Grounded in God: Decision-Making and Discernment in Congregations and Organizations
Spring 2003
Andover Newton Theological School

How can ancient traditions of spiritual discernment bring depth and a sense of unhurried presence into modern congregational and organizational life? How does our social location influence our discernment? How can we learn corporate spiritual discernment in the midst of an individualistic culture? This course will consider structures and processes of twenty-first-century congregations and organizations and explore how spiritual discernment practices can be integrated into decision-making processes.

This will be an experiential course, in which participants’ own decision-making experiences in congregations and organizations will serve as the basis for reflection and discernment. Insights from the fields of spirituality, management, and leadership studies will be combined to consider decision-making and discernment in these settings.

Outcomes of the course:
By the end of the course, you will have:
- Analyzed a congregational/organizational decision from your own experience in light of the readings.
- Reflected on your own spiritual awareness and resources in relation to congregational or organizational decisions you are called upon to make.
- Reflected on your own theory of decision-making and discernment in congregational/organizational life.
- Experimented with practicing and teaching spiritual discernment in a congregation/organization.

______________________________ (add your own outcomes, in consultation with me)

Course work which will facilitate these outcomes:
- Reading
- Class participation (discussion, group work, presentations)
- Short reflection papers
- Integrative paper (10-12 pp.)
- Final project (10-12 pp.)

Texts:
Margaret Benefiel, “Maturing in Christ: Corporate Spiritual Discernment as a School of the Spirit,” *Quaker Life*, July/August 2000

Other information:
Instructor: Dr. Margaret Benefiel
Phone: 617-436-8341
Office hours: by appointment

Schedule:
1/29  Introduction to course
       Overview of discernment
       Discernment exercises

2/5   Due at beginning of class: short reflection paper on Farnham/Hull/McLean or
       Morris/Olsen or Senge
       Presentations
       Discuss Farnham/Hull/McLean, Morris/Olsen, Senge

2/12  Due at beginning of class: short reflection paper on Farnham/Hull/McLean or
       Morris/Olsen or Senge
       Presentations
       Discuss Farnham/Hull/McLean, Morris/Olsen, Senge

2/19  Due at beginning of class: short reflection paper on Farnham/Hull/McLean or
       Morris/Olsen or Senge
       Presentations
       Discuss Farnham/Hull/McLean, Morris/Olsen, Senge

2/26  Due at beginning of class: short reflection paper on Morris/Olsen or Senge or Ackerman
       Presentations
       Discuss Morris/Olsen, Senge, Ackerman

3/5   Due at beginning of class: short reflection paper on Ackerman or Senge or Libanio or
       Benefiel
       Presentations
       Discuss Ackerman, Senge, Libanio, Benefiel

3/12  SPRING BREAK: no class

3/19  Due at beginning of class: short reflection paper on Ackerman or Senge or Libanio or
       Skelley
       Presentations
       Discuss Ackerman, Senge, Libanio, Skelley

3/26  Work on integrative paper
       Presentations
       Discuss progress on integrative paper

4/2   Due at beginning of class: integrative paper
       Presentations

4/9   Presentations
       Final project progress reports

4/16  Presentations
       Final project progress reports

4/23  Presentations
       Final project progress reports

4/30  Final project progress reports
       Closing reflections
Final project due

Grading:
25% for each outcome
Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory system.