



Our Way or God's Way

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SOLT COM/CPM Gathering

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Agenda

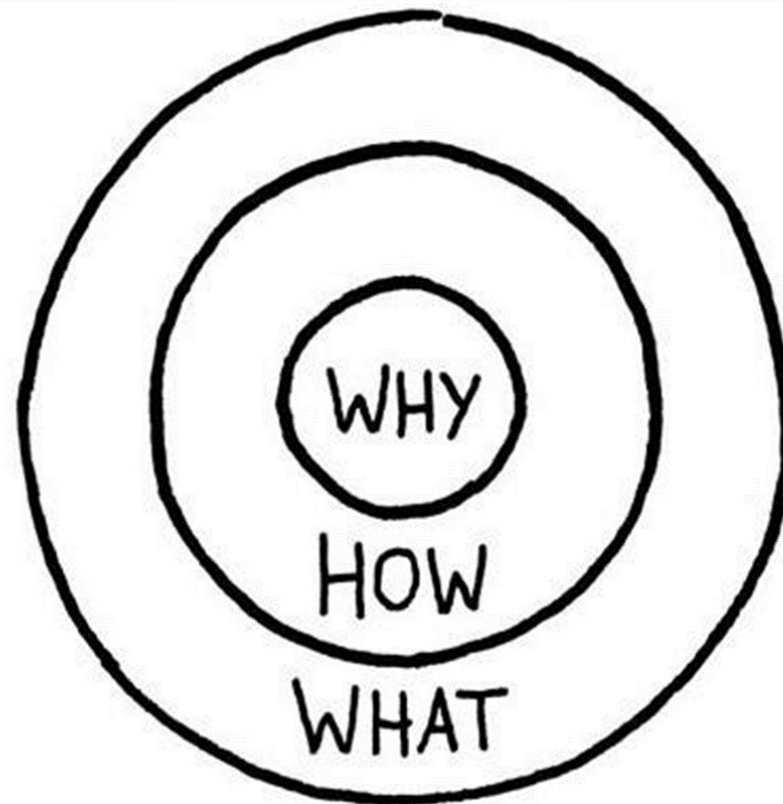
- What is the process of discernment?
- Why is it important?
- How do we do it?
- Resources
- Questions and discussion



Typical Approach to Church Planning

- Who are we?
 - Surveys and small groups
- Who are our neighbors?
 - Gather demographic data
- What is God calling us to be and do?
 - ???

Why Discernment Is Important





Case Study

- Your congregation has just received an unexpected gift of \$200,000 with no restrictions
- How will you determine how you to use it?

Every church and pastor should have a list ready of what to do if this happens – because it does.



How We Typically Decide

- Decision making
- Roberts Rules
- Consensus building
- Political bargaining
- Inertia
- We don't decide



Decision Making - Assumptions

- Most problems are solvable with data and logic
- We can understand and solve our own issues
- It is important to maximize the use of available resources
- A key goal is to maintain and restore order
- Most changes are incremental

We assume the process used in business works in churches




Decision Making - Process

1. Define the problem
2. Gather facts and data
3. Interpret data
4. Develop options
5. Establish decision criteria
6. Hold rational deliberation
7. Evaluate alternatives based on risk and return
8. Select optimal solution



Decision Making - Tools

- Reports of facts
- Decision trees
- Cost / benefit analysis
- Top-down guidance or specialized teams
- Parliamentary procedure
- Majority rule



Discernment - Assumptions

- God is still active in the world and is self-disclosing
- God is not neutral about our choices
- The Holy Spirit is our guide
- The will of God's is best discerned in community
- Open dialogue, active listening, and collective reflection are valued
- The journey is as important as the decision

God's will, nothing more, nothing less, nothing else



Discernment - Process

1. Frame and prepare for discernment
2. Listen for the prompting of the spirit
3. Move towards selection

What is the mind of Christ on this matter?



Discernment - Tools

- Prayer
- Silence
- Scripture
- Story telling and testimony
- Clearness committees
- Consolation / desolation



Discernment – Step 1

- Community gathers in Christ
 - Build community
 - Affirm a covenant
 - Name core beliefs and values
 - Frame the issue
 - Let go of egos, assumptions, bias
 - Pray for indifference

The setting of your gathering space is important.



Discernment – Step 2

- Community listens to the Holy Spirit
 - Reflect on scripture
 - Share information
 - Listen, listen, listen
 - Explore options
 - Improve options
 - Weigh options
 - Seek confirmation



Discernment – Step 3

- Community goes forth as God's people
- Closing to conclusion
- Move toward choice of direction
- Rest with the direction
- Make a formal decision
- Communicate decision



Discernment – Key roles

- Participants
- Leader
- Sage
- Intervener
- Scribe

You may benefit by having an outside facilitator



Resources

- Books

- Victoria Curtiss, *Guidelines for Communal Discernment* (Presbyterian Distribution, 2007)
- Susan Beaumont, *How to Lead When You Don't Know Where You Are Going* (text)
- Danny Morris and Charles Olsen, *Discerning God's Will Together* (Alban, 2012)
- Ruth Haley Barton, *Pursuing God's Will Together* (IVP Books, 2012)

Questions?