WHERE IS GOD CALLING YOUR CHURCH?

AN INTRODUCTION TO PRAYERFUL DISCERNMENT

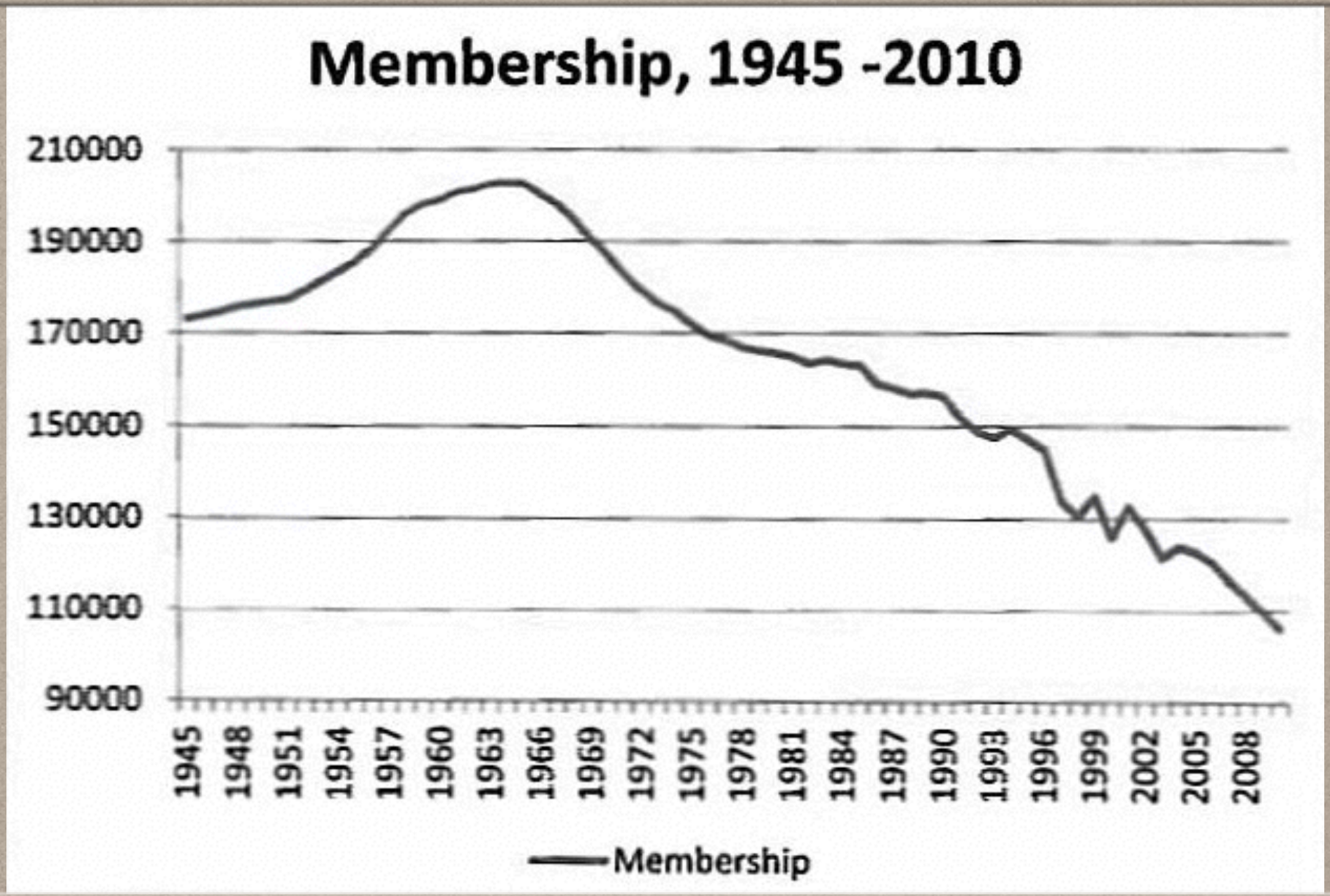
REV. DR. TIM ARCHIBALD
MINISTER, KINGS CHURCH, NEW MINAS, NS

NORTH AMERICAN CHURCH FACES A MASSIVE SEA CHANGE

- 70 Years Ago–60% of Canadians attended weekly worship

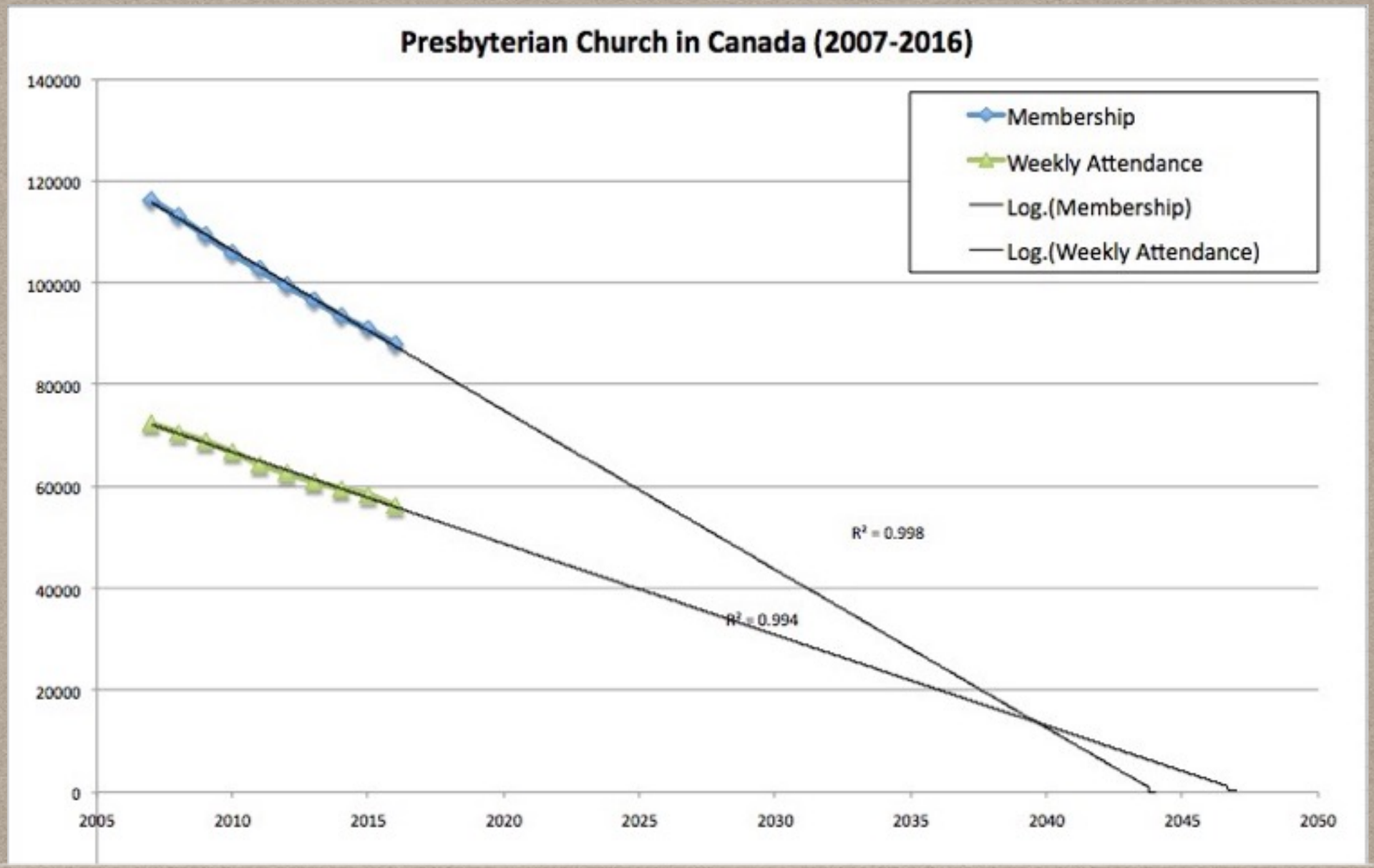
- Now–Less Than 20% attend weekly worship

- Current Membership of PCC is about 50% of what it was in 1964



MEMBERSHIP, 1945-2010

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN CANADA



PROJECTED MEMBERSHIP 2005-50

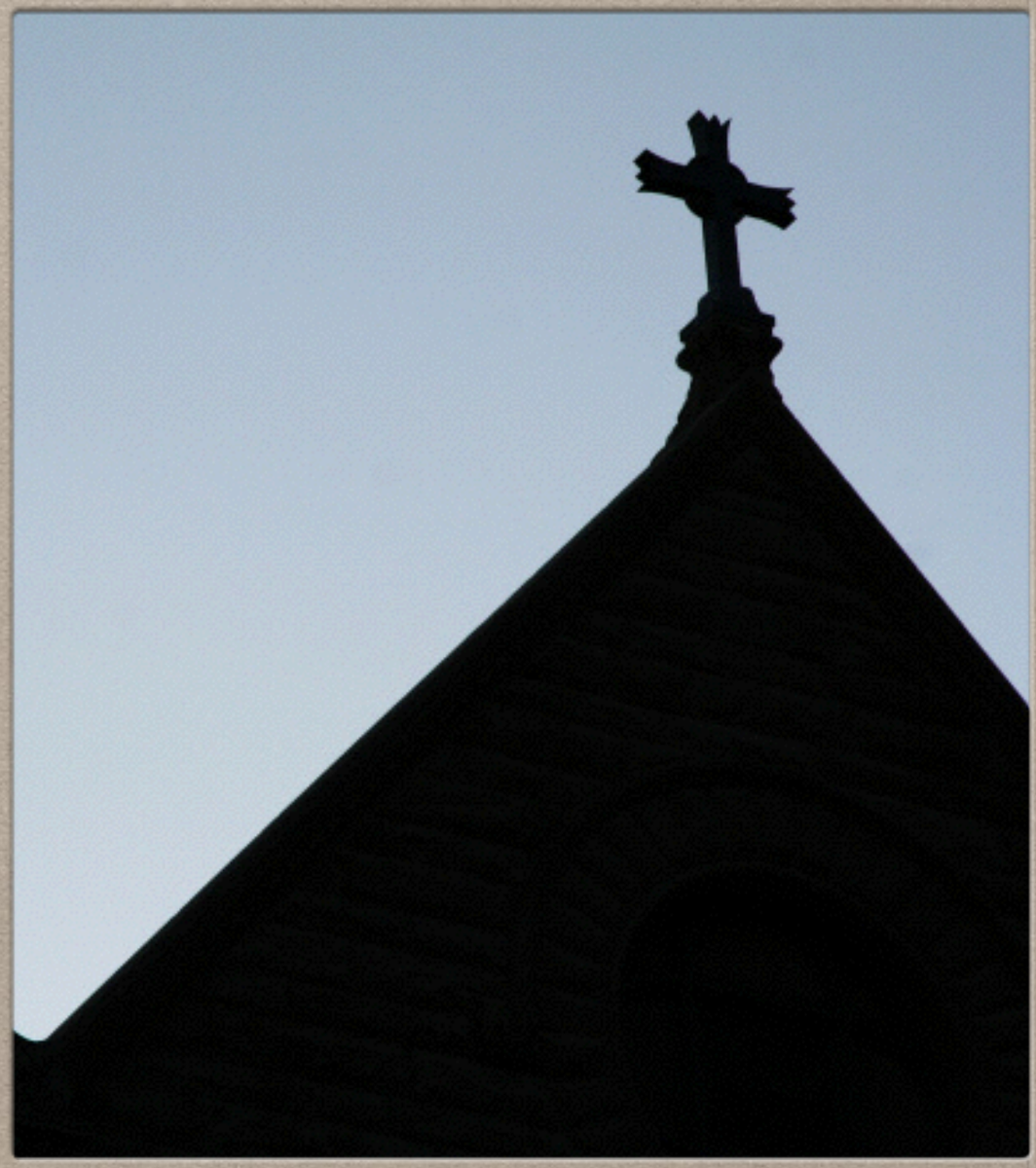
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN CANADA

FAMILY
CHURCH
OF
Heritage
Green

MARTHA GRACE REESE

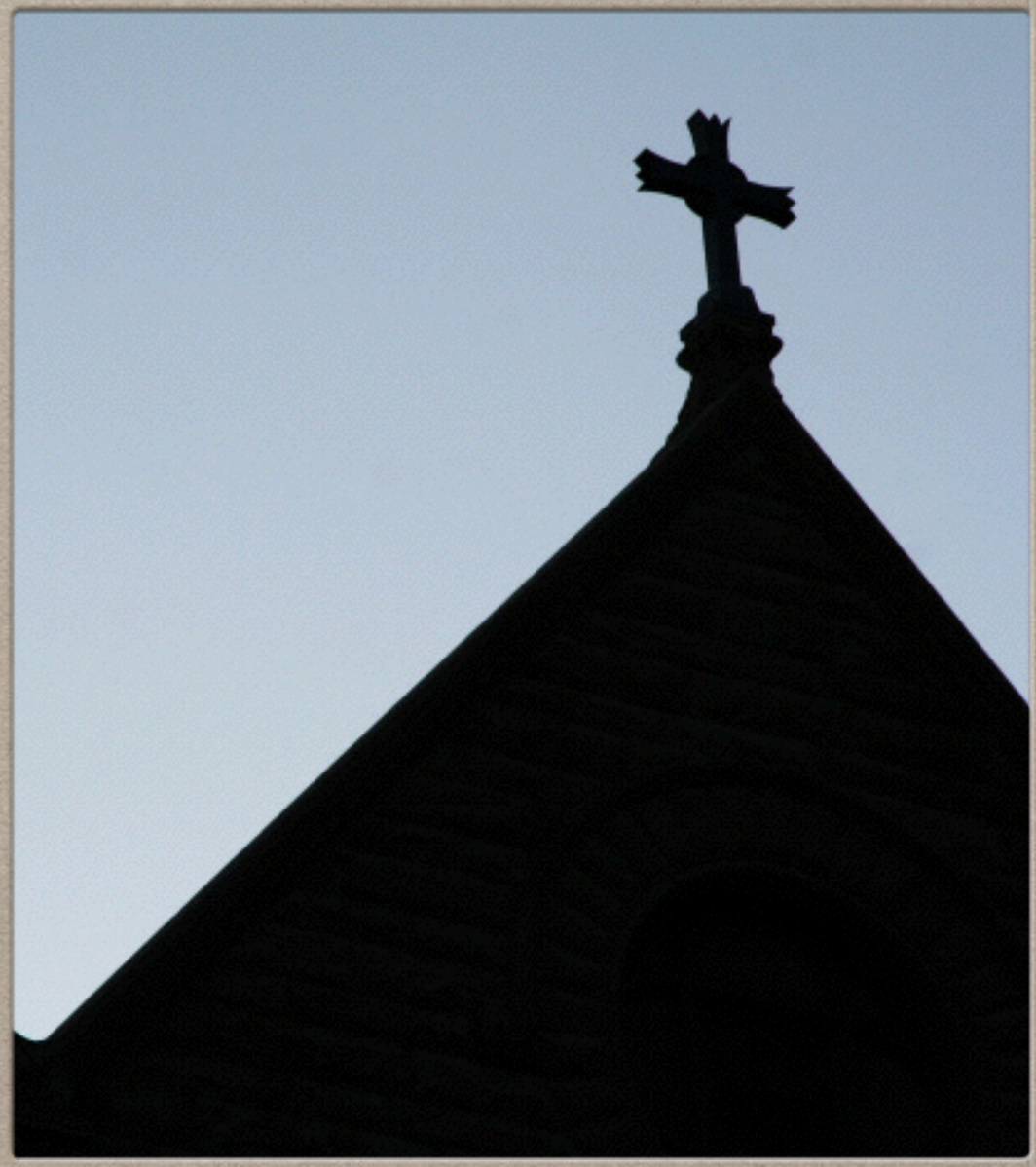
"Many churches are slowing down because they are running on human steam."

Martha Grace Reese, *Unbinding the Gospel* (St. Louise: Chalice Press, 2008) p.55.



MIRED IN HUMAN EFFORTS

- People most concerned about having their own individual wants and desires met
- As we seek to serve ourselves more than God, our communion with God grows increasingly shallow



PRAYERFUL DISCERNMENT

- THE INTENTIONAL PRAYERFUL SEEKING OF GOD'S GUIDANCE RECONNECTS US TO OUR ORIGINAL GOD-GIVEN PURPOSE, POWER AND VITALITY

PRAYERFUL DISCERNMENT

- Discernment is the most critical issue in postmodern religious formation in North America.

Diana Butler Bass, Christianity For the Rest of Us (New York: Harper One, 2006), p. 93.

- *Discernment enables us to recover our North Star of purpose and direction*

BIBLICAL DISCERNMENT

- Desiring God's voice and will
- Examples :
  - Abraham
  - Mary

"Talking to God is called prayer. God talking back is called schizophrenia."

LILY TOMLIN

BIBLICAL DISCERNMENT

- Desiring God's voice and will
- Examples
  - Abraham
  - Mary
  - Jesus: *"My sheep hear my voice. I know them and they follow my voice."* John 10:27

PRINCIPLES OF BIBLICAL DISCERNMENT

- Desiring to respond to the Divine invitation to engage in loving relationship
- Receiving God's will by making available space in our lives.
- Responding by stepping out and concretely doing God's will
- Surrendering ourselves in humble mutual service

“When the whole church is thus obedient to Him it will be what it is meant to be, ‘a fellowship of creative heaven-led souls’ with power to fulfil its vocation of transforming the world.”

EVELYN UNDERHILL

A COLLECTIVE DISCERNMENT PROCESS

- God's will is truly the source of our effectiveness.
- "Spiritual vitality is not ultimately about knowing more, but about a greater openness to living more of the will of God." Evelyn Underhill, *The Fruits of the Spirit* (London: Longmans, Green, 1949), p.21.

A COLLECTIVE DISCERNMENT PROCESS

- A Prayer Group
- A Five-Day Silent Retreat for the Minister
- A Four-Week Leadership Study Group on Discernment for Elders
- Prayer and reflection Partners
- A Four-Week Worship Series on Biblical Discernment
- A Congregational Discernment Event
- A Discernment Retreat for Elders
- Follow-up Discernment Meetings for Elders

RESULTS OF A COLLECTIVE DISCERNMENT PROCESS

- The Wilderness Experience: "For me this was a tangible sign of the reality of our deepening relationship with God—the wilderness is where the openness, humility, trust and faith… become real. We were faced with our weakness and as we waited and 'abided' these spiritual gifts began to grow and 'renew our minds." Elder, Kings Church
- A Growth in Spiritual Vitality among elders of 22%
- The Most dramatic Areas of Spiritual Growth (from 30 to 58%) related to a deepening relationship with God and a strengthening relationship with others in community
- A 30% Clearer Sense of Direction in the ministry and mission of Kings Church
- Faith, Humility and Flexibility/Openness were identified as the top area of growth
- *"After going through the discernment process, I think I find it easier to trust God that He will guide us if we are prepared to listen. And this realization of trust has helped to strengthen my faith. I find it easier to have God involved in my solutions rather than try to solve it on my own. In other words, give up control, which is not always easy."* Elder, Kings Church