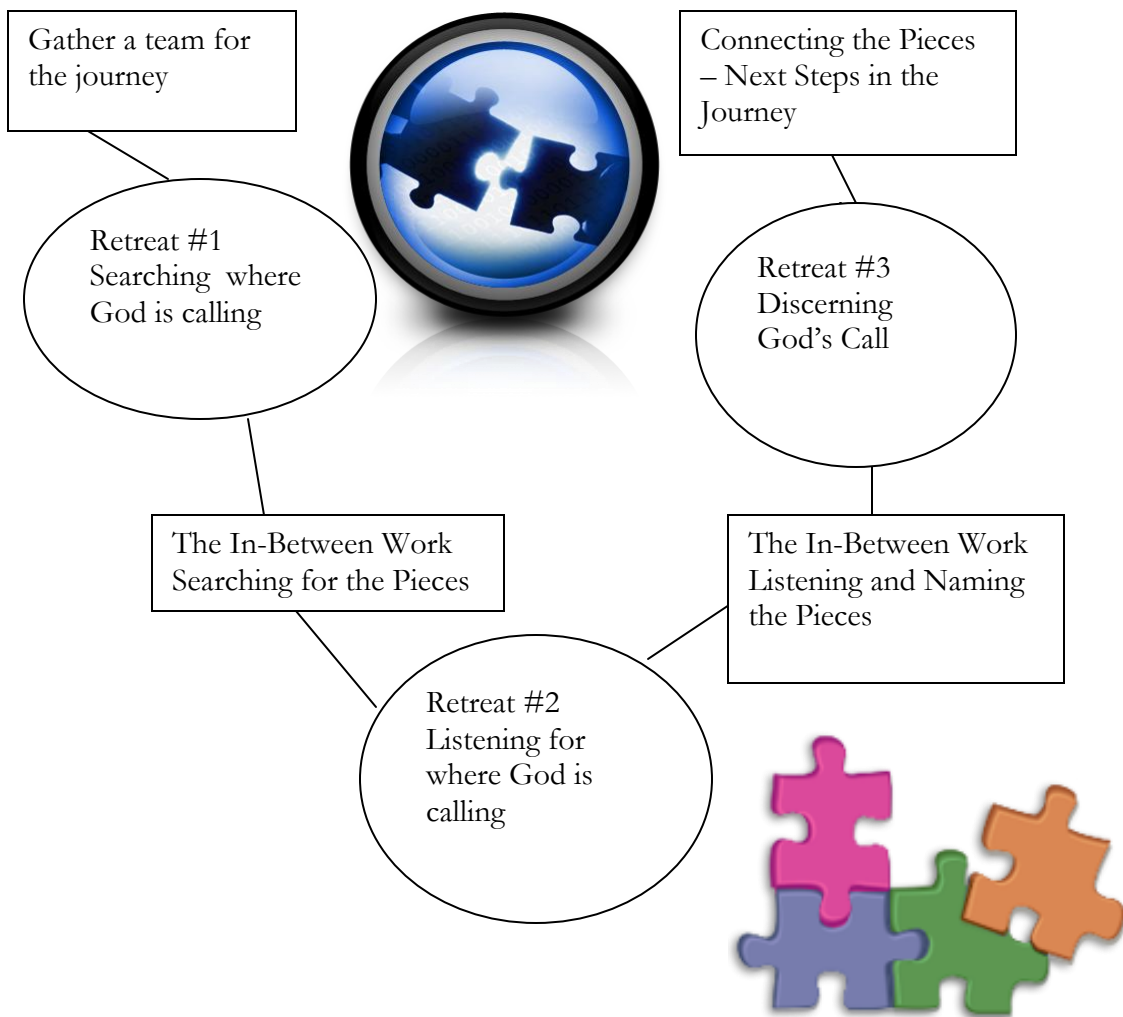


DISCOVERING AND CONNECTING THE PIECES OF OUR CHURCH:

A journey of searching, listening, & discernment

A Discernment Process for Congregations



July 2011 - Version 1.1

Acknowledgements

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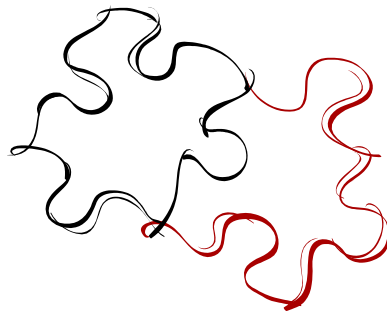
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DISCOVERING AND CONNECTING THE PIECES OF OUR CHURCH: A journey of searching, listening, & discernment

Welcome to Discovering and Connecting the Pieces of Our Church!!!

This document was developed by a team of people from the Presbytery of Philadelphia and Church Innovations for use by congregations who are in a time of transition between pastors. The process is intentionally designed to assist the congregation and the leadership to reflect on their history, discern their gifts, and encourage new leaders but mostly to focus on where God is calling them. From this work the process will lead the leadership in discerning what type of leader is needed to walk with them into God's preferred and promised future.

The cost of the document is \$10 for each congregation. Upon payment of the \$10 you have permission to make as many copies as needed for your congregation. We do ask that, if you recommend this process to other congregations, they be encouraged to download their own document. Funds received from this document will be used to help develop resources for Congregational Development and Transformation.

We do not have an online payment system but the honor system. Please use this page as the invoice for your treasurer.

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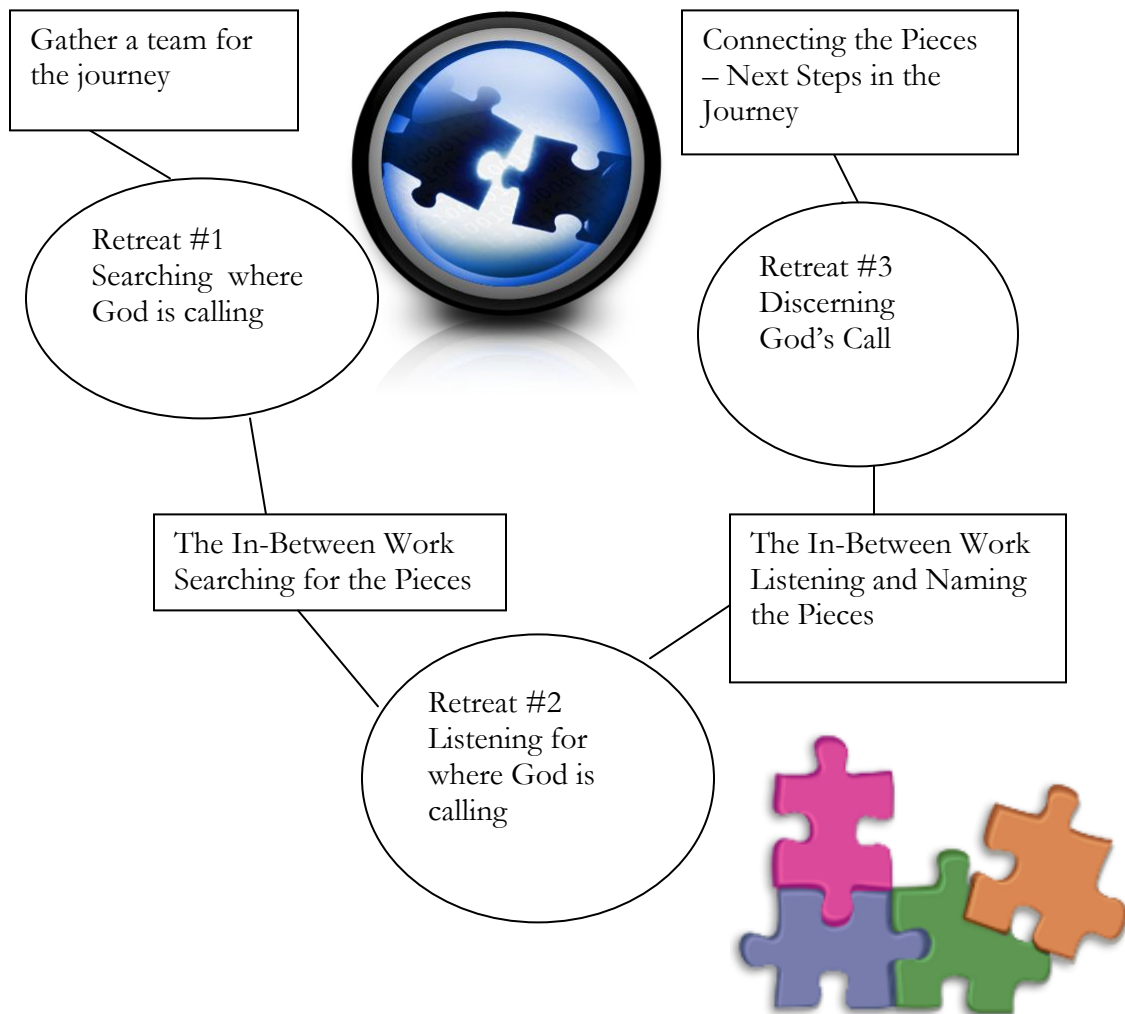
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DISCOVERING AND CONNECTING THE PIECES OF OUR CHURCH:

A journey of searching, listening, & discernment

Retreat # 1

Here's the big picture:



Our major steps on the full journey:

- Gather a team
- Have Retreat #1
- The work between retreats
 - Timeline event
 - Demographics Study
- Have Retreat #2
- The work between retreats
 - Listening Posts
 - Congregational Discernment Event
- Have Retreat #3
 - Communication
 - Complete and submit the Congregational Discernment Report

Introduction

Discovering and Connecting the Pieces of our Church: A journey of searching, listening & discernment

What is a puzzle?

*A **puzzle** is a problem or process that tests the ingenuity of the solver(s). In a basic puzzle, one is intended to piece together objects (puzzle pieces) in a logical way in order to come up with the desired shape, picture or solution. Solutions to puzzles may require recognizing patterns and creating a particular order. Puzzles and solutions are based on the process of inquiry and discovery.*
Wikipedia

The discernment process is very similar to the steps of solving a puzzle. Solving a puzzle requires inquiry and discovery; seeing patterns and forms and making sense of all the bits of information. When we work our way through the discernment process we need to listen, inquire and discover where God is calling our congregation. This means looking for patterns, listening deeply and making sense of all the pieces of information.

This discernment process will assist the congregational leadership to discover or rediscover the pieces of history, information and call for this congregation and help them to see the patterns, shapes and order of that information so that together the congregation can discover where God is calling them in this time and place.

Why are we doing this?

It is well documented that the time between pastors can be critical and fruitful for the life of the congregation. The in-between time can be used as a space to evaluate, reflect on, focus and discern the faithful journey of the congregation.

A discernment process leads the congregation through that evaluation and reflection on where God is calling the community on their next steps of faith.

During this transition time we need to put the different pieces of our life in Christ in order, to provide a picture of who we are, whose we are and where God is calling us as a community of faith.

During this process we will begin to find the different pieces and join them together. This process is also meant to help a congregation use the in-between time for reflection and to assist the congregation in preparing for the next steps in searching for pastoral leadership.

This process is an intentional design to assist the leader in answering the questions on the PC (USA) Church Information Form (CIF). However it can be used by the congregation at any time in their life together when they want to be intentional about discerning where God is calling them.

What is the process and how long does it take?

The process consists of three leadership retreats with congregational events in between. Depending on the time of year, the process is designed to be completed within 4 to 6 months, but it may take longer. It is not recommended that the process take fewer than 4 months. This will allow the congregation the appropriate amount of time to accomplish and reflect on the pieces of the puzzle.

Who leads the process?

Ideally this process is led by the Interim Pastor who has been called to assist your congregation through a transition time between pastors. If an interim pastor is not available for your congregation the Committee on Ministry (COM) will assist your congregation in finding a facilitator for the process.

A Transition Team works with the Interim Pastor to lead the congregation. This team of 4 to 6 people is appointed by the session. The moderator of the team should not be the Interim Pastor. The team should be people who are interested in pulling information together; who are good listeners, are good organizers, and are willing to take on this short term task. They do not have to be members of the session but having at least one person from session on the Transition Team can assist in communication.

What are the responsibilities of the Transition Team?

- To plan and assist the interim pastor in leading the retreats
- To follow up on the "in-between" work
- To put together a final report for the COM and PNC (Pastor Nominating Committee)
- They will search, find, and gather the pieces together with assistance from other members of the congregation

What does the Process look like?

Outline of the Process

I. Transition Team appointed by Session

This is the team who searches, finds and gathers the pieces and facilitates putting the pieces together.

II. Retreat #1 Searching for the Pieces

- Interim Pastor and Transition Team participate in this retreat
- Dwelling in the Word
- Review the Developmental Tasks
- Plan for the Timeline Event
- Plan for the Demographic Study

III. Between Retreat #1 and #2

- Dwelling in the Word
- Transition Team works on a demographics study
- Timeline Event with congregation

IV. Retreat #2 – Naming our Pieces

- Dwelling in the Word
- What have we learned? What Pieces have we gathered?
- What have we discovered?
- Frame our Story – Plan for Listening Posts
- Putting Pieces Together – Plan for Discernment Event

V. Between Retreat #2 and #3

- Dwelling in the Word
- Listening to Our Stories – Listening Posts
- Putting Pieces Together – Discernment Event

VI. Retreat #3 – Putting the pieces together

- Dwelling in the Word
- What have we found? What have we learned?
- What is God's call to us? Plan for Congregational Discernment Report
- Sharing the Pieces – Plan for Communication

VII. Next Steps

DWELLING IN THE WORD

What is Dwelling in the Word?

Dwelling in the Word is a process of deep listening to the Word of God and what God is saying to us as individuals and as a community of faith. The process of Dwelling in the Word is included in the appendix #1.

Why do Dwelling in the Word?

Dwelling in the Word is about listening to each other, to our own hearts and listening together to where God is calling us as a community of faith. God does call communities of faith to ministry and the first step in discerning that call is to listen.

Throughout this discernment process you will be Dwelling in one passage of scripture. Though it may seem strange to many to stick with one passage, the challenge is to hang in there throughout the process and to listen deeper each time the scripture is read. The richness is not in hearing the scripture over and over but the listening to it and each other over and over.

From *Dwelling in the Word* by Pat Keiffert and Pat Taylor Ellison, chapter 2

Deep listening to one another

[In Dwelling in the Word] we hear one another. We listen deeply to one another and notice things. This deep listening happens in dwelling because the practice involves hearing the passage, reflecting silently upon it, and then finding a partner we don't know well and listening that person into speaking freely about what thoughts or feelings came during the reading. Such deep listening is rare enough in classrooms or among staff members or on church councils. Even rarer is having to report to the rest of the group what the *other* person said.

Reporting the words of another as truly as possible is an old active listening exercise, nothing new, to be sure. But that sort of listening honors the other and makes sure that it is safe to say freely what needs to be said.

Can you imagine being on a staff or a committee where this kind of deep listening to one another takes place regularly? Wouldn't it be freeing? Wouldn't it build trust? Wouldn't it make that staff or committee co-creators with God of a trustworthy world?

Getting Ready for Retreat #1

Responsibilities of the Session

- Appoint a Transition Team

Responsibilities of the Interim Pastor

- Orientation of the Transition Team to the process
- Review and lead Dwelling in the Word

Responsibilities of the Transition Team

- Dwelling in the Word
- Plan date/ location/ food /supplies etc.
- Invite Session, Deacons and Transition Team to first retreat

Retreat #1: Searching for the Pieces The Morning

Team Introductions via Dwelling in the Word (35 -45 min)

Read Acts 9:10-20. Someone reads aloud. Others can follow along in Bibles or handouts, or can simply listen.

Allow some silence to unfold after the reading.

Each person finds a reasonably friendly-looking stranger to listen to, asking the stranger to say what picture or question popped up or where his or her imagination was caught as the passage was read. The pair listens to one another well enough to report what the other has said. They also exchange names, so that each can introduce the other during the reporting.

The pairs return to the larger group and introduce their partners and say what they heard from one another. The retreat leader(s) make sure that everyone has been introduced and, if there's time, some further discussion of the passage can take place.

Reflect on ways Dwelling in the Word can be used in the Congregation during this transition time.

Note: The *Dwelling in the Word* book can be purchased through the Church Innovations office at www.churchinnovations.org

Notes for Facilitator:

- Share the Acts 9: 10-20 sheet with group – Appendix #1
- Review the Dwelling in the Word process with the team.

Considering where and when and why we are (45 -60 min)

Our congregation is at a transition point – between what and what?

We consider many things in order to discern God’s preferred future for the congregation. We engage in conversation with each other about the direction of the congregation, review its history and its present, work through some “developmental tasks,” gather information for the Church Information Form, all so we can call a pastor who is willing to walk with us.

Take time as the Transition Team to think together about the transition point the congregation is journeying through. What is it between?

List the major “markers” or events or metaphors the local church is crossing between. Be creative.

List your ideas on paper.

Review the Developmental Tasks (see presentation possibilities in appendix # 2)

Notes to Facilitator:

- Have paper handy to write down the “markers”
- Review suggestions which are available in appendix #2 on Developmental Tasks presentation.

Our congregation needs to remember its history and look at its present in order to claim its future

Review Timeline event (30 min)

Purpose:

The Transition Team will host a timeline event (Appendix # 4), attended by congregation members, accomplishing three things:

- Beginning to work through some Developmental Tasks for this journey
 - Members come to terms with History
 - Members begin to discover Identity
 - Members begin to consider the Future
- Training in Leadership Skills
 - Transition Team and others lead a big event
 - Transition Team and others reflect on what is learned from the big event
- People focusing on Spiritual character of the church, putting God at the center
 - Dwelling in the Word
 - Asking what God has provided in the past
 - Beginning to consider God’s call to the congregation
 - Discussing why reflecting on our history can be important to understanding our call as a community of faith

Naming the pieces discovered at the timeline event

The Transition Team and the others who led the event will have a meeting after the event to give everyone a chance to reflect on what they saw and heard and claim not only the history of the congregation but the gifts and energy of the members.

Take time to list on paper what you believe about the role of a congregation’s history in looking to the future. Use mutual invitation as a process of sharing (Appendix # 8)

Notes for Facilitator:

- Review the purpose of the time line event with the team. Appendix # 4
- Write down their reflections about history for a future retreat.
- Plan for a time for the Transition team to gather to reflect on what was heard at the Timeline event

The congregation needs to understand its location and its neighbors (30 -45 min)

Checking out the demographics of our area

The Transition Team will complete a Demographic Study, (Appendix # 3) gathering facts about our area and the people who live here, giving us much information about ourselves and our neighbors.

Helpful information: The small team can be 2 or 3 (or more) people who are not intimidated by statistical information. The small team does not need to be from the Transition Team but will communicate with the Transition Team.

Naming the pieces discovered from the demographics

The Transition Team and the others who helped in the Demographics Study will have a meeting after their work is done to give them a chance to reflect on what they are learning. The gathering for the time of reflection should happen before the next retreat.

Reflect on the difference between your neighborhood as the mission field to where God calls us and our neighborhood as where your members live.

Notes for Facilitator:

Lead the team in a conversation about their understanding of the demographics in general. What do they think are the demographics now? What has it been in the past? How have any changes affected (or not affected) the congregation and the mission/ministry of the congregation? Make a list to compare with the actual demographics at the next retreat.

The congregation needs to consider its gifts, its purpose, and its call

The timeline event and the demographic study will produce a wealth of information that our members do not normally consider when they think about our congregation. At this point of transition, such information provides valuable pieces of the puzzle that we are called to put together.

Laying one or two pieces on the table

Not every piece of information from the timeline or the study will be immediately valuable to our team or the rest of the church's leadership. Our team will begin thinking about which pieces are the most important for this time and place; which pieces might reveal God's call to our church.

Notes for Facilitator:

Lead a discussion about the importance of not being overwhelmed with the information but importance of focusing on a few pieces of information, the pieces that appear to fit together.

Retreat #1: Searching for the Pieces The Afternoon

Planning the demographic study (30 min)

Recruit a small team to complete this part of the work, gathering the facts of human population with reference to size and density, distribution and vital statistics

Helpful information: The small team can be 2 or 3 (or more) people who are not intimidated by statistical information. The small team does not need to be from the Transition Team but will communicate with the Transition Team.

Notes for Facilitator:

Review the process for gathering demographics with the Transition Team. This information will be gathered between retreats.

Review the process for gathering Demographics (appendix # 3)

1. This demographics team will use the PCUSA website for an overview. The PCUSA Research Services provides demographic information for your congregation's neighborhood.
2. The Demographic Report database will display a map of the area on which the team can identify pictured churches, view neighborhood statistics, and download block group data in excel format
3. They can then print out the charts available from Research Services:
 - a. General Population
 - b. Households with Children
 - c. Adult Age Groups
 - d. Housing Types
 - e. Education Levels
 - f. Average Income
 - g. Major Cultural Groups

See Appendix #3 on how to access the information.

4. The sub-team will gather the information and with the Transition Team work through the reflection questions.

Together with the demographic study team, consider what your neighborhood looks like. Really.

Helpful information: Break into a 2 or 3 teams (or more) of two and take a walk (or drive if walking is not a possibility) around different parts of your neighborhood. Many congregations look at their neighborhood as where their members live; this exercise is to look at the neighbors surrounding the church itself.

1. Walk or Drive around the church's neighborhood during a nice Saturday afternoon. What do you see about the housing? Who are the people walking around the area? Is there mostly retail or residential properties? What are the age groups seen on the streets or in the parks or out and about in the area?

2. Go to a place where you can talk about what you are learning. Ask yourselves these questions:

- What is our neighborhood?
- Who are your neighbors? Are they like you? Does the church membership reflect the neighborhood?
- What does hospitality look like in your congregation?
- How would you welcome the neighbors you have identified?
- What steps do you need to take to welcome the neighbors?

Notes for facilitator:

- Help the team list names of those who might be willing to be part of the demographic team. Who will contact them and when?
- Make sure the Transition Team sets a date to do the walk/drive around demographics. Who will be the teams? When will they gather to reflect their findings?

Planning the timeline event (Appendix # 4) (30 min)

What will you need in preparation?

Lots of space, lots of paper, markers (red, blue, green), different art mediums – collage material, watercolor, crayons, paper, glue, paint, color pencils, tape, digital camera or even digital video camera. Tape a long series of papers onto a long wall and mark out the years from the founding of the congregation through the present.

Scribe – This needs to be a person who is willing to take notes by hand or on a computer. See instructions for the scribe.

Video person (optional) – someone could video the stories as they are told. This can be then made into a presentation for the new pastor, for youtube and/or for historical purposes. This might also be helpful to the scribe.

What happens at the event?

Participants write major stories of their congregation as a community in the different places of the timeline. They use the same colored markers as for the individual stories.

Begin with Dwelling in the Word, using Acts 9:10-20 as the passage.

Ask participants to write stories about their own history with the congregation in the different places of the timeline. They use different colored markers:

- Red for a time that was good or great or positive,
- Blue for the time that was difficult, hard or conflicted,
- Green for the time when they could see the work of the Holy Spirit; a time of growth.

Following a time of writing take time to reflect on the timeline.

Ask people these questions:

- What jumps out at you?
- Where are most of the stories (around what decade, years, eras)
- How do the colors tell the story of the church?
- What do you see that gives you “pause”? What gives you hope? What makes you laugh? What saddens you heart?
- Where do you see the work of the Holy Spirit?

Add Biblical stories to the Timeline

Following a time of reflection, break group into small groups of 4 to 5. In a small group, then in the large group, share Biblical stories that relate to events in the timeline.

Using different art media create a collage, picture or design that tells about your conversation. Add your creation to the Timeline.

In a large group spend time in Reflection on the congregation’s story and God’s story.

- Where do we see ourselves in the Biblical narrative?
- What have we learned about ourselves? (the good, the bad and the ugly need to be lifted up)
- Where do we laugh? Where do we pause? Where do we feel sadness or anger? Where do we see hope?

Leave the timeline up for a few weeks. This allows people to see it, reflect on it, and even add to it.

During the entire event, the very important scribe writes down participants’ comments without commentary. The scribe may work with a small writing team of 2 or 3 persons. They do not need to copy the timeline but instead record people’s stories, questions, and comments. The resulting account should be published on the church’s website and in the newsletter. Place photos on the website and in the bulletin. Videos can be posted on the church’s website or on youtube.

Notes for facilitator:

- Walk the Transition Team through the Timeline event.
- If time allows guide the Transition Team through a “mini” version of the Timeline event using a couple of decades of the congregation’s history.
- See appendix # 4
- Using the “steps” worksheet (next page and appendix #5), make sure each team member has clarity on the part they will coordinate

Steps Worksheet (15 min)

Fill out the steps worksheet. Make sure everyone has a copy

Closing (15 min)

Dwell in the Word once again, sharing with a different stranger. Then close Retreat #1 with prayer.

Steps Worksheet from Retreat #1

Steps we'll take to make this happen

- **What will we put on the calendar? Who'll do this?**
 - Dates for Retreats #2 _____ and #3 _____
 - Date for the timeline event _____
 - Date for the meeting to reflect on the timeline event _____

- **Who will we need to recruit? Who'll do this?**
 - Teammates for the demographic study

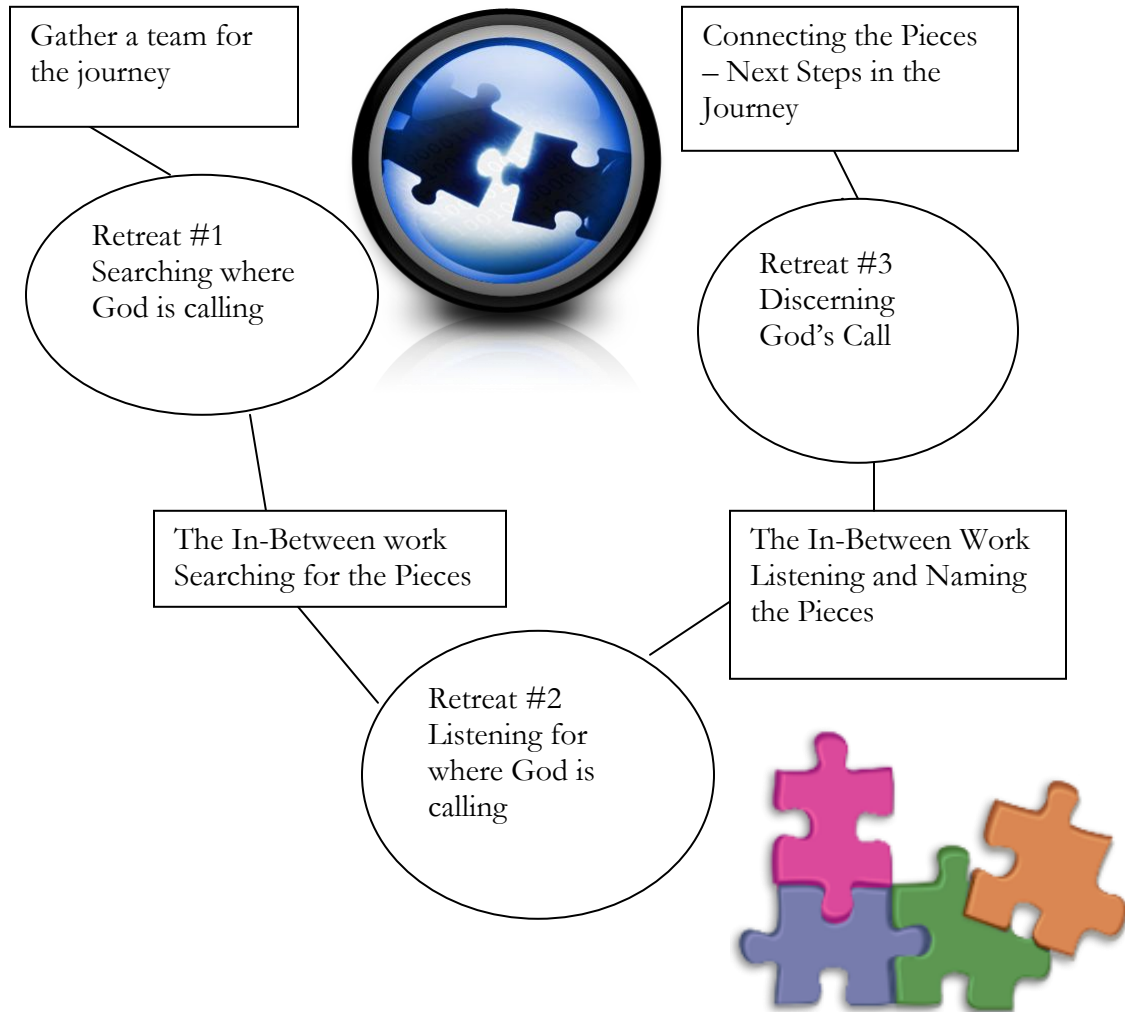
 - Teammates for the timeline event
scribe _____
video _____

- **What supplies will we need? Who'll do this?**
 - for the demographic study

 - for the timeline event

- **Is the work shared fairly across the team?**

DISCOVERING AND CONNECTING THE PIECES OF OUR CHURCH: A journey of searching, listening, & discernment



Our major steps on the full journey:

- Gather a team
- Have Retreat #1
- The work between retreats
 - TimeLine Event
 - Demographic Study
- Have Retreat #2
- The work between retreats
 - Listening Posts
 - Congregational Discernment Event
- Have Retreat #3
 - Communication
 - Complete and submit the Congregational Discernment Report.

Before the Retreat:

- Have demographics in a readable and understandable format.
(Remember not all people like statistical information. If you are able to add graphs and charts or stories that would be helpful.)
- Plan for lunch, location and needed supplies.
- Have timeline information in a readable and understandable format.

Who attends Retreat #2

- Facilitator/interim pastor
- Transition team
- Folk who assisted with the demographics study
- Session and deacons

Retreat #2: Naming the Pieces The Morning

Team Introductions via Dwelling in the Word (30 min)

Read Acts 9: 1-20 aloud. Others can follow along in Bibles or handouts (Appendix # 1), or can simply listen.

Allow some silence to unfold after the reading.

Each person finds a reasonably friendly-looking stranger to listen to, asking the stranger to say what picture or question popped up or where his or her imagination was caught as the passage was read. The pair listens to one another **well enough** to report what **the other** has said. They also exchange names, so that each can introduce the other during the reporting.

The pairs return to the larger group and introduce their partners and say what they heard from one another. The retreat leader(s) make sure that everyone has been introduced and, if there's time, some further discussion of the passage can take place.

What are we learning, inside and outside our walls? What pieces are we gathering? (30 -45 min)

Take time to reflect on the timeline work and other information gathered between retreats. Record on paper or PowerPoint the comments and reflections.

What have we discovered about our congregation's culture and character?

- The participants share with one another what they observed and learned from the events. List on big paper.
- Break into 2 or 3 (or more) groups of 4. Each group works together in discovering a Bible story or other metaphor that describes their congregation **at the present time**.

- The groups share with the other participants those stories and metaphors. Consider as a group what is being learned from the stories.
- Reflect together on what are the other pieces/stories of the congregation that might be apparent.

Notes for Facilitator: Record the stories, scriptures, gifts and other information on big paper or on PowerPoint for everyone to see and to use for the Discernment Report.

What have we discovered about our community? (30 -45 min)

Reflecting on the demographic study and other resources

- The demographic team shares the nature of the neighborhood or greater community in which the church is located, including people and groups that might be of special interest.
- Break into small groups of 3 or 4 for discussion on the Demographic Teams presentation.
- Each small group works at naming what God is doing in their community and where their congregation might choose to be a part of that work.
- In the larger group each small groups share those accounts of God at work and consider as a larger group what is the congregation's place in the community **at the present time**.

Notes for Facilitator: Keep track of comments either on big paper or on PowerPoint or projected note taking. Lead the teams through the above steps of sharing.

Retreat #2: Naming the Pieces The Afternoon

Notes for Facilitator: Start the afternoon with a brief discussion about the importance of listening to each other. See appendix for suggestions.

Before planning the listening post events, lead a discussion with the Transition Team on why listening is the next step, what they can expect as an outcome, and some learnings that can come from listening.

Planning the Listening Posts (appendix # 6) (30 min)

The Transition Team will recruit a small team to complete this part of the work of inviting and gathering people together to hear their stories.

This Listening Post Team will plan and carry out a meeting or series of meetings in the congregation to hear from as many members and affiliated persons as possible. There should be enough listening posts so that all people interested can attend.

Listening Posts

The Listening Post Team will organize several Listening Post Meetings. The meetings should consist of groups between 6 - 10 people. These can be groups that already know each other, work together, are an organized group (i.e. choir, women's circle, Bible Study) or are groups that are organized specifically for this listening process. One suggestion is to pick several dates and have people sign up to be part of a group. Each group should have two facilitators; one to ask the questions and assist in keeping the conversation going and one to keep notes.

Listening Post meetings: (60 minutes)

1. Begin with Dwelling in the Word; Acts 9: 1-20
2. Facilitators will work through these questions and conversations

- a. What Biblical stories relate to our life together as a faith community?
- b. What are some metaphors or images that best fit with our community? With our congregation?
- c. What did you learn from the demographic report that surprises you? What doesn't surprise you?
- d. What did you learn from the History Timeline event? What surprises you? What doesn't surprise you?
- f. Where do you see God at work in your congregation? Where do you see God at work in your community?
- e. In one word, tell the new pastor something about this congregation.

Notes will be kept from each Listening Post meeting.

- About Note taking: The notes from the Listening Post Meetings should include only comments and stories. Avoid using specific names or quotes. Remind the speakers that what they say will be shared but no comment will be connected to a specific speaker.

Together with the Listening Post team, consider what your congregation members think and feel. Really. (20 min)

Notes for Facilitator:

- This section is what the Transition Team does after the listening post events. Assist the team in setting a timeline for the Listening Post events and for the reflection time. **The Listening Post event needs to happen before the Congregational Discernment event.**
- Review this section with the Transition Team and set a date for a time of reflection.

Reflect together on the memories of the past, statements about the present, and dreams for the future that been collected. List the different ideas, stories and memories. Try to put them in similar groups if possible.

Consider any more Biblical stories or other metaphors that have arisen from the Listening Post or from your reflections. Record these.

Planning a Discernment Event for Session or Congregation (30 -45 min)

Note for Facilitator:

Review the purpose of the Discernment Event (Appendix #7) with the planning team. Walk them through the process so they will be able to lead portions of the Discernment event.

What is the purpose:

- To review learnings from the "in between work"
- To reflect on how God is calling us in this time and place
- To look for patterns and commonalities
- To spend time listening to each other about what we have learned.
- To put together the information for more reflection and action

Who participates?

This is a question that the session and transition team need to discuss. In a small church it would be helpful to have everyone who wants to, participate. For larger congregations, perhaps only the leadership of the church participates. The group should be at least the session and a few more representative people. A good diverse discussion can happen with at least 10 -12 people participating. Larger groups might want to break into smaller groups for discussion.

What will be needed in preparation?

- A Session meeting devoted to this work or a 2-hour timeframe when many members/affiliates can participate.
- Lots of paper, markers, a scribe or two.

What happens at the event?

- Dwell in the Word, using Philippians 1:27; 2:5 -11 as the passage. (Take 30 minutes for this.)
- Learnings about the congregation and learnings about the community are shared briefly by this team. (15 minutes)
- A brainstorm session will get the ideas flowing from the dwelling passage and the learnings collection. Ask the groups to wrestle

with a central question, "How does God seem to be at work in us and in our corner of the world right now?" (15 minutes) (See Appendix # 8)

- Following the brainstorming time, take time for silent reflection, perhaps preceded by a reading of the dwelling text once again. (5 minutes)
- Engage the entire group in a conversation about the church, the neighborhood, the Biblical stories and metaphors that have been shared, and the ideas that arose during the brainstorm. It is very important that the facilitator manage the conversation. Set ground rules of length of comments. Depending on the size of the group use the Mutual Invitation process (see appendix #8) (40 minutes)
- Before Facilitator brings the meeting to a close, ask: what is the sense of the room? Have we been inspired in some way toward one particular image? Do we have an emerging sense of God's call to our congregation? Record these summations. (10 minutes)
- Reread the dwelling passage and pray for God's wisdom to lead the congregation. (5 minutes)

During the event, the very important scribe records what is said during the brainstorm and Closure/Summary segments. The resulting account (or as much of it as is helpful) should be published to the wider membership, so that everyone understands what is going on.

What happens after the event?

The Transition Team meets to reflect upon what has been learned at the discernment event, what has coalesced, what remains unfocused, what is emerging.

These learnings are pieces to be brought back to Retreat #3.

Review and Plan with the Steps Worksheet (15 min)

Dwell in the Word once again, sharing with a different stranger. Then close Retreat #2 with prayer. (15 min)

Steps Worksheet For Retreat # 2

Steps we'll take to make this happen

- **What will we put on the calendar? Who'll do this?**
 - Date for Retreat #3 _____
 - Date(s) for the Listening Post(s) _____
 - Date for the meeting to reflect on the Listening Post(s)

 - Date for the Discernment Event _____
 - Date for the meeting to reflect on the discernment event _____

- **Who will we need to recruit? Who'll do this?**
 - Teammates for the Listening Post(s)

 - Teammates for the Discernment Event scribe _____

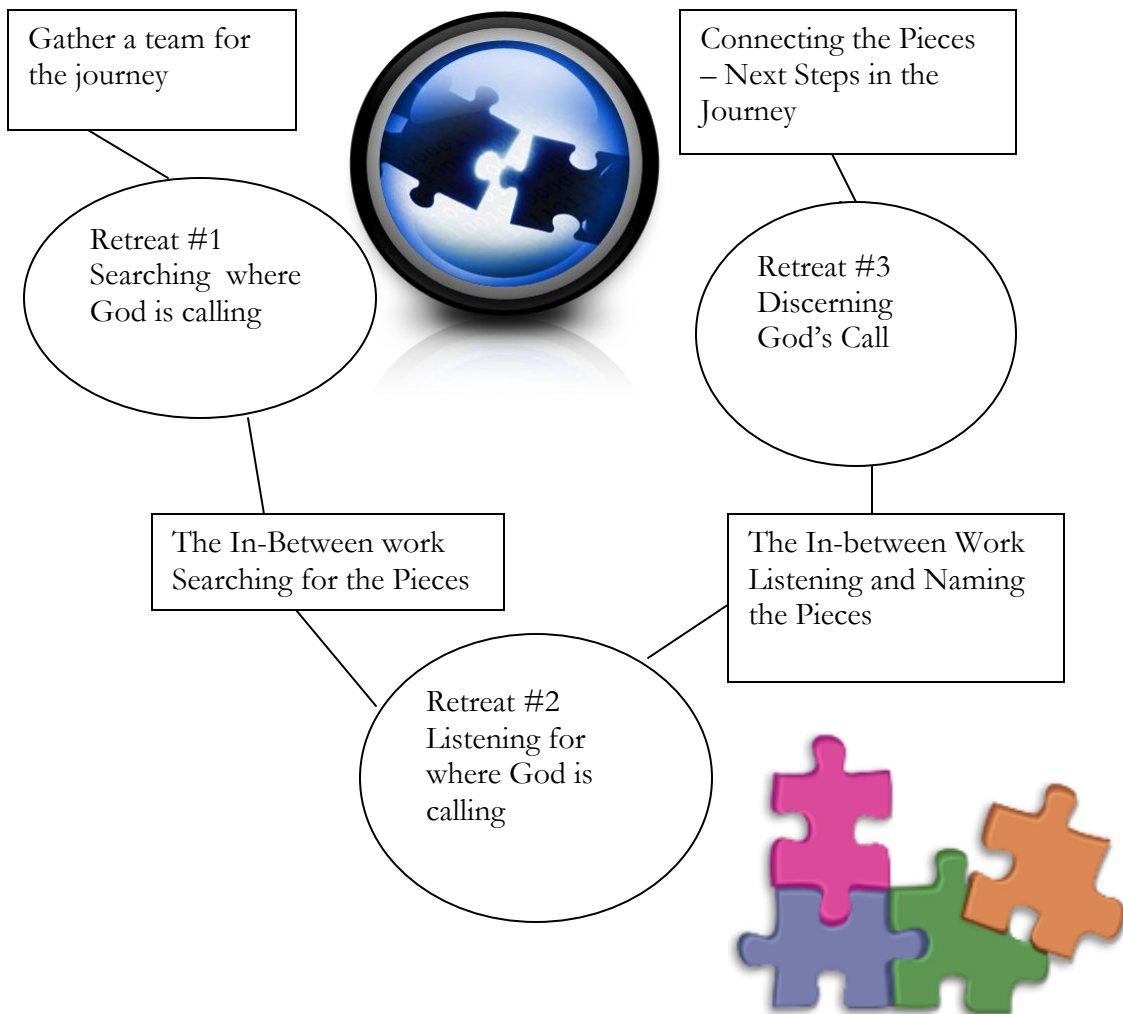
- **What supplies will we need? Who'll do this?**
 - For the Listening Post(s)

 - For the discernment event

- **Is the work fairly shared across the team?**

DISCOVERING AND CONNECTING THE PIECES OF OUR CHURCH: A journey of searching, listening, & discernment

Here's the big picture:



Our major steps on the full journey:

- Gather a team
- Have Retreat #1
- The work between retreats
 - Timeline Event
 - Demographic Study
- Have Retreat #2
- The work between retreats
 - The Listening Posts
 - The Congregational Discernment Event
- Have Retreat #3
 - Communication
 - Complete and submit the Congregational Discernment Report

Retreat #3

Connecting the Pieces Together: seeking a spiritual leader for our mission

Plan of this Retreat:

The Morning

- Team Introductions via Dwelling in the Word
- What are we learning by listening and discerning?

The Afternoon

- Planning the completion of the Congregational Information Form
- Planning ongoing communication
- Steps we'll take to make this happen

Before the Retreat:

- Have notes from Listening Posts and session/congregation retreat in a readable presentation. Be Creative.
- Plan for lunch, location and needed supplies

Who attends Retreat #3

- Transition Team
- Facilitator/interim pastor
- Session members
- Listening Post Facilitators
- Church staff – paid and volunteer (especially staff who would be involved in implementing steps)

Retreat #3: Connecting the Pieces The Morning

Team Introductions via Dwelling in the Word (30 min)

Read Acts 9: 1-20. Someone reads aloud. Others can follow along in Bibles or handouts, or can simply listen.

Allow some silence to unfold after the reading.

Each person finds a reasonably friendly-looking stranger to listen to, asking the stranger to say what picture or question popped up or where his or her imagination was caught as the passage was read. The pair listens to one another well enough to report what the other has said. They also exchange names, so that each can introduce the other during the reporting.

The pairs return to the larger group and introduce their partners and say what they heard from one another. The retreat leader(s) make sure that everyone has been introduced and, if there's time, some further discussion of the passage can take place.

What are we learning by listening and discerning? (30 -45 min)

- Begin with Reflecting on the Listening Posts. What have we discovered about our congregation's views of the present and the future? List the comments.
- The participants and Transition Team share with one another what new ideas and dreams have been generated from the Listening Posts.
- After listing the new ideas and what has been discovered, take time to comment and give feedback on these shared learnings.
- The participants talk about what those learnings might mean for seeking a pastor.

What have we discovered about our leadership's vision?

(30 min)

Reflecting on the Discernment Event

- Share with one another what has been learned from the discernment events.
 - Share with one another how the process itself went.
 - Comment and give feedback on these shared learnings.
 - Talk about what those learnings might mean for seeking a pastor.

Notes for Facilitator:

- Keep track of the discussion with notes on large paper or PowerPoint.
- It will be helpful to allow the group to reflect on the two events, Listening Posts and Discernment Event, separately before asking them to compare and contrast the two events.
- Take some time before breaking for lunch to summarize what the group has been discussing and learning.
- Let them break for lunch without discussion on the summary.

Retreat #3: Connecting the Pieces The Afternoon

Planning the completion of the Congregational Discernment Report. (60 -90 min)

Notes for Facilitator: Assist the group in focusing the information into a report. Keep the group moving. Encourage or assign volunteers to take on different writing pieces of the report. The afternoon should be reserved for planning the Congregation Discernment Report

Sections should include:

- One page Summary of Demographics
 - What did we learn from our “drive/walk around” from between Retreat #1 and Retreat #2
 - Summarize what has been learned from the demographics
- One page Summary of Listening Post Events:
 - What did we learn and hear from the Listening Post?
 - Reflection statement about listening posts
- One page summary of Biblical Stories and Metaphors.
 - What is God up to in our communities? Where is God calling us?
 - What have we learned about our gifts, skills and experiences?
- One or two page summary of Congregational Statistics

Notes for Facilitator: The following questions are very important to the Discernment Report. They are similar to the Church Information Form questions. Breaking into small groups maybe helpful in writing drafts of each section. There might not be enough time in the one day retreat to complete the items below, so make sure the group decides who will work on each section, when each section will be completed and when the whole document will be compiled. Timelines and deadlines are crucial.

Also include in the Congregational Discernment Report the information that has been gathered throughout this process, including the following:

Note for Facilitator: There could be a tendency to draw on information from previous statements and documents. DO NOT use old documents. Please use the information that has been gathered for this study. This will help the information to be about where you are now and not where you used to be or think you should be.

- Brief Church Mission Statement (keep this statement really, really brief)
- Please write a brief description of your church's/organization's programs or accomplishments.
- Describe what gifts, skills and experiences your congregation possesses to fulfill its mission.
- What are the key theological issues of our church and society that are reflected in the ministry of our congregation/organization? (*Use the Biblical stories and metaphors to assist you identified with this question.*)
- What is God up to in your congregation?
(*This doesn't need to be a long section but it should be something with depth. This is probably the hardest to articulate but the most important. Spend time on this section.*)

Seek feedback from session members, the interim pastor and COM liaison on the drafts of sections and statements.

See Appendix #12 for possible format for Congregational Discernment Report.

What next? Action Steps from the Report (45 min)

The Discernment process is meant to ask the question “What is God up to in the life of this congregation?”

Hopefully some positive energy has been generated around this process. Now is the time to develop some plans to move forward using that energy.

List some steps that can be taken to continue to put the pieces together. Take time to reflect on the following questions.

- What can the congregation do to extend hospitality to those who have been identified?
- Think about hospitality that is beyond having a nice worship service with coffee and cookies afterward. List areas to enhance or improve hospitality.
- What do we need to learn in order to meet those to whom God calls us? What would that look like?
- What experiments can we embark on to reach beyond our doors to those in neighborhood?

Action Steps Format (15 min)

- Be specific about how each is going to happen.
- Set timeline for steps that need to happen
- List who is going to do the steps. How will you recruit others to join in?
- Set realistic goals and steps.
- Plan for a 3 month and 6 month review and reflection on how things are going.
- Plan for ways to celebrate the goals.
- Write up the plan and include it in the Discernment Report.

Planning Continued Communication (15 min)

- With Session
 - Plan for a time to share with Session the Congregational Discernment Report.
 - The Session should approve the report before it moves forward to the congregation and Committee on Ministry, if the congregation is preparing for the Church Information Form (CIF).

- With the Congregation
 - As the Congregational Discernment Report is completed the congregation needs to know about the progress and when they will hear some news.
 - Make a plan for who will be responsible for communicating that information, whether it is your team or someone in another leadership role.

- With the Presbytery/Committee on Ministry (COM)
 - Share the Congregational Discernment Report with your COM liaison if the congregation is in the process of seeking pastoral leadership.
 - Make certain you have all the necessary contact information for interacting with the Presbytery.
 - Be clear about deadlines and expectations for response.

Notes for Facilitator: A Discernment Study Report only needs to be shared with the Committee on Ministry if the congregation is seeking to call a pastor. However feel free to send a copy to your COM liaison or favorite Presbytery staff person

Dwell in the Word once again, sharing with a different stranger. Then close Retreat #3 with prayer. (15 min)

Steps Worksheet Retreat # 3

Steps we'll take to make this happen

- **What will we put on the calendar? Who'll do this?**

- Dates for submitting the Discernment report

- Cycle of communication with congregation
- Cycle of communication with Presbytery
- Date of 3 month review of Action Steps
- Date of 6 month review of Action Steps
- Date (s) of celebration of goals

- **Who will we need to recruit? Who'll do this?**

- Any special input needed for Discernment Report

- **What supplies will we need? Who'll do this?**

- For the Discernment Report.

- for ongoing communication

- **Is the work fairly shared across the team?**

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APPENDIX # 1

Acts 9: 10 -20

Now there was a disciple in Damascus named Ananias. The Lord said to him in a vision, 'Ananias.' He answered, 'Here I am, Lord.' The Lord said to him, 'Get up and go to the street called Straight, and at the house of Judas look for a man of Tarsus named Saul. At this moment he is praying, and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him so that he might regain his sight.' But Ananias answered, 'Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to your saints in Jerusalem; and here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who invoke your name.' But the Lord said to him, 'Go, for he is an instrument whom I have chosen to bring my name before Gentiles and kings and before the people of Israel; I myself will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name.' So Ananias went and entered the house. He laid his hands on Saul and said, 'Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on your way here, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.' And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and his sight was restored. Then he got up and was baptized, and after taking some food, he regained his strength. For several days he was with the disciples in Damascus, and immediately he began to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues, saying, 'He is the Son of God.'

Team Introductions via Dwelling in the Word

Read Acts 9:10-20. Someone reads aloud. Others can follow along in Bibles or handouts, or can simply listen.

Allow some silence to unfold after the reading.

Each person finds a reasonably friendly-looking stranger to listen to, asking the stranger to say what picture or question popped up or where his or her imagination was caught as the passage was read. The pair listens to one another well enough to report what the other has said. They also exchange names, so that each can introduce the other during the reporting.

The pairs return to the larger group and introduce their partners and say what they heard from one another. The retreat leader(s) make sure that everyone has been introduced and, if there's time, some further discussion of the passage can take place.

Reflect on Ways Dwelling in the Word can be used in the Congregation during this transition time.

Note: The *Dwelling in the Word* book can be purchased through the Church Innovations office at www.churchinnovations.org

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Appendix # 2

DEVELOPMENTAL TASKS OF TRANSITIONAL CHURCHES

taken from Critical Moment of Ministry: a change of pastors by Loren Mead,
The Alban Institute, 1986

The period between the "termination" and the "start-up" is one stage found in the life of congregations when it is possible to deal most creatively with several major life themes. During this period there is an unparalleled opportunity to engage in the developmental tasks - tasks that, if carried out well, can lead to greater health in achieving the congregation's aims and purposes. (Page 37)

The First Task: Coming to Terms with History

It's hard to know where you are going if you are unsure where you have been. Taking a good look at the history of the church is important during a transition. First, it gives a sense of rootedness. Second, it can provide opportunities to learn from past experiences. Also, coming to terms with our history is a time when the congregation can find closure and be able to say good-bye to those things that are gone or need to be packed away. Celebrating the past as past is a springboard to celebrating the future. (pg 37)

The Second Task: Discovering a New Identity

Congregations, like people, have a way of getting fixed on who they are and sticking with that idea until something comes along to cause them to rethink that self image. The in-between time is a prime opportunity to rediscover and revision the identity of the congregation in light of new ministry. (Pg 42)

The Third Task: Allowing Needed Leadership Change

Over time the lay leadership tends to take on the traits of the pastoral leadership. Those who see things the way the pastor sees them tend

to be attracted to work with her or him and naturally gravitate into leadership. Those who see things significantly differently may tend to withdraw into the back pews. They may withdraw with no bad feelings, but still see the parish as a place not worth investing too much energy in. The time of pastoral change is a time for some stirring up the leadership team. It is time to open the leadership windows for fresh ideas to mix with the old and to encourage all to nurture their gifts for ministry. (Pgs.46 -47)

The Fourth Task: Renewing Denominational Linkages

Congregations of all types have rich resources available through their denomination. Congregations are healthier if they stay in touch with their outside resources. The denomination has resources for new pastoral relationships, leadership training, financial resources and mission opportunities. When the denomination and the congregation are connected both grow from the relationship. (pg. 47)

The denomination and other congregations provide links and partnerships to new ideas, transformation, resources for Missional understanding and leadership development.

Current data has shown that when congregations partner with the presbytery, other congregations and ecumenical partners they are healthier and more positive about their ministry and future.

The Fifth Task: Commitment to New Directions in Ministry

This task means going through the whole in-between time journey, each step of it, dealing with its many dynamics and possibilities as well as possible. The developmental task means so covering the journey that one comes out having discovered the new territory (or even having discovered what is new in the old territory we still inhabit), with a new sense of direction and with a sense that the new person selected fits the needs of the next stage of the congregation's ministry and mission. (pg. 49)

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Appendix # 3



Completing the Demographics Study

Demographics: the statistics of human population with reference to size and density, distribution and vital statistics

This study can be done by a smaller group/steering team who will make a presentation to a larger group (Session or congregation) on their findings and reflections. The team will be using the PCUSA website. PCUSA Research Services provides demographic information for your congregation's neighborhood.

1. Searching the Neighborhood Demographic Report

You can search the Neighborhood Demographic Report application by entering either a zip code or a specific city and state. To search by zip code, just enter the five-digit zip code of your church's local community. To use the city/state option, enter a city name and then select the state from the dropdown box. After you've entered the zip code or city/state option, click the "Search" button, or you can click on the map and use the zoom functions to zero in on your area of interest.



Search Results: The Demographic Report database will display a map of the area you selected. The map shows major highways and each Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) congregation. Urban areas often appear cluttered on this map, but you can use the Zoom functions to adjust the display.

2. Getting the Details

Zoom In: Use the + button above the map to display a smaller area of the map in more detail. Zooming in will reveal roads and PC(USA) congregations in the map area.

Zoom Out: Use the — button above the map to view a larger area.

To the right of the map you'll find an area labeled "Choices, Selections, and Options." Click on one of the items under that heading to obtain more information from the map. Note: For some options to work, you need to be zoomed in to a relatively small section of the map.

- **Identify Pictured Churches:** Provides name, membership and contact information for pictured churches.
- **View Neighborhood Statistics:** Provides demographic information from the U.S. Census for Census tracts in the area shown.
- **Submit New Locations or Updates:** Allows you to send an email to let us know if your church location has changed.

- **Download Block Group Data in Excel Format:** Allows you to download a copy of the Census data for your chosen area. Note: You must first click on "View Neighborhood Statistics" for this feature to work.

3. Demographic Data Fields (provided from U.S. Census)

The "View Neighborhood Statistics" function provides demographic information about people in a three-mile radius around the point clicked. Click on "View Neighborhood Statistics" to bring up the next screen, which displays options under the heading "Select a Report." Each option in "Select a Report" displays a map and several graphs for a particular topic; most also show comparisons with data for the United States nationally. Print out the charts available from Research Services

- **Summary overview:** Displays population trends, age composition, housing types, education levels, household incomes, and major cultural groups; a map shows the distribution of families and young adults in the neighborhood.
- **Age groups:** Displays detailed age breakdown of the neighborhood population; a map shows the location of persons aged 20-34.
- **Culture/ethnicity:** Displays population across major racial ethnic groups (white, non-Hispanic; African American, non-Hispanic; Native American, non-Hispanic; Asian American, non-Hispanic; Hispanic; other); a map shows areas of population concentration.
- **Education levels:** Displays educational attainment of persons aged 25 or more, and public and private school enrollment for persons less than 25 years of age; a map shows the distribution of college graduates.
- **Family structure:** Displays number of families by marital status and presence/absence of children, and marital backgrounds of currently single adults; a map shows the percentage of households that contain families.
- **Housing types:** Displays number of housing units by type and year built, rental rates, and owner-occupied housing values; a map shows the number of housing units built from 1990-2000.
- **Economic indicators:** Displays household income, employment status, and occupational categories; a map shows household income.
- **Population and growth:** Displays population for the 1990 and 2000 Censuses, a 2002 estimate, a 2007 projection, annual population growth rates, population urban/rural distribution, housing shifts and migration between 1995 and 2000, and travel time to work; a map shows projected population change.

4. General Population Information

NOTE: Not all areas will have a 2006 or 2008 estimated areas. Government Census did random estimated population growth for different areas. Use whatever numbers are available on the report. The 2010 Census will be available in 2011.

In each box on the main page has a “click here for more information” link. Make sure to click on that link and get your additional information. This will make it easier to answer the following questions. You may find it best to answer the questions on a separate page.

General Population

Compare the 2000 Census report of population for the defined area to the listed 2006, 2008 and 2013. What is the population growth for your ministry area? What does that growth mean for your church? How has that population change already affected your congregation?

Write a brief paragraph of what you learned in this section.

Households with Children

Compare the Household with Children to Single parent households and other related tables. What strikes you about those numbers? How does that percentage compare to your congregation?

Write a brief paragraph of what you learned in this section.

Adult Age Groups

Review the Adult Age Groups information.

How does that compare to the membership of your congregation?

Review the Estimated ages. What strikes you about your area’s population compared to the US population? How does the Estimated Age population tables compare to your congregation? What have you learned from reviewing the tables?

Write a brief paragraph of what you learned in this section.

Housing Types

Review the Housing Types and related tables. What strikes you about the information? What are the possibilities of new housing units in your area? What can you learn from looking at the Housing Types?

Write a brief paragraph of what you learned in this section.

Education Levels

Review the Education Levels. How do the Education levels of your area compare to your congregation? What are some learnings from your review of this table?

Write a brief paragraph of what you learned in this section.

Average Income

Review the Average Income. How does it compare to the US average? How does the US poverty level for your area compare to your congregation? What strikes you about the Occupation tables? How do those tables compare to your congregation?

Write a brief paragraph of what you learned in this section.

Major Cultural Groups

What is the largest Cultural Group in your area? What are the other groups in your area? How does that percentage compare to your congregation? If the US Census gives additional information how does the 2000 Census compare to the 2006 – 2008 and 2013 percentages.

Write a brief paragraph of what you learned in this section.

5. What does your neighborhood Look like? Really.

Drive around your defined neighborhood during a nice Saturday afternoon.

What do you see about the housing? Who are the people walking around the area?

Is the area mostly commercial or residential? What are the age groups seen on the streets or in the parks or out and about in the area?

Write a brief paragraph of what you learned in this section.

6. Reflection questions about neighborhood and demographics

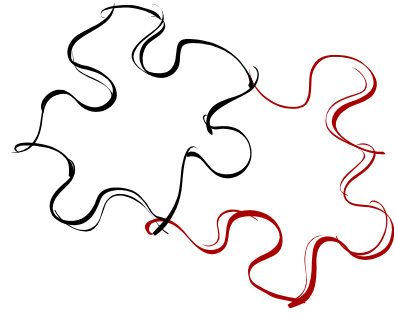
- What is our neighborhood?

Many congregations look at their neighborhood as where their members live. Is this true of our congregation? Who is around us? Do we know them?

- What does hospitality look like?

How do we presently welcome the neighbors we have identified? What steps do we need to take to welcome these neighbors?

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Appendix # 4

TIMELINE EVENT

Planning the timeline event

What will you need in preparation?

Lots of space, lots of paper, markers (red, blue, green), different art mediums – collage material, watercolor, crayons, paper, glue, paint, color pencils, tape, digital camera or even digital video camera. Tape a long series of papers onto a long wall and mark out the years from the founding through the present.

Scribe – This needs to be a person who is willing to take notes by hand or on a computer. See instructions for the scribe.

Video person (optional) – someone could video the stories as they are told. This can be then made into a presentation for the new pastor, for youtube and/or for historical purposes. This might also be helpful to the scribe.

What happens at the event?

Participants write major stories of their congregation as a community in the different places of the timeline. They use the same colored markers as for the individual stories.

Other information about the event

The event should take about 1 ½ - 2 hours not including a meal. A meal could be included at the beginning, during or after the event.

Make sure to set a date far enough ahead so people can include this on their family schedule. Children and Youth should be encouraged to participate in the event.

Process

Begin with Dwelling in the Word, using Acts 9:10-20 as the passage.

Ask participants to write stories about their own history with the congregation in the different places of the timeline. The stories should be brief or short statements in order to fit onto the paper.

They use different colored markers:

- Red for a time that was good or great or positive,
- Blue for the time that was difficult, hard or conflicted,
- Green for the time when they could see the work of the Holy Spirit, a time of growth.

Following a time of writing, take time to reflect on the timeline.

Ask the participants these questions and make sure that scribe is writing down their responses:

- What jumps out at you?
- Where are most of the stories (around what decade, years, eras)
- How do the colors tell the story of the church?
- What do you see that gives you "pause"? What gives you hope? What makes you laugh? What saddens you heart?
- Where do you see the work of the Holy Spirit?

Add Biblical stories to the Timeline

Following a time of reflection, break group into small groups of 4 to 5. In a small group, share Biblical stories that relate to events in the timeline.

Using different art media, create a collage, picture or design that tells about your conversation. Add your creation to the Timeline.

In a large group spend time in Reflection on the congregation's story and God's story. Small groups share their Biblical stories with the entire group.

- Where do we see ourselves in the Biblical narrative?
- What have we learned about ourselves? (the good, the bad and the ugly need to be lifted up)

- Where do we laugh? Where do we pause? Where do we feel sadness or anger? Where do we see hope?

Leave the timeline up for a few weeks. This allows people to see it, reflect on it, and even add to it.

Role of the Scribe

During the entire event, the very important scribe writes it up without commentary. The scribe works with a small writing team of 2 or 3 persons. They do not need to copy the timeline, but instead record people's stories, questions, and comments. The resulting account should be published on the church's website and in the newsletter. Place photos on the website and in the bulletin. Videos can be posted on the church's website or on youtube.

Materials Needed:

- Copies of Dwelling in the Word Acts 9: 10 -20
- Lots of Paper or long "butcher" paper
- Markers – Red, Blue, Green
- Different Art mediums
 - collage material
 - watercolor paints
 - crayons
 - paper
 - glue
 - tape
 - color pencils
- Digital camera or video (optional)

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Steps Worksheet From Retreat #1

Steps we'll take to make this happen

What will we put on the calendar? Who'll do this?

- Dates for Retreats #2 _____ and #3 _____
- Date for the timeline event _____
- Date for the meeting to reflect on the timeline event

Who will we need to recruit? Who'll do this?

- Teammates for the demographic study

- Teammates for the timeline event
scribe _____
video _____

What supplies will we need? Who'll do this?

- for the demographic study

- for the timeline event

Is the work fairly shared across the team?

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Appendix # 6

The Listening Posts

Purpose of Listening Posts: To listen to members and affiliated participants of the congregations about their concerns, stories, visions and hope for the ministry of the congregation.

Materials needed:

Demographic report

History Event report

Both of the reports should have been distributed prior to the listening posts.

Who will be the listeners?

The Transition Team will recruit a small team to complete this part of the work, inviting and gathering people together to hear their stories. The listeners should be people who are willing to listen to others. They need to be gentle spirits who can ask questions that encourage more responses. They should be people who are known in the congregation as attentive and don't have an agenda.

This Listening Post team will plan and carry out a meeting or series of meetings in the congregation to hear from as many members and affiliated persons as possible. There should be as many listening posts as there are people interested in attending. The transition team or retreat facilitator should do a short training with the listening posts facilitators. (See appendix #13)

Listening Posts

The Listening Post Team will organize several Listening Posts Meetings. The groups should be between 6 to 10 people. These can be groups that already know each other, or work together, or are an organized group (i.e. choir, women's circle, Bible Study) or groups that are organized specifically for this listening process. One suggestion is to pick several dates and have people sign up to be part of a group. Each group should have two facilitators; one to ask the questions and assist in keeping the conversation going and one to keep notes. These listening posts meetings should be completed between Retreat # 2 and Retreat # 3

Listening Post meetings: (60 minutes)

1. Begin with Dwelling in the Word Acts 9: 1-20
2. Facilitators will work through these questions and conversations
 - a. What Biblical stories relate to our life together as a faith community?
 - b. What are some operating metaphors or images that best fit with our community? With our congregation?
 - c. What did you learn from the demographics report that surprises you? What doesn't surprise you?
 - d. What did you learn from the History event? What surprises you? What doesn't surprise you?
 - f. Where do you see God at work in your congregation? Where do you see God at work in your community?
 - e. In one word, tell the new pastor something about this congregation.

Notes will be kept from each Listening Post meeting.

- About Note taking: The notes from the Listening Post should be comments and stories. Avoid using specific names or quotes. Remind the speakers that what they say will be shared, but no comment will be connected to a specific speaker.

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Appendix # 7

Discernment Event for Session or Congregation

What is the purpose:

- To review learnings from the “in between work”
- To reflect on How God is calling us in our time and place
- To look for patterns and commonalities
- To spend time listening to each other about what we have learned.
- To put together the information for more reflection and action

Who participates?

This is a question that the session and transition team needs to discuss. In a small church it would be helpful to include all who want to participate. For larger congregations perhaps just the leadership of the church and representative members participates. The group should be at least the session and a few more. A good diverse discussion would happen with at least 10 -12 people participating. Larger groups might want to break into smaller groups for discussion.

What will be needed in preparation?

- A Session meeting devoted to this work or a 2-hour timeframe when many members/affiliates can participate
- Lots of paper, markers, a scribe or two

What happens at the event?

- Dwell in the Word, using Philippians 1:27; 2:5 -11 as the passage. (Take 30 minutes for this.)

- Learnings about the congregation and learnings about the community are shared briefly by this team. (15 minutes)
- A brainstorm session will get the ideas flowing from the dwelling passage and the learnings collection. Ask the groups to wrestle with a central question, “How does God seem to be at work in us and in our corner of the world right now?” (15 minutes)
- Following the brainstorming time, take time for Silent Reflection, perhaps preceded by a reading of the dwelling text once again. (5 minutes)
- Engage the entire group in a conversation about the church, the neighborhood, the Biblical stories and metaphors that have been shared, and the ideas that arose during the brainstorm. It is very important that the facilitator manage the conversation. Set ground rules for the length of comments. Depending on the size of the group use the Mutual Invitation process (see appendix # 8) (40 minutes)
- Before the facilitator brings the meeting to a close, ask: what is the sense of the room? Have we been inspired in some way toward one particular image? Do we have an emerging sense of God’s call to our congregation? Record these summations. (10 minutes)
- Reread the dwelling passage and pray for God’s wisdom to lead the congregation. (5 minutes)

During the event, the very important scribe records what is said during the brainstorm and Closure/Summary segments. The resulting account (or as much of it as is helpful) should be published to the wider membership, so that everyone understands what is going on.

What happens after the event?

The Transition Team meets to reflect upon what has been learned at the discernment event, what has coalesced, what remains unfocused and what is emerging.

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Appendix # 8

Four Basic Rules of Brainstorming

- **Focus on quantity:** This rule is a means of enhancing divergent production, aiming to facilitate problem solving through the maxim, *quantity breeds quality*. The assumption is that the greater the number of ideas generated, the greater the chance of producing a radical and effective solution.
- **Withhold criticism:** In brainstorming, criticism of ideas generated should be put 'on hold'. Instead, participants should focus on extending or adding to ideas, reserving criticism for a later 'critical stage' of the process. By suspending judgment, participants will feel free to generate unusual ideas.
- **Welcome unusual ideas:** To get a good and long list of ideas, unusual ideas are welcomed. They can be generated by looking from new perspectives and suspending assumptions. These new ways of thinking may provide better solutions.
- **Combine and improve ideas:** Good ideas may be combined to form a single better good idea, as suggested by the slogan "1+1=3". It is believed to stimulate the building of ideas by a process of association.

More "basic rules" can be found on the internet. A Google or Bing search will provide more information than you need.

Mutual Invitation
developed by Rev. Eric Law

Read the following directions to the group:

In order to ensure that everyone who wants to share has the opportunity to speak, we will proceed in the following way. The leader/convener will share first. After that person has spoken, he or she invites another person to share. The person whom you invite does not need to be the person next to you. After the next person has spoken, that person is given the privilege to invite another person to share. If the person invited does not wish to say anything, that person simply says "pass" and proceeds to invite another to share. This process is followed until everyone has been invited to speak.

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Appendix # 9

Steps Worksheet For Retreat # 2

Steps we'll take to make this happen

What will we put on the calendar? Who'll do this?

- Date for Retreat #3 _____
- Date(s) for the Listening Post(s) _____
- Date for the meeting to reflect on the Listening Post(s)

- Date for the Discernment Event _____
- Date for the meeting to reflect on the discernment
event _____

Who will we need to recruit? Who'll do this?

- Teammates for the Listening Post(s)

- Teammates for the Discernment Event
scribe _____

What supplies will we need? Who'll do this?

- For the Listening Post(s)

- For the discernment event

Is the work fairly shared across the team?

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Appendix # 10

What is a Mission Statement?

Using the information you have gathered so far, now is the time to develop a mission statement.

There are many "schools of thought" about Mission Statements for congregations. But most will agree there are some basics.

- The purpose of the Mission statement is to describe the purpose and identity of the congregation's ministry.
- The statement should have "forward movement" and not be about the past history or identity of the congregation.
- The mission statement should be ONE sentence that is meaningful and easily memorized.
- The visioning, planning and direction of the congregation should be related to the mission statement.
- Should be easily printed on the bulletin, sign board, newsletter, stationary, and bulletin.

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Appendix #11

Gift Assessment Tools

Each congregation needs to decide how to gather the data for the Gifts Assessment question. There are several in-depth studies that can be done over a period of time or a few meetings. Also, there are online assessment tools that congregational leaders can take and then share the results with the Transition Team.

ONLINE TOOLS

Here are a couple website that we have found to be helpful resources.

From the Evangelical Lutheran Church

<http://www2.elca.org/evangelizingchurch/assessments/spiritgifts.html>

From the United Methodist Church

http://www.umc.org/site/c.lwL4KnN1LtH/b.1355371/k.9501/Spiritual_Gifts.htm

A good sampling of data should be obtained, not just a couple of church leaders. Example: If there are 12 session members , at least 6 should take the online Gift Assessment Tool AND if there are 9 deacons 4 or 5 should take the online tool.

BIBLE STUDIES – GROUP EVENTS

Created and Called: Discovering Our Gifts for Abundant Living (Book)

Jean M. Trumbauer, Author. Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1998.

True to its title, *Created and Called* emphasizes that we are co-creators with God in the continuing work of creation and healing, and that each person is gifted and called by the Creator to ministry. Unlike manuals with similar themes, *Created and Called* explains how our gifts are more than our most visible talents and skills: they include our interests, motivations, styles, values, hopes, and vulnerabilities.

Recognizing that most mainline congregations do not assist members in discovering their gifts, this manual provides a comprehensive approach to recognizing traditional gifts (talents, skills, and knowledge), gifts of style (learning, personality, and motivational styles), and gifts of vulnerability (values, emotions, dreams, and wounds). It then guides users in integrating these gifts and applying them to needs in both the church and the larger community.

With reflection guides, reflection exercises, samples, and a listing of further resources in each chapter, Trumbauer has provided an excellent resource for gifts identification facilitators to use in small groups, adult education curricula, and leadership programs.

Available from publisher or amazon.com

Discerning Your Spiritual Gifts (Book)

Lloyd Edwards, Author. Boston, MA: Cowley Publications, 1988.

While human abilities are "natural talents" when they are used for self-gratification or altruism, they become "spiritual gifts" when they equip a person to assume his or her unique role in God's creative and redemptive work. This role is discovered through an understanding of God in relationship with individuals and creation. Gifts can be discovered at any stage of spiritual development, but gifts revealed when one is grounded in a faith community make easier an appreciation of the dual role an individual plays: as a unique agent for God's work in the world and as a member of a community held by God.

The book includes discussions of gifts in the Christian tradition as related in the New Testament, practices and activities of a hypothetical congregation living with the knowledge of their spiritual gifts, the relationship between

human wounds and gifts, and gift discovery as part of a spiritual journey.

Offering theological exploration, personalized examples, exercises for gift discernment, and a model for a spiritual gifts workshop, this book can be used by individuals, workshop leaders, or congregational leaders.

Available from publisher or Amazon.com

Network: The Right People, in the Right Places, for the Right Reasons, at the Right Time (Media)

Distributed by Zondervan Publishing House.

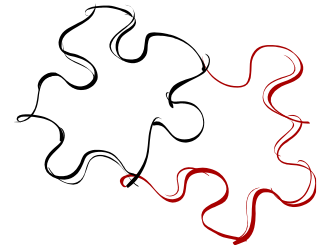
Replacing antiquated, ineffective "time and talent" surveys, the *Network* system offers a way to help people in congregations discover their unique ministries. It encourages participants to use a step-by-step process for discerning their gifts.

Through small groups, each participant finds his or her passion, identifies personal gifts, and gains insights into personal style. After participants complete the small group process, a trained in-house volunteer consultant meets one-on-one with each person to match passions, gifts, and personality with a specific ministry. The system clearly identifies and provides instruction for the various jobs needed to make it all work.

While the system is presented in a conservative-to-moderate Christian "voice" with an evangelical bent, it will be useful for a variety of congregations and denominations. Its interior framework is adaptable to most situations. The complete kit includes two videos and a set of manuals for each of the system's roles.

Available from publisher or Amazon.com

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Appendix #12

Format for Congregational Discernment Report

Cover Page:

- Name of Congregation
- Address & Phone number of Congregation
- email and webpage address of Congregation
- Date of Charter of Congregation
- Beginning and Ending date of Congregation
- Names of the Transition Team members/Interim pastor

Include in the Report

Summaries of Retreats and Events

- One page Summary of Demographics.
 - What we learned from our “drive/walk around”
 - Summarize what has been learned from the demographics.
- One page Summary of Listening Post Events:
 - What did we learn and hear from the Listening Post?
 - Reflection statement about listening posts.
- One page summary of Biblical Stories and Metaphors.
 - What is God up to in our communities? Where is God calling us?
 - what have we learned about our gifts, skills and experiences.
- One or two page summary of Congregational Statistics.

Information and Reflections

- Brief Church Mission Statement. (keep this statement really, really brief)

- A brief description of your church/organization programs or accomplishments.
- Describe what gifts, skills and experiences your congregation possesses to fulfill its mission.
- What are the key theological issues of our church and society that are reflected in the ministry of your congregation/organization?
(Use the Biblical stories and metaphors to assist you with this question.)
- What is God up to in your congregation?
(This doesn't need to be a long section but it should be something with depth. This is probably the hardest to articulate but the most important. Spend time on this.)

Action Steps from the Report

List some steps that can be taken to continue to put the pieces together. Take time to reflect on the following questions.

- What can the congregation do to extend hospitality to those who have been identified?
- Think about hospitality that is beyond having a nice worship service with coffee and cookies afterward. List areas to enhance or improve hospitality.
- What do we need to learn in order to meet those to whom God calls us? What would that look like?
- What experiments can we embark on to reach beyond our doors to those in neighborhood?

Action Steps Format

- Be specific on how each is going to happen.
- Set timeline on steps that need to happen.
- List who is going to do the steps. How will you recruit others to join in?
- Set realistic goals and steps.
- Plan for a 3 month and 6 month review and reflection on how things are going.
- Plan for ways to celebrate the goals.
- Write up the plan and include it in the Discernment Report.

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Appendix #13 – Listening Hints

Some helpful hints on “Listening” for information

- Maintain Eye Contact with the person speaking – You will have to take notes, however, keeping eye contact tells the person speaking that you are interested and are listening. Jot notes and come back afterwards to fill in more details.
- Avoid Emotional Involvement – You do not have to defend anyone. You are just there to listen. When you become emotionally involved in the listening, you tend to form “rebuttal” remarks in your mind and hear what you want to hear. Try to remain objective and open-minded.
- Avoid distractions – Give your full attention to the person speaking. Try not to form responses to their comments. Avoid looking around the room or out the window.
- Stay focused – Your mind might wander if you assume you know what the person is going to say next. If you feel your mind wandering away from the speaker's words, change the position of your body and concentrate.
- Let the Speaker finish before you begin to talk. You are there to listen. When you interrupt, it appears you are not listening, even if you are. Ask questions to encourage more information not to challenge the speaker or to confront.
- Let yourself finish thinking before you begin to speak. You can't really listen if you are busy thinking about what you are going to say.
- Listen for Main Ideas. Many speakers will have stories to illustrate their main point. Listen for the main idea and repeat that back to the speaker at the appropriate time.
- Ask questions. If you are not sure you understand what the speaker has said, ask. Try to keep the question open and for clarification. Stating the main idea or asking them to elaborate is sometimes helpful. Keep the questions open ended.

- Let there be silence. Avoid filling the silence with your thoughts. Let that silent time be a place where the speakers can gather their thoughts.
- Give Feedback. Sit up straight and look directly at the speaker. Nod or give appropriate responses to indicate that you are listening. Watch your body language.

From " Be an Effective Listener" by Dianne Schilling

Ten Steps to Effective Listening

1. Face the speaker and maintain eye contact.
2. Be attentive yet relaxed.
3. Keep an open mind.
4. Listen to the words and try to picture what the speaker is saying.
5. Don't interrupt and don't impose your "solutions".
6. Wait for the speaker to pause before asking clarifying questions.
7. Ask questions only to ensure understanding of something that has been said. (avoiding questions that disrupt the speaker's train of thought)
8. Try to feel what the speaker is feeling.
9. Give the speaker regular feedback, e.g. summarize, reflect feelings, or simply say "uh huh."
10. Pay attention to what isn't said – to feelings, facial expressions, gestures, posture, and other nonverbal cues.

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Appendix #14 Communicating

How Do we Communicate What we have been learning?

The Retreats are not meant to be something secretive or mystifying to the congregation. The more information that is shared, the more people will be comfortable with the process and willing to engage in the events and questions.

Here are some helpful hints on ways the session and Transition Team can communicate the Discernment Process

- Publish a general schedule/timeline. Give yourself room for changed dates, snow storms and other unplanned interruptions.
- Do a write up in the newsletter and/or bulletin about the process.
- Publish a synopsis of what was learned at each retreat and event.
- Have regular “minutes” for discernment at leadership events, committee meetings and especially during worship.
- Plan a question and answer time after worship on a regular basis.
- Put information in periodic emails and on the webpage. Make reference to it’s availability on the webpage during worship and in the bulletin.
- Have the session brainstorm other ways to share the information.

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Appendix # 15



Steps Worksheet Retreat # 3 Steps we'll take to make this happen

- **What will we put on the calendar? Who'll do this?**

- Dates for submitting the Discernment report

- Cycle of communication with congregation
- Cycle of communication with Presbytery
- Date of 3 month review of Action Steps
- Date of 6 month review of Action Steps
- Date (s) of celebration of goals

- **Who will we need to recruit? Who'll do this?**

- Any special input needed for Discernment Report

- **What supplies will we need? Who'll do this?**

- For the Discernment Report.

- for ongoing communication

- **Is the work fairly shared across the team?**

FEEDBACK PAGE

Please share with us your experience with
**DISCOVERING AND CONNECTING THE PIECES OF
OUR CHURCH: A journey of searching, listening, & discernment**

Please send your feedback to Michelle Grunseich, Communications and Resource Center Director, Presbytery of Philadelphia, resources@presbyphl.org or mail feedback to Michelle Grunseich, Presbytery of Philadelphia, 915 East Gowen Avenue, Philadelphia, PA 19510

. Retreat #1 Searching for the Pieces

- Interim Pastor and Transition Team participate in this retreat
- Dwelling in the Word
- the Developmental Tasks
- the Timeline Event
- the Demographic Study

COMMENTS and FEEDBACK

Retreat #2 – What are our pieces?

- Dwelling in the Word
- What are we learning? What have we discovered?
- Name and Claim our Story - Listening Posts
- Frame our Story – Discernment Event

COMMENTS and FEEDBACK

Retreat #3 – Putting the pieces together

- Dwelling in the Word
- What are we learning/What have we discovered?
- Congregational Discernment Report

COMMENTS AND FEEDBACK

Appendixes – COMMENTS and Feedback

- # 1 Dwelling in the Word
- #2 Developmental Tasks
- #3 Demographics Study
- #4 Timeline Event
- #5, 9 & 15 – Retreat Worksheets
- #6 Listening Posts
- #7 Discernment Event

- #8 Brainstorming/Mutual Invitation
- #10 Mission Statement
- #11 Gift Assessment
- #12 Congregational Discernment
- #13 Listening Hints
- #14 Communicating

Please send your feedback to Michelle Grunseich, Communications and Resource Center Director, Presbytery of Philadelphia, resources@presbyphl.org or mail feedback to Michelle Grunseich, Presbytery of Philadelphia, 915 East Gowen Avenue, Philadelphia, PA 19510