

# Welcome

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Introduction

Letter from Our Bishop

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Has anyone ever told you that you would be good at doing such and such ministry? Do you wonder how you can best be of service to others? Have you wondered how to listen to God, to open yourself to God's guidance?

This handbook offers some information that may be useful as you seek to listen to God and be open to God's guidance in your life.

This activity is often called *discernment*. Discernment is a process of placing ourselves in God's hands and listening for the direction in which God is calling us. Discernment is making choices through the eyes of faith, and in doing so deepening our awareness of God. Since we are always being called to grow in our relationship with God and in our service to others, discernment is best understood as a life-long process. Sometimes an individual wants to know whether the call is to an ordained ministry. Openness to God's call leads us to ministry of many kinds, not always ordained.

Discernment has both individual and communal aspects. It may begin in solitude, with listening for the voice of God. Yet as members of a community of Christians, we also draw upon the wisdom of the community as we listen for God's direction. This handbook is a guide. The first part focuses on individual aspects of discernment; the second, on the formation and function of a group of people, called a *discernment team*, who gather to listen to God along with the individual discerners; and the third part is appendices which provide useful information on discernment.

Our hope is that this handbook will help many people who seek to discern God's will for their lives. It provides a series of steps, starting with the writing of a spiritual autobiography and continuing through other activities, some to do on one's own and some to carry out with the companionship of a discernment team.

Help with the process of discernment and answers to questions may be obtained through members of the Commission on Ministry (COM) of the Diocese of Iowa. Please call the Diocesan Office for assistance 515-277-6165.