

Ways to Stay Attentive to the Spirit

**Created as an affiliate resource by Prayerful Voice Working Group
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- 1. Use the language of our faith, of our tradition, of our common understanding.**
- 2. Ground VOTF discussion and decision making in gospel values.** Keep in mind that there are four gospels, four distinct perspectives on the same life. We need all four. Scripture embodies for us the importance of differing perspectives.

3. Prayerfully discern, and subsequently share, in order to make all decisions.

We must, in confronting conflict or absence of consensus, acknowledge our dependency. We must acknowledge that it is not our collective reason that is the source of what is good, but rather our collective acknowledgment of Christ always at the center. If we succeed it is because we worked to become attuned to God's desire and acted out of this understanding. This is discernment. It is a simple and many layered process. No one "voice" can be listened to, it is only in the aggregate that we can have assurance that God's will is perhaps made manifest.

In order to embrace the discernment process, first acknowledge the existence of competing solutions or answers. Allow time for discussion and be open to different timetables. It might be best to wait, to shelve a discussion or a decision until another time. Give people time to reflect and pray over a given issue, and let a future coming together bring new perspective to the issue. Listen to different voices. Be open to changing your minds. Even Christ changed his mind. In the Gospel of Matthew (*Matthew 15:21-28 - NIV*), a presumptuous Canaanite woman approaches Jesus and asks for healing for her daughter tormented by a demon. Jesus dismisses her initially by saying... *"I was only sent only to the lost sheep of Israel."* At this time Jesus sees his mission as only to the Jews and not to the gentiles, like this woman. However, eventually Jesus was moved by her faith and persistence, and he heals the woman's daughter. Here is the only example in Scripture when Jesus changes his mind, and it is changed by a persistent, gentile woman, someone from outside the inner circle, someone actually considered unworthy. We need to hear other voices we might initially deem as "unworthy." We need to have our assumptions challenged so that we might reach the correct answer, guided by the Spirit rather than our own strong opinions.

4. Call for individual quiet, for "desert-time."

After his baptism, as reported in the gospels, Christ is "led" by the Spirit to the desert. "Desert-time" can be seen as a necessary activity we must take, fostered by the Spirit, to move out of a space of competing values and forces, into quiet where genuine reflection can take place. As an organization we need to acknowledge the primary place of quiet, of "desert-time" in our Christian lives. We are called to reflection, led by the Spirit and this can often be best done in quiet prayer, or prayerful patience and waiting. The desert can be a respite, a renewal. We trust that out of this place comes renewed attention to the genuine will of the Spirit, a discernment of the correct path. These revelations may then be shared within the group, and a path chosen.

5. Remember... We are not meeting because we believe we have the corporate power and resources to change the institutional church. We are meeting because we must, because we feel "called" to witness, to act, to speak, to pray together. There is no alternative for us. The Spirit has aroused in us a particular passion, and has brought us into "being." The Spirit has delivered us into each others presence and we need to discern our purpose, the "fruit" of this moment, this movement, this communal action.