

Reflection 3 Wisdom of Reflecting in Community

Scripture Philippians 2:1-11

If then there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy, 2 make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. 3 Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. 4 Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. 5 Let the same mind be in you that was[a] in Christ Jesus,

6 who, though he was in the form of God,

did not regard equality with God

as something to be exploited,

7 but emptied himself,

taking the form of a slave,

being born in human likeness.

And being found in human form,

8 he humbled himself

and became obedient to the point of death—

even death on a cross.

9 Therefore God also highly exalted him

and gave him the name

that is above every name,

10 so that at the name of Jesus

every knee should bend,

in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

11 and every tongue should confess

that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (NRSV)

Discernment in a community engages a group of people to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit. It involves prayer, a humble surrendering of control, reflection on Scripture, and listening carefully to one another as together we seek to hear God's voice. Very soon, the people of the diocese will be asked to participate in a survey to determine the gifts and talents of we desire in our next bishop. It seems a bit odd to think about community discernment while many struggle with profound isolation due to the pandemic. However, community discernment creates space for the Holy Spirit to guide, to hold accountable, to bring "a joyous convergence of direction that brings a sense of peace and rightness. When

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the deepest desires of persons are aligned with God's deepest desires, life is marked by loving more freely, becoming dedicated to the larger goodness, and experiencing healing and reconciliation with God, oneself, and one another." (Frances Taylor Gench. "Testing the Spirits" Bible study on 1 Corinthians 12-14, 25 October 2005, www.pcusa.org/peaceunitypurity (29 January 2008).

Discussion

- How or where did Jesus use community discernment and reflection in His ministry?
- What is your experience with community discernment? What did it look like? Was it effective?
- What barriers might there be to reflecting in community about the search for a new bishop, especially in light of the pandemic restrictions? How might those barriers be overcome?
- How might your community be strengthened or grow as a result of sharing this discernment journey?
- How might you get started community discernment for the search process? Who would you include? How will you meet? What will you do or discuss?
- What gifts do you bring to community discernment? How can you grow from participating in community discernment?