
THE CONTACT PERSON

The discernment group contact person is in charge of organizing the discernment groups. Duties for the contact person begin anew each time a potential focus person inquires about the possibility of a discernment group.

Whenever a request is initiated, the contact person needs to respond:

1. Set up an appointment to get together with the potential focus person.
2. Begin praying for the person.
3. Meet with the prospective focus person. During your time together, stay in a discernment mode, listening and offering questions to develop a sense of the person's needs.
 - Informally convey the basic tenor of Listening Hearts discernment – that discerners prayerfully listen and gently raise questions to help cast light on where God is in the situation and to discover where the Spirit may be pointing (not to solve the problem or tell the person what to do).
 - If discernment does not seem to be the appropriate path for the person, use a discernment discipline (prayerful questions, attentive listening) to help the person see that some other approach (pastoral counseling, marriage counseling, career counseling, therapy) might be more what the person wants or needs. If such is the case, help the person make the necessary contacts.

- Let the person borrow a copy of this manual, pointing out the section “Offering Discernment Groups.” Also lend him or her copies of *Listening Hearts, 20th Anniversary Edition* and *Grounded in God*. Get a sense of how much reading seems to suit the person and the situation; develop a reading plan.
 - In consultation with the focus person, prayerfully select three discerners with an eye to putting together a diverse and balanced group. Discuss alternates in case anyone declines.
4. Contact the selected discerners to determine their willingness to serve, designating one of them as the convener (the convener must be a highly responsible person). Give the convener the names, addresses, and phone numbers of the focus person and discerners. Remind the convener to use “Convening a Discernment Group” in this manual as a checklist.

5. Ask the focus person to write a few paragraphs stating the question to be explored and providing background information pertinent to the issue (see *Listening Hearts*, Appendix 1), with instructions to share with the convener. Be sure to give the focus person the name, e-mail address, and phone number of the convener.
6. If persons from outside the immediate community ask for discernment groups, the program may be able to accommodate them if sufficient discerners are available.
7. Keep an ample supply of the *Feedback Form for Discernment Groups* on hand and distribute them to the conveners as needed.
8. In some congregations, the contact person may take responsibility for publicizing the purpose and availability of discernment groups.

The contact person holds an important and delicate position which needs to be filled by someone who is sensitive, insightful, prayerful, and very reliable. Make sure that members of the congregation know how to get in touch with the contact person and can do so without difficulty.