**Unit Six**

Seeking God’s Will Together

**Inviting the Spirit to lead us**

***Participant Program***

Facilitators: Replace the light blue text with the activities you determine for these steps.

**Question for Discernment**

Articulate your question here.

**Scripture texts**

Print or list texts here.

**Preparation in Worship**

We believe that good biblical discernment happens within the context of worship, and that we each need deliberate, prayerful preparation in which we commit to seeking God’s will above our own agenda, desires or needs.

**Song**

**Opening Ritual**

Please join in the **bold** **text** portions, holding the stones that are on your tables:

*(Each person takes a stone)*

Leader: Like these stones that have been carved by the Creator’s natural elements,

we are *living* stones shaped by the Holy Spirit and our time in Christ’s community.

**All: We lift these stones as reminders to let the Holy Spirit shape and carve each of us to become building blocks of God’s home in our world**

L: We lift these stones as reminders of the weight of our words and deeds;

We “rid ourselves of all malice, and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy and slander of every kind.”

Let us speak and listen instead with compassion and love.

**All: Like the heft of these stones, our words and actions have weight.**

**We can cause others to stumble, or we can build a holy house.**

L: Like stones that create a permanent house for God,

we are living stones being built by Christ into God’s spiritual house,

a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession.

**All: We lift these stones as reminders that the work we are doing here is so that we “may declare the praises of him who called us out of darkness into his wonderful light.”**

L: Place all the stones together in a group in front of you. As we listen and speak together, let these stones be reminders to that we are being built up by the love of God, by the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and by the voices and experiences of those around this table. Let these inert stones be reminders that we are living stones gathered to listen and speak with one another and with God in love.

**Song**

**God’s Story, Our Story**

As we discern together, our emphasis is on the stories of God’s people throughout time. In this section, the stories of God’s people in the Scriptures inform and interpret our stories and experiences as God’s people today.

**Listening and Speaking in Love**

Discernment is hard work! Focusing on the ways that we speak and listen to one another and making sure that we are communicating primarily in love is important. We trust that when we discern together prayerfully and carefully, the Holy Spirit will reveal God’s will and guide us toward obedience.

**Leaving in Love**

In the same way that deliberate preparation is essential to good discernment, so is deliberate leaving. So often the temptation is to save our annoyances, irritations, or hurts until after group discussions, and then to gather and share them with other like-minded individuals after the meeting. This practice hurts the gathered community, both because our conversations are richer when we can be open and honest with one another in the context of discussions and because annoyances, irritations, and hurts often escalate when they are allowed to fester and grow. Before we leave, we surrender to God the work we’ve done around the table as a way of putting our relationships with God and one another ahead of issues we may agree or disagree on.

**Closing Ritual**

Please *pick up a stone* from the table and join in the “leaving in love” liturgy:

L: Like boulders that are too heavy to carry, our conversations are often weighty.

**All: We lay down these stones as reminders that we cannot carry heavy burdens alone.**

L: Like sharp stones in our shoes that irritate our sensitive feet, these conversations may stick in our minds.

**All: We lay down these stones as reminders to release to God our irritations and anger, anxieties and fears as we leave.**

L: Like the stone monuments that marked the work of God in the Old Testament,

we are living monuments of the work of God in this world.

**All: We lay down these stones as a memorial to the work that God has done here, in our midst.**

L: Like Jesus Christ, our living foundation stone, we also are living stones .

**All: We place these stones as a sign that Christ is building us into God’s home on earth.**

*(Lay down stones in the center of the table)*

**Song**