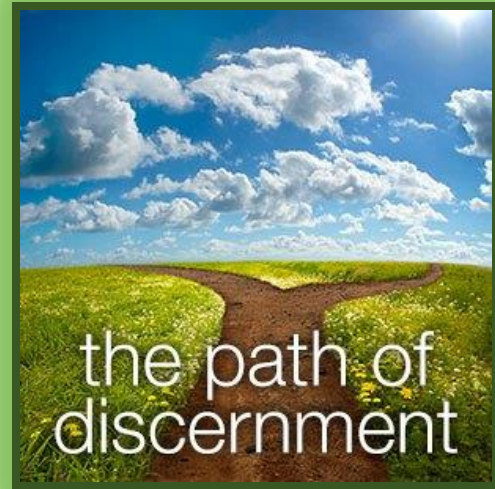


## **FIRST AND CENTER**

**Pastor's Blog**

**September 19, 2018**

This past week I gathered with some colleagues to consider how we might help ourselves, other individuals, and organizations (including churches) enter more fully into a lifestyle in which intentional discernment is a regular discipline. We actually engage in discernment all the time in our lives, at moments that enter our lives regularly (like discerning how to parent in any given moment, or how to spend our money) and at larger moments of our lives (like choosing a work or career path, choosing to enter a committed relationship, considering retirement or job changes, when in conflict or crisis). We are called to discern, but we don't always take the time and have a process to do intentional discernment rather than reacting in the moment or just polling our friends or family or social media contacts.



My working definition of discernment is this: "Listening with eyes, ears, heart, and spirit to God; other people, the earth, your gut, and then coming to clarity on one direction or another." There are lots of Bible stories about discernment (and lots of other stories, fictional and factual, as well). Esther considering whether to risk her life and beg the king for the lives of her people. Moses at the burning bush, deciding to return to Egypt to rescue his people. Mary with Gabriel, deciding to say "let it be" to becoming the mother of Jesus. In each case, that active listening to many voices, including the ones inside ourselves, is critical...as is the willingness to then move forward with a decision, instead of being paralyzed by too many choices or fear that a choice may challenge us more than we think we can handle (see all the stories above).

How do you discern what to do in your life? We will talk more about this in the year to come, both for ourselves and our congregation. Let's listen!

~ The Rev. Shelly Stackhouse,  
Transitional Minister