

## GATHERING YOUR CONGREGATION—ACTIVITY

Integral to these congregational conversations is a focus on discerning God’s will for your congregation. God speaks to us through his Word, shaping our hearts and minds to be aligned with his will.

One way to practice listening to God is through *dwelling* in God’s Word. (This is explained in the “Steps for Activity” section below.) We’ve found that when we repeat this process again and again, Scripture begins to shape and form us—so you may want to include this practice in other stages of the discernment process as well.

### Time needed for activity

20-30 minutes

### Group size

Any number of current members and regular visitors

### Steps for Activity

1. Choose a text that will shape your conversations. You’ll be using the same text each time you meet. Print this text so that everyone has a copy they can write on as they engage in this activity. Text suggestions: Ephesians 2:14-22; Psalm 23; 1 Cor. 12:12-27.
2. The facilitator should offer a short prayer, asking the Spirit to guide and speak to everyone through this text.
3. Invite two people to read the text aloud. Ideally these two people will reflect diversity in age, gender, ethnicity, etc. Allow about one minute of silence between the two readings.
4. As they follow along, the other participants should note the following: What words or phrases stick with you as you hear God’s Word read? What captures your imagination?
5. After both readings, all of the participants should meet with a partner—ideally someone they don’t know very well. The partners can take turns sharing what they have heard in the readings.
6. Returning to the large group, the participants are invited to share *what their partner has heard* in the text. (Note: This is a great way to develop the skill of listening to one another, as well as listening to God.)
7. The facilitator should record responses on a screen/whiteboard/newsprint. At the end of the sharing time, close with some questions like these: What themes do you see in what you have heard today? What might God be saying to you, collectively, today as you have this congregational conversation?
8. Close with a time of prayer, incorporating what you have just discerned communally as you pray for guidance and learning in the conversations you’ll have together.

### Facilitator’s Questions

After the activity, allow time for discussion around some questions like these:

1. What themes do you hear emerging in what God is saying to you today?
2. What did you learn from one another that you wouldn’t have learned on your own?
3. What’s this experience of dwelling in one passage like for you? What have you learned about yourself?