



# CHANGING THE WAY WE DO CHURCH

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## Praying for Discernment

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# Thanks and Greetings...

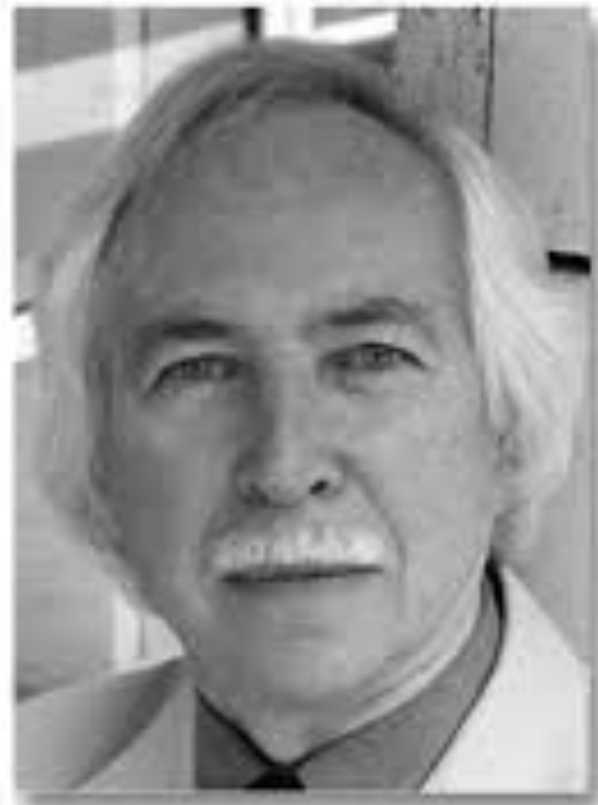
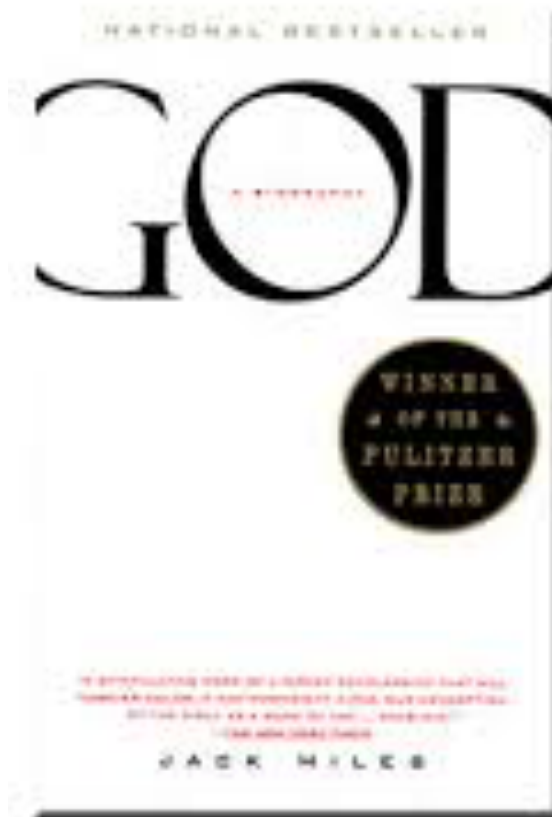
Thanks to...

- To Bishop Cho for his kind invitation
- To The Reverend Marc Brown for extending that invitation and the welcome
- To the people of Trinity United Methodist
- Their pastor, Larry Lenow
- To Bill Pike, Thomas Vecchione, Bev Myers, and

Greetings from President Lallene Rector, Dean Luis Rivera, and Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary

# Introduction

- Over fifteen years ago...

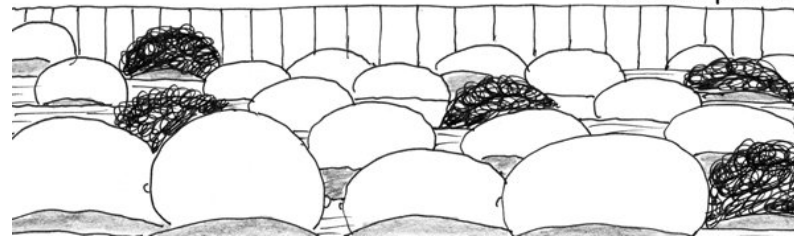


# The unspoken contract between clergy and lay people

OKAY, SO HERE'S THE DEAL:  
I AM THE ROSE AND YOU  
ARE THE THORNS. TOGETHER  
WE MAKE A BEAUTIFUL FLOWER!



©nakedpastor





What we should be asking is,

“Who is God calling you to be as a part of the body of Christ?” and that task that can only be undertaken with prayers for discernment.



## Prayers for discernment are largely absent from today's church...

- There are personal prayers for discernment
- Prayers for discernment if you are called to ordained life
- But otherwise absent from the life of the church
- And absent from decision-making



## Three tasks today...


- Describe the four things that praying for discernment requires
- Describe the nature of prayers for discernment
- Describe how prayers for discernment might change the church.



## Task # 1

Describe the four things that  
praying for discernment  
requires





One, prayers for discernment require that we embrace a robust ecclesiology.

- The Constitutional Church
- The Corporate Church
- The Body of Christ



## Prayers of discernment, then,

are about the church discovering her Lord's will for her and for those who participate in her life, as she moves ever more deeply into that new reality. They are not just about good decision making.



Two, praying prayers for discernment  
requires that we believe God will show up.


“Big M” Materialism

Signs and Wonders

The Mundane and the Miraculous


A rectangular wooden sign with a dark, possibly black, background and white text. The text is arranged in two lines. The first line reads "IF YOU'RE WAITING FOR A SIGN" and the second line reads "THIS IS IT". The font is a bold, sans-serif typeface. The sign is mounted on a wooden surface with vertical panels.

IF YOU'RE WAITING FOR A SIGN  
THIS IS IT



Three, for a church to pray prayers of discernment it must believe in the reality to which the Gospel witnesses.

- Alexander Schmemmann: The great enemy of the church.
- Negotiation skills or discernment?
- Society's chaplain or God's people?



*Four: To become a church guided by  
prayers for discernment requires that we  
distinguish between*

*I-Questions*

*We-Questions,*

*and God-Questions*

# I-Questions: universal but not first



# God-Questions: essential and first







## Task # 2 for the day:

Describe the nature of prayers for  
discernment



# One

Prayers for discernment involve  
more listening than talking.

## Two

Discerning prayer requires that we field and digest the impressions of everyone involved and that we weigh the potential significance of those impressions.



# Three

The fruit of prayers of discernment  
needs to be tested...



## Four

Prayers for discernment are followed by obedience. The journey inward requires a journey outward.

*Task # 3: How, then, might the church change if it nurtured the gift of discernment?*





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**BUT...**

That's ok, because the wild, unpredictable work of God's grace was never anything we could manage anyway.