

Bibliography

There is no expectation that you read all these books. Please select those you find useful.

Resources for Spiritual Discernment in Community

Dougherty, Rose Mary, 2009. Discernment: A Path to Spiritual Awakening. Paulist Press.

Dougherty introduces discernment as a core spiritual practice and offers practical advice for how to make oneself available to listen for God's voice.

Farnham, Suzanne G. et al. 2011. Listening Hearts: Discerning Call in Community, 20th Anniversary Edition. Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing.

Based on the assumptions that all people are made in God's image and all have access to God's call for our lives, this book provides a resource for learning the disciplines that make it possible to hear God's call.

Fendall, Lon, et al. 2007. Practicing Discernment Together: Finding God's Way Forward in Decision Making. Newberg, OR: Barclay Press.

The authors provide guidance for leading a group discernment process which they describe as "essentially a process of listening carefully to God" through silence and the Spirit speaking through group members.

Frykholm, Amy Johnson. 2007, April 3. "Out of Silence: The Practice of Congregational Discernment," Christian Century, p. 34-38.

Colorado Episcopalian Frykholm describes the prayer model for congregational discernment from personal experience and interviews with diocesan trainers Catherine Tran and Kathy Mordeaux.

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

While this book focuses on individual discernment, its helpful introduction to the biblical and theological foundations for discernment and description of "entry points" for discernment provide a useful resource for communal discernment. Liebert also depicts prayer practices which put the descriptions into practice.

Little, Edward S. 2003. Ears to Hear: Recognizing and Responding to God's Call. Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse.

Anchoring his chapters in stories from scripture, Bishop Little (Northern Indiana) reflects on his personal experiences of call and response. Each chapter includes discussion starter questions which could be used for exploring discernment by groups.

Morris, Danny E. and Charles M. Olsen. 1997. Discerning God's Will Together: A Spiritual Practice for the Church. Bethesda, MD: Alban Publications.

Addressing the "what", "why", "who", "how" and "where" of spiritual discernment, the authors show the practice at work in a variety of group settings. Chapter 4 describes 10 "movements" in the process of spiritual discernment. Among them are: "framing" which clarifies the subject matter for discernment; "shedding" which lays aside individual ego and personal ownership in favor of group discernment; and "closing" where careful attention is paid to various ways to bring closure on a decision.

Olsen, Charles M. and Ellen Morseth. 2002. Selecting Church Leaders: A Practice in Spiritual Discernment. Bethesda, MD: The Alban Institute.

While this book's focus is on the selection of leaders for immediate congregational needs, its wide variety of scriptural examples of discernment describing the distinctions between secular decision-making and spiritual discernment make it useful for congregational discernment groups of all kinds.

Vennard, Jane E. 2005. A Praying Congregation: The Art of Teaching Spiritual Practice; and 2000. Be Still: Designing and Leading Contemplative Retreats. Herndon, VA: The Alban Institute.

The 2005 book by Colorado spiritual director Jane Vennard provides a description of steps in shaping a praying congregation along with a variety of group activities to assist in reaching that goal. In the 2000 book, Vennard's Chapter 6 describes in detail her group contemplative prayer discernment model.

Yust, Karen-Marie. 2001. Attentive to God: Spirituality in the Church Committee. St. Louis: Chalice Press.

Noting that most people come to a church committee meeting with a working knowledge of a corporate or family model for decision-making, Yust offers both a theological rationale and practical examples for discernment built on worship, prayer, Bible study, and shared reflection on everyday life. Among her wealth of practical suggestions is “how to develop a behavioral covenant for life together”.

Spiritual Gifts, Personality and Leadership

Edwards, Lloyd. 1988. Discerning Your Spiritual Gifts. Cambridge, MA: Cowley Publications.

Through step-by-step exercises and self-evaluation questions, Edwards guides those seeking discernment of their spiritual gifts for a variety of ministries. Also included are directions and outlines for conducting workshops of varying lengths for training gift-discernment groups.

Keirse, David and Marilyn Bates. 1984. Please Understand Me: Character and Temperament Types.

Please Understand Me provides a quick introduction to personality typing using a short Myers-Briggs test. It also presents four easy-to-remember temperament types that underlie the 16 possible personalities identified by the test. The book then delves into a detailed analysis of each type, with sections on mates, children, and leaders. An appendix paints portraits of the 16 possible personality types.

Rohr, Richard and Ebert, Andreas. 2001. The Enneagram: A Christian Perspective.

Rohr and Ebert present nine personality types each of which has a primary sin and a primary gift which mirror each other. Part 1 offers the basic elements of the enneagram; Part 2 presents the nine enneagram types in detail; and Part 3 delves into the inner dimensions of human experience that the enneagram illustrates to us, leading us into a deeper understanding of ourselves and our relationships.

Schwarz, Christian A. 2001. The 3 Colors of Ministry : A Trinitarian Approach to Identifying and Developing Your Spiritual Gifts.

The 3 Colors of Ministry presents a holistic approach to identifying and developing your spiritual gifts. It is based on the three dimensions of God's nature, for which the author has chosen the colors of green, red and blue. In addition to emphasizing the critical importance of using your gifts in an authentically trinitarian way, this book shows you where you most need to focus your energies in order to bring this kind of balance to your Christian service. Includes test.

Scott, Katherine Tyler. 2010. Transforming Leadership. New York: Church Publishing.

Summarizing a number of models of leadership, management and structure from business and management specialists, Scott invites serious reflection on ways the church can adopt and adapt those models for its faith-centered ministry. Scott sees leadership in the church as a baptismal ministry for all, not just the ordained.

Spiritual Dialogue of Call

Most of these are classic Christian writings with numerous editions.

Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. The Cost of Discipleship.

Brother Lawrence. The Practice of the Presence of God.

Thomas à Kempis. The Imitation of Christ.

Lewis. C.S. The Great Divorce.

MacDonald, George. Lilith: A Romance.

Nouwen, Henri. The Wounded Healer: Ministry in Contemporary Society, Creative Ministry.

Rohr, Richard. 2011. Falling Upward: A Spirituality for the Two Halves of Life.

Weil, Simone. Waiting for God.

Williams, Rowan. 2003. Christ on Trial: How the Gospel Unsettles Our Judgment.