together?*

Respond aloud in the group with a brief statement, word, or image.

**Closing Blessing:** For Wider Vision

That we might see more than what we could see before  
And recognize with awe all we have yet to learn  
That humility might accompany us, stoking wonder and delight  
At the vastness, the multiplicity of ways of knowing, seeing, sensing  
That as our vision widens and deepens, so too, will our hearts  
And we will want to know more of each other  
And our rigid certainties will give way to a joyous searching  
Always seeking and journeying in the company of friends.  
Amen.

# A HOPEFUL FUTURE

AUTHOR: STEPHEN M. VEAZEY

## Excerpts from *Boldy Venture*

We also have one another as we journey, our beloved worldwide faith community. We are a diverse people. Through the Holy Spirit we are being fitted together as a global community through which Christ lives (Ephesians 2:19–21). We are becoming a dwelling place for God or holy temple, spanning the Earth. Our beautiful Temple reminds us of this destiny. As we journey, we are discovering:

**...the power of community in Christ expressed locally in distinctive fashions while upholding a unity of vision, foundational beliefs, and mission throughout the world.**

A hopeful future for Community of Christ is possible—if we choose it. The Holy Spirit urges us to boldly venture there with God. Doctrine and Covenants 165:1a–e affirms:

**Community of Christ, a divine vision is set before you... Lovingly invite others to experience the good news of new life in community with Christ. ...Undertake compassionate and just actions to abolish poverty and end needless suffering. Pursue peace on and for the Earth. Let nothing separate you from this mission. It reveals divine intent for personal, societal, and environmental salvation; a fullness of gospel witness for creation's restoration.**

Our vision speaks of holistic salvation for persons, groups, and the entire creation. Salvation in all dimensions. God's vision of restoration is much bigger than many imagine.

The World Church Leadership Council is involved in group discernment. This includes constant listening to the Holy Spirit through the voices of various ages, cultures, and life experiences around

the world. The council has drafted a statement of emerging themes. Excerpts include:

**The soul of Community of Christ is expressed most fully as we embody Jesus Christ, the peaceful One, and his mission. This happens through relational, spiritual, invitational, and globally connected Christ-centered communities actively pursuing justice and peace on and for the Earth. We are discovering that a posture of simplicity, agility, and flexibility will equip and poise us to faithfully live the heart of our calling in a changing world.**

These sentences are not the end of discernment. They provide opportunities for explorations of principles, possibilities, and insights in all apostolic fields. The church's constant call is to discern the time in which we live; our varied contexts of mission; and what our approaches to ministry should be as we embody the soul of Community of Christ and follow Jesus, the peaceful One.

# “LISTEN AND PRAY”: WHAT IS EMERGING IN THE COMMUNITY THROUGH THE HOLY SPIRIT?

## LESSON OVERVIEW

Learners will continue to deepen in discernment by listening to all that has been discussed and discovered to begin articulating what is emerging personally and communally.

## PREPARATION

Read Article 4, “A Hopeful Future” by “Stephen M. Veazey”

## SUPPLIES

- *Community of Christ Sings*
- Journal books or blank paper and writing utensils (invite participants to bring their own journal, if they wish)
- Meditative music for reflection (optional)

## GUIDING DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS

As you explore difficult issues in a group setting, it is important to talk meaningfully, welcoming all perspectives and honoring the Worth of All Persons. The following principles will help guide difficult conversations:

- Honor all perspectives and hold safe space for all to share. Vary opportunities for sharing, such as sharing in pairs, writing, drawing responses, or sharing in small groups. Pay attention to perspectives that challenge your own. Remember, the purpose is not to debate or change perspectives.
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# Gather

Activates background knowledge;  
prepares and motivates for lesson  
(15% of lesson time)

## Spiritual Freedom: Parable of the Sower

As you hear these words, consider the state of your own soul as you come into this discerning community.

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**The Path.** We can get busy or stuck on the surface of things and forget to think about what really matters. Without places of depth in us, the seeds of deep life can get washed away or eaten by birds.

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**Thorns:** Too much crowds and chokes out who God invites us to be. Too many opinions. Too many voices. Too much happening at school, in our lives, at home, in the world.

**Good Soil:** This happens when we know we are whole, loved, and paying attention to what really matters. We thrive when we have the space to

discover who we really are and let God tend our lives.

**Reflect:** What does the ground of your life feel like?

After reflecting, turn to a neighbor and briefly share how you come today.

# Engage

Invites exploration  
and interaction  
(35% of lesson time)

Reflect on what the group heard yesterday on the topic as it reviewed the six lenses. In groups of three, reflect on the following questions.

1. Where does it feel like there is growing consensus or shared understanding?
2. Where do we sense differences of opinion or perspective?
3. Can we identify what in the topic for discernment seems most significant for this community?

Invite members to share reflections with the large group.

## Practice: Listen and Pray

Take ten–fifteen minutes (based on allotted time for class) to reflect on what you have heard and experienced in our time of community discernment on this topic.

Spend time in individual prayer over the topic the group has been discerning. Notice how you feel. Notice if anything has shifted or changed in you throughout the week. Walk in nature. Pay attention to your body. Listen to the movements of your heart. **How is God speaking through your mind, heart, and body as you reflect on this topic today?**

# Respond

Takes the learners from hearing to doing  
(35% of lesson time)

## Practice: Seeking Consensus

We do not expect that as a group we will discover “the answer” by the end of our time together. But we do want to provide space to practice growing in consensus, listening deeply, and laboring together in love to find areas of common understanding.

Invite reflections from the time of individual prayer in groups of four or five. Give each group twenty minutes to share how it comes to the topic after these days of discernment and prayer. Emphasize that this does not need to be a “final answer,” but a touchpoint of where we are individually and collectively. After hearing each other’s perspective, task the group with **identifying a short statement that represents what the group can say together about the topic.** This does not mean everyone is in agreement. This is a practice in listening together to different perspectives and finding where there is common ground. Invite the group to write its statement on a piece of paper and to decide on a person who will be willing to share it with the large group.

*Facilitator Note: Consider bringing the groups back with a familiar song.*

**Large Group:** Invite each group to share its statement.

# Send

Explores how the lesson might be lived  
(10% of lesson time)

## Large-group Sharing

- What was your experience of this time of consensus-building in your small group?

- What patterns did you hear in the statements read in the larger community?
- What do you sense is the next faithful step for our community based on what you have heard?

Notice what you have heard so far today and how it has impacted your feelings. Commit to remaining open in the days ahead as we continue to embrace a “spirit of adventure, openness, and searching” (Doctrine and Covenants Section 161:1b).

# Bless

Time of prayer, praise, blessing, and help  
(5% of lesson time)

Invite participants to reflect on this time together as it draws to a close. Give thirty to sixty seconds in silence as they reflect on the question:

*How has the Spirit of God been present among us in this time together?*

Respond aloud in the group with a brief statement, word, or image.

Closing Blessing

# THE WAY FORWARD: WHAT IS THE PLAN?

AUTHOR: STEPHEN M. VEAZEY

“What is the strategic plan for the church?” I can offer material that answers this question. However, my basic response is: “You are the church’s strategic plan” or, better yet, “We are the church’s strategic plan!”

God’s plan of redemption and restoration is incarnation. Incarnation is the Eternal Word becoming flesh in Jesus Christ so that it dwells through communities of disciples that embody Christ’s ministry. In other words, all the dreaming, discerning, and doing of ministries locally and globally, as guided by the Holy Spirit, are the essential elements of God’s vision as expressed through the church.

## 1

It is vital that we get this concept! We are God’s way of redeeming and transforming the world. Whom we become in Christ and what we share of our giftedness and resources is how the reign of God expands on Earth.

No detailed plan can substitute for communities of disciples and friends discerning and living Christ’s mission together daily.

Clarity we seek about the future will come as we journey together in response to guidance of the Holy Spirit and befriend all we meet along the way. Remember the Samaritan who had the courage to see as God sees and respond as God would to the wounded traveler (Luke 10:25–37)?

Recently, I was reminded of a fable. One day an elephant was walking down a road. It saw a hummingbird lying in the road with its tiny feet pointed into the air. “What are you doing, little bird?” boomed the elephant. The bird replied, “I heard the sky might fall today, so, I am ready to help hold it up, should that happen.”

## 2

The elephant trumpeted a laugh that echoed off the hills and said, “Little bird, do you really think

those spindly legs could help hold up the sky?” The bird responded, “Well, not alone. But in a situation like this, one must do what one can do. And this is what I can do!”

In some cultural versions of the story, the elephant reflects briefly, then carefully lies down near the bird and points its massive legs toward the sky, too! And, in yet more versions, other animals curious about this surprising sight gather, asking, “What are you doing?” and “Can we help, too?”

One time I took our granddaughter, Bailey, who was seven at the time, with me to my office on Take Your Daughter (granddaughter) to Work Day. I set up a little table for her to use for her “office work,” which was mostly drawing and coloring. She produced an amazing picture of the Temple.

## 3

Later I invited her to sit with me as we explored the World Church website and talked about the church. Then we looked up her family in the Ministry Information System (Shelby). We zeroed in on her name. By her name was the term “friend” since she was not yet baptized and confirmed. She looked at the screen and then at me with puzzlement as she repeated the word “friend.” Then she said, “But Grandpa, I want to be more than that!”

Bailey was experiencing the stirring of Christ’s call to discipleship and whole-life commitment that has now continued through her baptism, confirmation, and continued growth as an active church member.

What about you? Do you sense the encouragement of the Holy Spirit to keep growing in discipleship and ministry, to be “more than that” at this point in your life?

Ruth Haley Barton in her book, *Life Together in Christ*, observes that Spiritual transformation takes

place incrementally over time with others in the context of disciplines and practices that open us to God. In general, while we are still on Earth, our transformation will happen by degrees (2 Corinthians 3:18), and we need each other to grow (1 Corinthians 12).

These are unsettling, disruptive, demanding, and opportune times! We can allow ourselves to be paralyzed by uncertainty and conflict, or we can keep growing and transforming in Christ as we respond to opportunities and challenges.

Let's be and do all we can to move into the future with courage, creativity, and commitment. Let's surprise ourselves and others as we grow in love, faith, ministry, invitation, generosity, and bold action with God.

# ACT

## WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS WE WILL TAKE TOGETHER?

### LESSON OVERVIEW

Learners will conclude the discernment experience by identifying where they feel called to continue exploring the topic, or by considering the next faithful steps for the community in response to the topic or question.

### PREPARATION

Read Article 5, “The Way Forward: What Is the Plan?” by Stephen M. Veazey

### SUPPLIES

- *Community of Christ Sings*
- Journal books or blank paper and writing utensils (invite participants to bring their own journal, if they wish)
- Meditative music for reflection (optional)

### GUIDING DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS

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# Gather

Activates background knowledge;  
prepares and motivates for lesson  
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to discover who we really are and let God tend our lives.

**Reflect:** What does the ground of your life feel like?

After reflection, turn to a neighbor and briefly share how you come today.

# Engage

Invites exploration  
and interaction  
(35% of lesson time)

*Facilitator Note: Based on the statements from yesterday, pay attention to what is needed in the group to bring closure to this experience of group discernment. Is more dialogue, information, or prayer needed on this topic? Does the group have common understanding or a desire to act based on the week of discernment? The facilitator may choose to spend time outside the session synthesizing the statements into one statement that represents where the group finds itself as a way to generate further conversation while moving forward in understanding. Consider the following two options as a next step for the group’s experience.*

## Option 1: If more dialogue and prayer are needed on the topic...

### Provide five minutes of personal reflection

(in silence or with reflective music in the background) for participants to prayerfully consider and write the questions they are holding as they prepare to leave this week of discernment. What more needs to be discovered as we continue to hold this issue in discerning community over the months ahead?

**In small groups,** compile the questions and share about the experience of engaging deeper on this topic through discernment. (ten minutes)

**Large Group:** List all the questions the group is holding at the end of this week. Discuss possible ways to continue to hold one another

and the topic in prayer and ongoing discernment and dialogue in the year ahead.

### **Option 2: If there is significant consensus and a desire to move forward in action...**

**Provide five minutes of personal reflection** (in silence or with reflective music in the background) for participants to prayerfully consider the next faithful step, for them personally or for the community on this topic. Remind the group that “the next faithful step” does not need to include *everything* that could be done to address this issue, but one thing to which they are feeling particularly called and *actually* will do.

**In small groups**, share statements of “the next faithful step.” Compile these statements and have a scribe ready to share them with the larger group.

**Large group:** Hear from each group its list of a possible “next faithful step.” After all groups have shared, take one minute to invite the group to reflect: “*What is the one to which you feel most called as a response?*” Provide space as possible for individuals to respond.

*Facilitator Note: If it feels like the group is coalescing around a possible action, notice where the conversation is going while keeping space open for disparate perspectives and inviting prayerful attention to the call of God and a commitment to spiritual freedom. Return to the image of the parable of the sower if necessary—what conditions are needed in us for the life of God in this situation to thrive?*

## **Respond**

Takes the learners from hearing to doing  
(35% of lesson time)

**Prayer of Examen:** The prayer of examen is a way of reflecting on our experience and seeking the presence of God in our memories and future. Slowly lead the group through this time of prayer, pausing after each prompt for personal reflection.

## **Prayer of Examen**

“O Lord, you have searched me and known me”  
(Psalm 139:1).

1. Take a few moments to settle into prayer. Take as much time as you need to breathe into the silence and find any small opening to God’s presence with you here and now.
2. Invite the Holy Spirit to help you prayerfully review today’s discernment retreat. Trust that everything spoken, heard, and felt has happened in God’s presence. Prayerfully review your memories through the lens of God’s unconditional love and grace.
3. Search your memories for moments when you felt especially close to God and others, awake and alert to divine presence, energized, or grateful. Savor these memories and give thanks. Notice what was happening when you felt this way and write it down.
4. Search your memories for moments when you felt distant, distracted, or disconnected from God and others. Notice if you felt tense, restless, or spiritually unfree. Were there times when your own agendas, assumptions, or biases about issues or people restricted your openness? Notice what was happening when you felt this way and write it down.
5. Is one distinct memory, moment, feeling, or insight from this discernment that is most present for you now? Rest with it in prayer, noticing what it may be opening in you. Write down anything that surfaces as significant.
6. Give thanks for the Holy Spirit’s light and wisdom during this time of prayer. Offer your future to God. Continue to seek a stance of spiritual freedom and openness to God’s call as you imagine continuing in this discernment process.

Amen.

# Send

Explores how the lesson  
might be lived  
(10% of lesson time)

**Large Group:** We have spent a week exploring a particular topic through practices of a Christian discernment process. Reviewing our experience is an important way of paying attention to what God has been forming in us individually and as a community, even if we still leave with questions about what is next for us. What came up for you in the prayer of examen? What did this time of prayer reveal about your experience of the week?

Notice what you have heard so far today and how it has impacted your feelings about the topic. Commit to remaining open in the days ahead as we continue to embrace a “spirit of adventure, openness, and searching” (Doctrine and Covenants Section 161:1b).

# Bless

Time of prayer, praise,  
blessing, and help  
(5% of lesson time)

Invite participants to reflect on this time together as it draws to a close. Give thirty to sixty seconds in silence as they reflect on:

***How has the Spirit of God been present among us in this time together?***

Respond aloud in the group with a brief statement, word, or image.

**Closing Blessing:** Read or sing, “O God of Vision,” (CCS 78).

*O God of vision  
far greater than all human scheming,  
gather us now in your presence,  
refreshing redeeming.  
Show us anew*

*life in your breathtaking view,  
lovely beyond all our dreaming.*

*Pour out your Spirit on all  
now assembled before you.  
May our diversity here  
be a means to adore you.  
Women and men, young, old, and youthful again,  
Make us as one we implore you.*

*Grant to us insight, O God,  
for this time of decision.  
May we dream challenging dreams  
of both depth and precision.  
Speak through the dark.  
Dispel by lightning’s bright spark  
whatever clouds dim our vision.*

*Break the sun’s rays into color,  
a rainbow around us.  
Storm clouds, though real and near,  
are not enough to confound us.  
Arched in the sky,  
beauty and promise are high,  
giving us hope to astound us.*

*Grateful, we come now by  
Christ’s invitation clear spoken.  
We seek the nourishment  
found in fruit crushed and bread broken.  
Christ for us all!  
Come, let us answer the call,  
Of-f’ring our lives as the token.*



## Recommended Resources

Personal and Communal Discernment Guide: [CofChrist.org/discernment/](http://CofChrist.org/discernment/)

Beaumont, Susan. *How to Lead When You Don't Know Where You're Going: Leading in a Liminal Season*. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2019.

Brackley, Dean. *The Call to Discernment in Troubled Times: New Perspectives on the Transformative Wisdom of Ignatius of Loyola*. New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2013.

Cimperman, Maria. *Social Analysis for the 21st Century*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2015.

Farnham, Suzanne G., and Stephanie A. Hull, R.T. McLean. *Grounded in God: Listening Hearts Discernment for Group Deliberations*. Harrisburg: Morehouse Publishing, 1996.

Fendall, Lon, and Jan Wood, Bruce Bishop. *Practicing Discernment Together: Finding God's Way Forward in Decision Making*. Newburg: Barclay Press, 2007.

Haley Barton, Ruth. *Pursuing God's Will Together: A Discernment Practice for Leadership Groups*. Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2012.

Liebert, Elizabeth. *The Way of Discernment: Spiritual Practices for Decision Making*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008.

Liebert, Elizabeth. *The Soul of Discernment: A Spiritual Practice for Communities and Institutions*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2015.

Morris, Danny E., and Charles M. Olsen. *Discerning God's Will Together: A Spiritual Practice for the Church*. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2012.