



## THE GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF COMMUNAL DISCERNMENT

The following principles guide all the processes in a communal discernment chapter.<sup>1</sup>

1. Communal Discernment is:
  - a. A way of seeking together God's dream for the group; God's call to the community
  - b. A balance of deep personal prayer and faith-sharing with each other
  - c. A balance of attentive listening and authentic speaking
  - d. A movement from "I" to "we"
  - e. A movement from "we and they" to simply "we"
2. Communal Discernment requires letting go of personal agendas and staying open to new possibilities
3. When a chapter is in session, it is the highest authority in the congregation — and therefore everyone is equal in the group
4. Because all are equal in the group, all the information needed is available to all of the participants in the discernment process
5. Each person makes a commitment to respectful conversations, particularly during discernment for elections
6. Each person makes a commitment to have "the meeting at the meeting"
  - a. While it is fine to converse with others before or after the meeting, the respectful conversation guidelines still hold.
  - b. What is inappropriate is to meet to strategize about how to "make something happen" as the meeting unfolds.
  - c. Politicking or efforts by members to manipulate the outcome have no place in communal discernment
7. The results of communal discernment will reflect:
  - a. The quality of the information available to all
  - b. The commitment of each person to respectful conversation
  - c. The time available —the actual time-frame of the meeting
  - d. The inner spiritual freedom of the discerners regarding the outcome
8. The key questions in communal discernment are:
  - a. What is God saying through the group?
  - b. What is for the greater common good of the whole?
  - c. To what are we being called?

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<sup>1</sup> Based on materials developed by Barbara Valuckas, SSND – Developed by Carole Shinnick, SSND for client use