

PRAYER and DISCERNMENT
at
LEASIDE UNITED CHURCH

Winter Project 2010



WEEK FIVE February 14, 2010
Unlocking the Future

Discerning our Future Together

The Wesleyan Square

John Wesley, one of the founders of Methodism, was a deeply spiritual person. He believed that true Christian life was illuminated by a number of factors: scripture, tradition, reason, and experience. In group discernment, these four things are always present, but each of us is pre-disposed to one or another, as a dominant way to make decisions. Wesley's quadrilateral expands the range, and forces us to balance out our strengths and weaknesses. Great in groups when many feel their voice is not heard!

Before we can use the square, it's best to come up with a **question** for discernment. For example: We think we would like to expand our outreach ministry with a soup kitchen for the homeless. (I am just using this as an example: you can think of something else!)

The four sides of the square are:

Scripture

Tradition

Experience

Reason

In turn, we ask questions of each corner of the square:

Is there a **scripture** passage or image that would help inform our decision making? Prime the pump of your memory to see if you can think of an example. What might it tell us?

What is the **tradition** of the Church in this matter? What is the tradition of the universal church, and our own church?

What might we hear from this tradition?

What **experience** can we add to the mix? Have we ever done this before? Have other churches done it before? And what has their experience been?

Last, what **reason** do we have for doing this? Is it meeting a need? Is the need truly a need, or just a disguised wish? What reason would we use for NOT doing it? And how do these help or hinder our decision making?

EXERCISE for your own DISCERNMENT

Now we are going to consider finding an answer to our own calling/discernment/quest/ministry/mission.

Take a few moments in quiet contemplation. Find your breath. Find your inner space. Let it expand.

Look at the pictures you have drawn. Is any one of the root desires not grown or developed? Does any one of them jump out at you as needing attention? Are there any branches that are stunted, or not bearing fruit?

Take a few moments to think and pray about these things.

Do you feel a movement toward any one root or branch?

There could be more than one. You'll have to work on one at a time, though part of the process is sifting through to find the one you need to work on now.

Draw a square on a large piece of paper.

Write the one desire in the middle of the square. You could draw a picture of it. How does it make you feel as you draw the picture? Pay attention to what is going on inside!

Apply the Wesleyan Square:

REASON: is there any reason keeping me from achieving this one desire? Is there any reason to continue to avoid it? Will people be hurt? Is there a cost? How will I manage? How will I manage if I DON'T try to answer this call??

TRADITION: What has been my pattern in my life? Do I traditionally follow my heart or my head? Do I traditionally jump in without thinking, regretting it later, or do I refrain from engaging, and wish later I had? What will help or hinder now?

EXPERIENCE: Have I ever done this before? Is there any other experience in my life that will help me with this? What do I need to know, or study, or do? Can I talk to someone who does have the experience I am questioning?

SCRIPTURE: Is there a story that informs my thoughts? A Bible image? A line of scripture? Or a poem or fairy tale? Has there been a book or article, long set aside, that is now calling my attention? What lessons do these portray for me?

Now you need to **sit with these thoughts for a while.**

Perhaps a week or more, perhaps longer.

When you return to them, take note of where your energy lies.

You may have found your heart's true intention!

PRAYER for UNLOCKING the DOOR (JGSmith)

May the door of my future blessing open this day.

May I have in my heart, the key to turn in the lock.

May I have in my hand, the will to push the door open.

May I have in my mind, the wisdom to follow this path.

As I step over the threshold,

May my heart be filled with peace,

May my hands tremble with joy,

And may my mind be overflowing with the delight of knowing

that I am never alone on this path.

My whole life is held in the palm of God's hand.

And for this, I am so very grateful:

This day, tomorrow, and the day after that. Amen!