

# Vocare Discernment Retreat

## Conversation Process Guide

Color Key:

- Black Lettering in Italics* indicates group instructions
- Blue indicates script for the facilitator to read aloud
- Purple indicates time suggestions for the time monitor
- Green indicates what is recorded on posters

### **Leadership:**

- **Facilitator** – *The facilitator must read through the Conversation Process Guide thoroughly and carefully to understand the process and the desired outcomes. The facilitator must not be a participant.*
- **Timekeeper** - *The timekeeper must read through the Conversation Process Guide thoroughly and carefully and be prepared to help keep the retreat on schedule.*
- **Recorders** – *A recorder will be determined by each table after the agenda is reviewed. Recorders will use the templates provided as guides to record on newsprint.*

### **Supplies needed:**

- *Flip chart with tear-off sheets that can be used by each table to record their discussion. 7-10 sheets for each table should be more than sufficient.*
- *Markers*
- *Printed Values deck for each table*
- *Post-it notes and/or blank values cards for each table to create additional cards for the deck*
- *Prints of the “Discernment” image (Appendix A) or a projection of it on a screen*
- *Templates printed (from the Appendix) for each table so the recorder knows how to make the recording sheets on the newsprint*
- *This process guide for the facilitator*
- *Note: Each part of the retreat should take approximately 90 minutes*

### **One the day of the retreat:**

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*Welcome and greet participants as they arrive*

*At appointed time, the facilitator welcomes the group and leads the conversation by reading the script in blue. The time monitor is prepared to keep time.*

- *We begin today with two readings. First, **Isaiah 43:18-19***

*<sup>8</sup> Do not remember the former things, or consider the things of old.*

*<sup>19</sup> I am about to do a new thing;*

*now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?"*

*I will make a way in the wilderness*

*and rivers in the desert.*

*Second, **Romans 12:1-2***

*I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. <sup>2</sup>Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.*

- *Opening prayer:*

*Please pray with me. Let us pray together:*

*Lead us by your Spirit, O God, to value what you value and to live out our ministry reflecting those values.*

*Shepherd our conversation and discernment,*

*so that your purposes are reflected on what we do here today.*

*Lead us, guide us, and accompany us*

*into the future you have in mind for us.*

*In the name of +Jesus, Amen.*

- *At your tables now, share the following:*

- Name
- Your role within your congregation or ministry
- Look at the image “Discernment (Appendix A)
  - Share what you see in the image
  - What might this image have to say about “God doing a new thing” and “discernment of the will of God?”
- *We will take **5 minutes** to do all of the above.*



- *After the time rings: Let's review our agenda for the day together:*

Part 1: Naming our Values

Part 2: Where have we been: Considering our History through Vocare?

Part 3: Who are we called to be, and what are we called to do?

- *We need a volunteer at each table:*
  - **Recorder:** We need a recorder at each table to capture the shared wisdom from each group. Please choose a recorder. Directions for what to record will be given at each step.
- *So that we can record our work, the recorder should now create a Part 1 Template on newsprint, like Appendix B.*
- *While recorders are preparing the templates: This resourcing conversation has three goals:*
  - *To share and collect the wisdom of those gathered today about shared ministry values*
  - *To review our respective congregational stories so that we can consider their impact on our ministry today*
  - *To begin to imagine who God is calling us to be and what God is calling us to do as [insert congregation name(s)].*
  - *Our day will be divided into three distinct conversations. Each conversation will take about 90 minutes. The intent is to capture as much insight today as we can. **It is essential that we keep the conversation moving.** We will do our best to stay within the allotted time for each section of our experience together.*

## **Part 1: Naming our Values**

- 1. Our values shape our experiences and grow out of our experiences. Take 2 minutes to reflect silently upon the following: Think of an experience from your own life when church was everything that you imagine it is supposed to*

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*be. What was happening in this experience? What feelings does this experience bring to mind? What values did this experience honor?*

- *Time monitor sets timer for 2 minutes*

2. *When the timer rings: Consider the experience that came to mind for you. If you are willing to share the feelings and values associated with that experience, please **briefly** do so now at your table. Please know that sharing is optional. We will take five minutes. Please share in such a way that everyone at your table will have time to share if they choose.*

- *Time monitor sets timer for 5 minutes*
- *Recorder writes the emotions shared on the left side of the box labeled “emotions.”*

3. *For the next part of our reflection, take 2 minutes to reflect silently upon an opposite experience. Think of an experience from your own life when church was everything that you imagine it is not supposed to be. What was happening in this experience? What feelings does this experience bring to mind? What values were missing or being suppressed by this experience?*

- *Time monitor sets timer for 2 minutes*

4. *When the timer rings: Consider the experience that came to mind for you. If you are willing to share, **briefly**, the feelings associated with that experience and the values missing from the experience, please do so now. Please remember that sharing is optional. We will take five minutes. Please share in such a way that everyone at your table will have time to share if they choose.*

- *Time monitor sets timer for 5 minutes*
- *Recorder writes the emotions shared on the right side of the box labeled “emotions.”*

5. *With these experiences and feelings in mind, we are now going to think together about our personal values for church as we experience it in and through our congregations.*

- *Each table has a deck of values cards*
- *Spread the cards out on the table so that everyone can see them*
- **DO NOT DISCUSS THE VALUES AT THIS POINT**



- *Take two minutes to look through the cards*
  - *If you think that there are important values for your congregation's ministry that are missing, write them on the blank values cards that are provided.*
  - *Make a note of the **two values** that are the most important to you.*
  - *Time monitor sets the time for **2 minutes***
6. *We are now going to spend ten minutes sharing and listening. Share why you chose the two values cards that you did. What makes them the most important values for church for you? Remember to share in such a way that everyone at your table has time and an opportunity to share. The goal of this time is sharing and listening.*
- *Time monitor sets the timer for **10 minutes.***
  - *Recorder writes the personal values that are shared in the box labeled "personal values."*
7. *Once personal values have been shared: We are now going to look for values that are related in some way, and place them together into 5-10 related column groupings. (Appendix C)*
- *It is very important that no one talks during this step.*
  - *We will take turns, two people at a time.*
  - *Each person will move up to three cards to group like-ideas together.*
  - *Once you have moved three cards, step aside, so that someone else can have a turn.*
  - *We will repeat the process until all cards are grouped.*
  - *It's okay to have "singles" that don't seem to fit with a group. Place them in a group of their own.*
  - *It is also okay to move a card that someone else has already moved.*
  - *If a card seems to belong in two groups, make a second card.*
  - *The focus should be on looking for and grouping related ideas.*
  - *Remember that these are "groupings."*
  - *Do not place the cards in any order or determine categories or headings in advance.*
  - *We will take 5 minutes to do this.*



- *Time monitor sets the timer for 5 minutes.*
8. *Once the values cards are all grouped with any singles placed in their own group: We are now going to discuss what we see and identify a **central theme for each value grouping**. If we need to move some ideas around as we discuss, that is okay.*
- *To help us think of a theme for each value group, it may help to look for card in each group that captures the general meaning of the group.*
  - *We will take 10 minutes to do this.*
  - *Begin with the grouping on the left, and repeat the process until each grouping has a heading.*
  - *Time monitor sets the timer for 10 minutes.*
  - *Recorder writes the theme for each value group on a sticky note and places it at the top of the grouping.*
9. *Once each group has a theme: Look at the themes we have identified. All of these values are important. We know the list is incomplete, but this is our important wisdom we bring to the conversation today. We are now going to have an open conversation so that we can rank these value themes in priority order. We will take 10 minutes for this conversation.*
- *Discuss the themes “popcorn style.” If needed, the questions below can help guide the conversation.*
  - *What strikes you as important about each value theme?*
  - *What criteria are you using to determine importance?*
  - *What implications does each value theme have for who we are called to be?*
  - *What implications does each value theme have for what we are called to do?*
  - *What would be missing if a particular value theme was left out?*
  - *Which value themes are essential and represent the church’s primary way of being?*
  - *Time monitor sets the timer for 10 minutes.*



10. *When the timer rings: Remembering that each value theme is important, we are going to rank them in priority order by voting. With your marker, place dots by the top two themes for you.*

- *Count the dots by each value theme. Rank them in order. The top two are the priority value themes from this exercise.*
- *We have 2 minutes to do this.*
- *The recorder writes the priority value themes in priority order in the “Priority Values” box.*
- *Time monitor sets the timer for **2 minutes**.*

11. *Once the priority values are determined: We are now going to give some depth to our priority values by writing statements that capture what is contained within each grouping.*

- *We want each statement to be rich and meaningful and if possible, to inspire.*
- *Look at the words in the grouping for each priority value, and use those words to help craft a statement.*
- *EX: Let’s say we’ve identified a priority value of worship to represent others values like the Holy Communion, Holy Baptism, preaching, singable music, and prayers that come from the heart. Your values statement might be: “Worship: to proclaim the Gospel faithfully through the sacraments, preaching, congregational song, and meaningful prayers.”*
- *Not all words in each grouping will fit in each statement, but we want to capture the spirit of the grouping with our statements.*
- *We have 10 minutes to write our statements.*
- *The recorder writes the statements in priority order in the “Priority Values Statements” box.*
- *The time monitor sets the timer for **10 minutes**.*

12. *Now that we have priority values statements, we will discuss if these priority values are actual values (values the church currently lives out in daily life and ministry), aspirational values (values the church hopes to live out in daily life and ministry) or both. We have five minutes to do this.*

- *The recorder marks actual values with a “#,” aspirational values with a “+,” and both with “#+.” We will take five minutes to do this.*





- *The time monitor sets the timer for 5 minutes.*

## HANG THE POSTERS WHERE OTHERS CAN SEE THEM, AND TAKE A BREAK

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### **Part 2: Where Have We Been: Considering our Congregational Story through *Vocare***

1. *Now that we have named our current actual and aspirational values, we are going to consider our past, where we have been as congregations in ministry. This discussion will take **90 minutes**. To get us started, the recorder creates the first section of the Part 2 Template on the Newsprint (Appendix D). As the discussion moves forward, a new section is added for each subsequent pastorate that is remembered.*
2. *Our task in this part of our retreat is to create a “**Congregational Story Line**” at each table.*
3. *There are no “right or wrong” answers or opinions. All remembrances are welcome. This reflection upon where we have been in our life together is critical to discerning who we are called to be, what we are called to do, and why we are here, while acknowledging, celebrating, and sometimes grieving various chapters in our story.*
4. *Each time-period served by each pastor who can actually be remembered by at least one person at each table will be discussed. The conversation begins with the pastoral time-period that is the farthest back in history. The conversation moves forward through each pastoral time-period to the present.*
5. *The amount of time discussing each pastoral time-period will vary by table, depending upon how many pastoral time periods can be remembered by the participants at each table.*
6. *For each pastoral time-period, discuss and record the following:*

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- What were the **major congregational events or experiences** during the time period indicated?
- What words would you use to describe the congregational experiences, attitudes, and feelings during this time period?
- What did the congregation **value** during this period?
- What was the congregation **open** to during this period?
- How would you describe the congregation's **call** during this period?
- Where did the congregation invest its time and **attention** during this period?
- What were the **regrets and celebrations** in the life of this congregation during this period?
- How did your congregation **experience God's presence** during this period?
- What were the experiences, celebrations and regrets in the life of the **wider community and world** during this period?
- *The time monitor sets the timer for 90 minutes*

7. Once memories have been shared and recorded from each pastoral time-period, reflect together what has been shared.

- What are the *Vocare commonalities* across pastoral time-periods?
- *The recorder creates the "Where Have We Been Summary" and captures the Vocare commonalities across pastoral time-periods in the VOCARE section. (Template E)*

8. Look carefully at "attention" and "regrets" across pastoral time-periods.

- Note where attention has been invested
- Was attention invested in any unhealthy, i.e. ministry distracting, ways?
- How were regrets tended to?
- Are there any unresolved regrets?
- *The recorder notes the above on the "Where Have We Been Summary" made in #7 above (Template E)*

**HANG THE POSTERS WHERE OTHERS CAN SEE THEM. (Hang posters from different tables from the same pastoral time-periods next to each other).**

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## TAKE A BREAK

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### Part 3: Who Are We Called to Be, and What Are We Called to Do?

1. *Now that we have named our actual and aspirational values and considered our congregational story, we are going to explore our personal living faith so that we can begin to imagine who God is collectively calling us to be and what God is calling us to do as [insert congregation name(s)]. We will share our thoughts briefly on 5 different questions. This is a time for sharing and listening, not a time for conversation or debate. We will spend 5 minutes on each question.*
  
2. *Share your thoughts about the following question: what is life-giving for you about being part of a Christian community? (i.e. worship, education, service/advocacy, social opportunities, etc.)? You have 5 minutes.*
  - *The recorder captures what is life-giving on the Part 3 Template*
  - *The time monitor sets the timer for 5 minutes.*
  
3. *Share your thoughts about the following question: what aspects of worship are most impactful for you, and why? (music, liturgy, prayers, sermon, community, etc.). You have 5 minutes*
  - *The recorder captures impactful aspects of worship on the Part 3 Template*
  - *The time monitor sets the timer for 5 minutes*
  
4. *Share how being a Christian makes a difference in your daily living. You have 5 minutes.*
  - *The recorder captures how being a Christian makes a difference in daily living on the Part 3 Template*
  - *The time monitor sets the timer for 5 minutes*



5. *How does being a Christian impact how you think and act in relation to matters of public concern? You have 5 minutes.*
- *The recorder captures how being a Christian makes an impact on thinking and acting on public concerns on the Part 3 Template*
  - *The time monitor sets the timer for **5 minutes***
6. *Share a time when you experienced the presence of God. You have 5 minutes.*
- *The recorder captures experiences of the presence of God on the Part 3 Template*
  - *The time monitor sets the timer for **5 minutes***
7. *Consider again the priority value themes from Part 1, together with what you have just shared and heard about your personal living faith and that of your peers. At your tables, generate a list of everything that is **essential** for [NAME of congregation] to be faithful to the Gospel.*
- **DO NOT DISCUSS WHILE YOU ARE GENERATING THE LIST. SIMPLY MAKE A LIST TOGETHER, “POPCORN” STYLE.**
  - *Once you have generated the list, discuss the importance of each item, including why you think it is essential.*
  - *After 7 minutes, you will vote. Each person chooses 2.*
  - *The recorder writes the top 5 essential components for ministry faithfulness on the Part 3 Template.*
- *After the essential components for faithfulness are recorded: We are now going to note obstacles and opportunities of each essential component for ministry. You have 5 minutes.*
    - *What obstacles does each essential component for ministry present?*
    - *What opportunities does each essential component for ministry present?*
    - *The time monitor sets the time for **5 minutes**.*
    - *The recorder notes the obstacles and opportunities in the appropriate box on the Part 3 Template*



8. Consider the local community of *[name your city/area here]*, together with the value themes from Part 1, and the Congregational Story from Part 2, what can the Congregation do to have a greater impact on the life of our neighborhood and/or city? You have 10 minutes.
  - The time monitor sets the time for **10 minutes**.
  - The recorder notes possibilities for impact in the appropriate box on the Final Template
  
9. Consider again the Congregational Story from Part 2, together with the exercises we just completed. Discuss the following. You have 15 minutes.
  - What “new thing(s)” is the Congregation being called to be open to that is not currently part of our ministry?
  - Where is the Congregation currently investing our attention that we may be being called to re-evaluate?
  - What is the Congregation currently doing that we may be being called to no longer do?
  - What regrets does the Congregation have that we are being called to tend to?
  - How is the Congregation being called to help others experience the presence of God?
  - The time monitor sets the time for **15 minutes**.
  - The recorder notes the responses in the appropriate boxes on the Final Template
  
10. To conclude our time together today, you are each invited to share “just one thing” that I will take away from today.
  
11. Express thanks to the participants for their time, thoughtfulness, and engagement.
  
12. Share next Steps.
  
13. Closing Prayer:
 

*O God, you have called your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown. Give us faith to go out with good courage, not knowing where we go, but only that*



*your hand is leading us and your love supporting us; through Jesus Christ  
our Lord. AMEN*

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## Appendix A



### *Discernment*



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**Appendix B**  
*Part 1 Template*

<b>Naming Our Values</b>	
 <b>Emotions</b>	 <b>Emotions</b>
<b>Personal Values</b>	
<b>Priority Value Themes</b>	





## Priority Values Statements

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## Appendix C

### *Values Groupings*



## Appendix D

*Part 2 Template – Create one chart for each pastorate that was experienced and remembered by at least one person in each group*

<b>Where Have We Been: Considering our Congregational Story through <i>Vocare</i></b>
<p>Pastoral time-period: Pr. J. Doe 19XX – 19XX</p> <p>Major congregational events or experiences:</p> <p>Congregational Experiences, Attitudes, Feelings:</p> <p>Congregational –</p> <p>V</p> <p>O</p> <p>C</p> <p>A</p> <p>Regrets and Celebrations</p> <p>Experiences of God’s presence</p> <p>++</p> <p>Experiences, Celebrations and Regrets of wider community and world:</p>



## Appendix E

### *Where Have We Been Summary*

<b>Where Have We Been Summary – Across pastoral time-periods</b>	
<b>V</b>  <b>O</b>  <b>C</b>  <b>A</b>  <b>R</b>  <b>E</b>	
<b>Where have we invested Attention?</b>	<b>Unhealthy or Distracting Investment of Attention</b>
<b>Tending to Regrets</b>	<b>Unresolved Regrets</b>

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## Appendix F

### Part 3 Template

<b>Who are we called to be? What are we called to do?</b>	
<b>What is Lifegiving?</b>	<b>Impactful Aspects of Worship</b>
<b>Difference in Daily Living</b>	<b>Impact on Public Concerns</b>
<b>Experiences of the Presence of God</b>	
<b>5 Essential Components of Ministry</b>	
<b>Obstacles</b>	<b>Opportunities</b>

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**Appendix G**  
*Final Template*

<b>Who are we called to be? What are we called to do?</b>	
<b>Impact on Neighborhood or Community</b>	
<b>New Things</b>	<b>Re-evaluate</b>
<b>No longer called to do</b>	<b>Regrets</b>
<b>Help Others Experience God's Presence</b>	

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