



Pastor Sorensen's July 2023 First-of-the-Month Letter

Summer greetings!

This month I want to talk about the difference between **deciding** and **discerning**. In the church community, as the writers of Ecclesiastes said so long ago, there “is a time for everything” and so there is a time for deciding and a time for discerning.

So, Pastor, what is the difference and why does it matter? The difference between decision-making and discerning is a difference of methodology. The difference is between quantitative (deciding) and

qualitative (discerning). The difference is between technical solutions (deciding) and adaptive solutions (discerning).

Problems to be solved require a decision-making process that seeks insightful data, risk assessment, probability scenarios, and often takes a vote for final decision. God may or may not be part of the decision-making process. On the other hand, discernment begins with God and assumes that God is not neutral about our choices. There is a preferred and promised future that can only be discerned through a deep listening to the Holy Spirit.

Discernment is messy, and it is not linear. Discernment takes time, silence, prayer, reflection, scripture, listening, exploring. Discernment needs a community.

Why does it matter that we pay attention to this deciding/discerning distinction? This liminal season for Christ Lutheran, as you move from what was to what will be, must be an intentional time of discernment. You are not looking to decide upon a new settled pastor. You are discerning what God is already doing in our community, where God is leading, and who God has already equipped to come and join this community as its next pastor to boldly walk with the congregation into God's future.

Every congregation must do both decision-making and discernment well. And every congregation should be able to know when to employ decision-making skills and when to employ discernment skills.

Discerning a new pastoral leader for this congregation is no easy task, and it has been decades since you have exercised this spiritual practice. But we know that God is faithful, and that the Holy Spirit is in our midst. So, I want to offer a word of encouragement...if it seems like this

discernment process is not going as quickly as you had hoped, well, we are on God's timeline, not ours. If it seems like this discernment process is creating more questions than answers, then I would say the Holy Spirit is in the midst of all of those questions.

But remember, God is faithful. The time will come when a new leader is discerned...the time will come when that new direction is discerned...the time will come when the next exciting, challenging, God-sized opportunity is discerned...when that time comes, then will be the time to boldly, faithfully, joyfully, and confidently move quickly into the very future God has prepared.

See you in worship,
Pastor Scot