**CORPORATE SPIRITUAL DISCERNMENT MAP**

**NINE MOVEMENTS FOR DISCERNING GOD’S WILL TOGETHER**

**Spiritual Discernment –** The capacity to recognize the presence, activity and perspective of God

**Corporate Spiritual Discernment –** Responding to the activity of God as a leadership group and to make decisions in response to that presence

**Biblical Example: Acts 15 –** Do Gentiles need to be circumcised in order to become Christians?

* They listened to the conversion experience of the Gentiles themselves
* They listened to respected believers witnessing these conversions
* They listened to respected experts in Mosaic law
* They listened to Peter’s perspective
* They listened to Paul and Barnabas’s descriptions of signs and wonders God had done among the Gentiles
* They listened to James expounding on Scripture connecting the dots between Peter’s testimony and the words of Amos*…….”And I will set it up, so that all other peoples may seek the Lord even all the Gentiles over whom my name has been called”*
* *“Then the apostles and the elders, with the consent of the whole church decided…….”*
* *“For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us…………..”*
* *“When the people of Antioch read the letter, they rejoiced at the exhortation………”*

**FRAMING:**

* What are we deciding? What are we praying for?

**GROUNDING:**

* What are our guiding principles?
1. Mission and Vision
2. Values
3. Objectives, Goals and Strategies

**SHEDDING:**

* Am I willing to give up my will for the sake of discerning God’s will?
* What preconceived notions, assumptions and biases do I need to set aside to openly consider the matter?

**ROOTING:**

* What biblical themes, scriptures and stories connect to the matter we are considering?
* Is there anything in the life and teachings of Jesus that informs our considerations?
* What of our church’s traditions, history and precedents connect to the matter we are considering?

**LISTENING:**

* What pertinent facts do we need to consider?
1. Financial reports/implications
2. Pertinent research, statistics and background information
3. Proposals/recommendations
* Whose voices do we need to hear?
1. Those who will be impacted by the decision
2. Those who will implement the decision
3. Those with special giftedness, experience or expertise in the area being discussed
4. The promptings of the Holy Spirit (in silence)

**EXPLORING/IMPROVING:**

* What are the potential options and paths that are available to us?
* Can any of these be improved or combined as a third alternative?

**WEIGHING:**

* How do we test and select the best options in response to the leading of God’s spirit throughout the discernment process?
1. From the Jesuit practice of rigorous and vigorous mental examination (pros and cons)
2. From the biblical witness, which choice will nurture the fruit of the Spirit in our church and larger community? Which is the most loving and unifying option?
3. From the Quaker tradition, place each option near the heart
4. Is there consolation – as sense of peace and movement toward God?
5. Is there desolation – a sense of despondence and movement away from God?
6. From Henry Blackaby’s “Experiencing God” question, where is God working?

**AFFIRMING:**

* The leader asks each member if the articulated path seems to be God’s will.
1. I agree with the option/motion/path as stated
2. I agree with some reservation, however, I have expressed my reservations and have been heard, so I can move forward in peace
3. I don’t agree, but I feel comfortable in standing aside and deferring to those who are most affected and who have greater clarity
4. No, I don’t agree and cannot go forward

**RESTING:**

* How does it feel? Does the decision bring peace and draw the group closer to God and each other or does it result in distress and move the group away from God?