

Introduction

Our Hope for this Workbook

In your hands is the work of our hearts and our hands! Members of the Spiritual Discernment Team, a unit of the Maritime Conference Christian Life and Growth Committee of the United Church of Canada, have prepared *“Readying Our Hearts: A Spiritual Discernment Workbook.”* It is designed as a personal workbook and introduces the language and practices of spiritual discernment.

In our years of service in the Resource Pool, we have offered workshops in Sunday School curricula, visioning, mission statement development, honouring and protecting volunteers, and on the United Church resources “Of Love and Justice” and “Exploring Our Faith”. We introduced some practices of spiritual discernment but worried we were conveying the idea that discernment is merely a “technique” when really it demands a lifestyle of practice. By offering a resource that focuses on individual practice, we hope spiritual discernment becomes a way of life in small groups, Boards/Councils and wherever shared decision-making happens!



How the Workbook is Organized

The Workbook offers a “Daily Worship.” You are invited to use this every day as an entry into your reflection. With repeated use, the affirmations imprint themselves in our being.

The Workbook is divided into four weeks. Each week one scripture story is introduced and used throughout the six days.

The Prayer of Approach uses verses of hymns from *Voices United*. Sing them or meditatively speak the words.

We offer a variety of ways to pray the scripture. They are drawn from different Christian traditions. We have unique prayer personalities and not all practices will speak in the same way. We invite you to notice how each practice feeds you or raises resistance in you.

Similarly not every question will engage you. Choose those questions that do and work with them.

The words in the text box offer a way for you to carry the practice through the day.

Each day can take as long as you have to offer to it, and need not be done all at once. We offer guidance for six days. You have an extra day each week to catch up!

This book is presented as a “workbook”, so white space is intended for your notes and reflection.

Suggestions for Group Use

- If your *Board/Council* is interested in deepening spiritual discernment as a practice for group decision-making, you could invite members to work through a “week” before a meeting. Here are some suggestions for group gatherings:
 1. What stands out for you from your days of spiritual practice?
 2. Did any questions arise that you would like to bring to the group for further discussion?
 3. What did you learn that would be helpful to your group when making decisions?
- A *Weekly Study Group* might do Day I of each week as a group process and then continue through the days as individuals. At the beginning of the next meeting, the group could use these group questions:
 1. What stands out for you from your days of spiritual practice?
 2. Did any questions arise that you would like to bring to the group for further discussion?
 3. As you reflect upon the week, which day was most insightful? Most difficult? Most energizing?Then, as a group, work through Day I, Week 2.

Giving Thanks!

These reflections were written by members of the *Maritime Conference Spiritual Discernment Team*: Bethe Benjamin-Cameron, JB Brown, Marilyn Burrell, Lynn Caldwell, Kelly Hudson, Laura Hunter, Janice MacLean and Susan Reid. We brought our individual discernment skills to a group effort in preparing this resource. The experience of working in a discerning community was exceptionally rewarding and fruitful!

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Daily Worship

You are invited to begin each day in the same way using this gathering and litany.

Following this time of worship, please turn to the appropriate week and day to continue your guided reflection. Each day will focus on a different discernment and will use a number of techniques for exploring the Scripture passage, which will stay constant for the week.

Gathering:

Repeat the following phrases, allowing time for your body, mind, and spirit to relax, shed cares, and to settle into this holy time with God.

“Be still and know that I am God.”...

“Be still and know that I am...”

“Be still and know...”

“Be still...”.

Litany:

(A series of faith affirmations, followed with personal responses)

The church is the body of Christ in the world today.

I am an essential part of the body of Christ.

God has much to accomplish in and through us as we live and walk together.

I am needed, and I need you, God.

God is an active living presence, among, around, and within us.

I ask to be kept in the Spirit’s care and be led, at this time, with love.

It is the mind of Christ that needs to be sought in any situation.
I seek the mind of Christ, for such a time as this.

Insight flows from our trust in God.
Teach me, God, to rely on your strength.

Our part is to listen for God's guidance.
Keep my footsteps on the path, walking towards your light.

We must be ready to respond in love and obedience.
Give me courage to serve your call.

Prayer is central to the search for God's calling.
Lord, I prayerfully ask, for such a time as this, show me what I am being called to do.
In Jesus' name, Amen.



Please turn to the appropriate day and week
to continue your reflection.