

The Episcopal Church's



# Practicing Spiritual Discernment

Your Vestry as a Discernment Body for Ministry

# Why don't we just work through the agenda and go home?

- Discernment is life giving
- Being attentive to spiritual practices as a vestry leads to better ability to make decisions and reach consensus
- Over-worked and spiritually hungry lay leaders lead to low energy, spiritually hungry congregations.

# What does it mean to “practice spiritual discernment” as a Vestry?

1. Praying together
2. Looking through the lens of scripture
3. Listening
4. Paying attention
5. Telling stories

# I. Praying Together

- **Connecting** with God and each other through acknowledgement of a higher power of authority
- **Giving thanks** to God for blessings of, in, and around our congregation
- **Asking God's guidance** and presence among us
- **Asking God's healing** for those in need
- **Inviting others** to pray with us

What might we pray about now?



## 2. Looking Through the Lens of Scripture

- Scripture tells the story of the people of God – it is our story, too.
- How can scripture help this group of leaders be clear about our direction?
- Consider an issue/matter that is on the agenda of the vestry now.
- James 1: 19-27



What is this scripture saying to the church around the named issue?

OR

How does this reading inform your thinking and your prayers about the issue?

# 3. Listening is a critical and essential part of leadership

Who?

- To God
- To each other
- To our own call through Baptism
- Who else might we need to listen to?

# How do we listen?

- Sometimes alone in silence...
- Sometimes when there is a lot of noise...
- Not preparing our response while others are speaking
- Not projecting

## 4. Paying Attention

- Prayer, listening and looking through the lens of scripture are all ways of paying attention (“paying with our attention”) to what is going on around us.
- If we are not paying attention to the real needs of our congregation, we are not being faithful leaders.

## 5. Telling Our Stories

- Our congregational story is part of the story of all the people of God.
- We've already seen how this connects us to scripture.
- The actions that we take and the ministry that we do connects us also.



God has given us everything we need to do ministry in this place at this time.

- If this is true, then what are the things that we are doing already?
- What are the gifts and skills we bring to this congregation as vestry members?

Maybe you didn't expect to be a spiritual leader when you were elected to the vestry...



That's why they call it "practice".

In a word...



what are you taking home for  
your “Vestry Ministry toolbox”?