



DISCERNMENT JOURNAL



Greetings! Thanks for joining the church in this process of prayer and discernment. The purpose of this journal is to give everyone in our community a way to share in this spiritual journey even through our individual times of prayer and devotion. The following pages present a shared structure for daily prayer and worship, shared passages for reflection and space for you to journal your thoughts, insights and reflections throughout the process.

As you journey through the next 12 weeks if you feel that God is speaking to you about the discernment of our church we welcome you to communicate your thoughts to the Discernment Team. Our leaders want to hear from the larger church community as God is moving and speaking to people. You can email discernment@highrockbrookline.org where the Discernment Team will be collecting and reading input from the church. Or you can stop by 39 Harvard Street, 2nd floor, any Thursday morning (between January 17 to March 28) from 8:30am–9:30am where at least one of the pastoral staff will be present.

OUR HOPE FOR DISCERNMENT

One of the obvious questions that people will have is, “What am I praying for? What are we discerning as a church?” The most basic answer to that question is simple; we want to know God’s will for our church so that we can align our next steps with that will.

More specifically there are a few areas where we are particularly seeking to hear from God.

OUR LEADERSHIP STRUCTURE

While we are a congregational church with elders and ministry leaders that serve the church, in many ways we are a ‘Lead Pastor led church’. Perhaps the primary question we have in this discernment process is how God wants us to structure ourselves in terms of leadership going forward.

THE PRIESTHOOD OF ALL BELIEVERS

Directly related to the leadership structure is our growing focus on the Priesthood of all believers. What does it mean that God has given each of us gifts to edify the Body of Christ with? And what might that mean for the future of our church and how we are led?

MARS HILL FELLOWSHIP CHURCH

Over the last couple of years we have been developing a relationship with MHFC and for the past months we have been worshipping together every week and more. One of the questions we have is what God is calling us to in our partnership with MHFC? Is it close to over? Do we continue as we are now? Is there a new future that God is calling us to enter into?

ELEMENTS OF THIS JOURNAL

There is a daily structure for everyone to follow, most of which will be familiar to people. However, there are two elements that might be unfamiliar and require greater explanation.

THE DAILY EXAMEN

The Daily Examen was a part of the Spiritual Exercises written by St. Ignatius of Loyola in the 16th century. There are different versions of The Daily Examen today but the heart of the Examen is to reflect back over the day that you have just lived and recognize God's activity in that day and whether the activity of the day drew you closer to God, or further away.

**Every night you are invited to practice the Examen for 5–10 minutes by doing the following 5 things:*

- 1 Place yourself in the presence of God and thank him for his great love for you.
- 2 Pray for God's grace so that you might understand how he is acting in your life.
- 3 Recall the day – think back over each activity, person, conversation and event.
- 4 Reflect on what you said, or did or thought in those moments. Did that moment draw you closer to God, or further away from him?
- 5 Look forward toward tomorrow. Think of how you might partner more effectively with God's plan for you. Be specific as you think about the day ahead.

**Perhaps consider lighting a dedicated candle during the Examen as a way to specifically mark that time.*

FASTING & CONTEMPLATIVE PRAYER

For the past few months our Overseers, Staff & some others have been fasting and praying on Thursday morning. During this season of discernment everyone is invited to join that fasting and prayer. Specifically, you are invited to replace your breakfast on Thursday mornings with a time of contemplative prayer.

Contemplative prayer can also mean differing things to different people but for our purposes you are invited to ‘fix your gaze on Jesus’ during this time of prayer; to contemplate or meditate on him. It is a time of dedicated focus on our Messiah where we reject all of the ‘input’ of this world (including food) and extend our gaze outward upon our Lord.

If you are looking for ideas on where to fix that gaze you can choose specific scenes or stories from the life of Jesus (perhaps pick a different one each Thursday) or on different aspects of who he is; his humility, his mercy, his grace, his majesty, etc – and fix your gaze on one area each Thursday.

FINAL WORD

Our culture is cluttered with great ideas of things to do that we start but don’t finish. A commitment to join in this process for the next 12 weeks could easily become one of those if there isn’t a plan that will keep you committed and help normalize this new rhythm in your spiritual life.

So take the time now to put together a plan for how you will set aside at least 15 minutes every morning and 15 minutes every night for this. Do the simple but necessary work of putting it in your calendar, changing your alarm times, setting alerts and whatever else you need to do in order to prioritize this process. We are hoping and praying that God, through his Holy Spirit, will speak to his church over the next 12 weeks; let us be sure to create the space and time for that to happen!

Thanks so much for joining the church in this. May God bless you and encourage you in the weeks to come. Amen.

DAILY JOURNAL

WEEK ONE

JANUARY 14 – 20

WEEKLY TEXT: GALATIANS 5:13–26 (NIV)

¹³You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh[a]; rather, serve one another humbly in love. ¹⁴For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.”[b] ¹⁵If you bite and devour each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.

¹⁶So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.

¹⁷For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever[c] you want. ¹⁸But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

¹⁹The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; ²⁰idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions ²¹and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

²²But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

²⁴Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. ²⁶Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.

WEEK TWO

JANUARY 21 – 27

WEEKLY TEXT: JAMES 4:1-10 (NIV)

¹What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? ²You desire but do not have, so you kill. You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask God. ³When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

⁴You adulterous people,[a] don't you know that friendship with the world means enmity against God? Therefore, anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. ⁵Or do you think Scripture says without reason that he jealously longs for the spirit he has caused to dwell in us[b]? ⁶But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says:

“God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble.”[c]

⁷Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

⁸Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. ⁹Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. ¹⁰Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.

WEEK THREE

JANUARY 28 – FEBRUARY 3

WEEKLY TEXT: PSALM 27:1-14 (NIV)

¹The Lord is my light and my salvation—whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life—of whom shall I be afraid?

²When the wicked advance against me to devour[a] me, it is my enemies and my foes who will stumble and fall.

³Though an army besiege me, my heart will not fear; though war break out against me, even then I will be confident.

⁴One thing I ask from the Lord, this only do I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze on the beauty of the Lord and to seek him in his temple.

⁵For in the day of trouble he will keep me safe in his dwelling; he will hide me in the shelter of his sacred tent and set me high upon a rock.

⁶Then my head will be exalted above the enemies who surround me; at his sacred tent I will sacrifice with shouts of joy; I will sing and make music to the Lord.

⁷Hear my voice when I call, Lord; be merciful to me and answer me.

⁸My heart says of you, “Seek his face!” Your face, Lord, I will seek.

⁹Do not hide your face from me, do not turn your servant away in anger; you have been my helper. Do not reject me or forsake me, God my Savior.

¹⁰Though my father and mother forsake me, the Lord will receive me.

¹¹Teach me your way, Lord; lead me in a straight path because of my oppressors.

¹²Do not turn me over to the desire of my foes, for false witnesses rise up against me, spouting malicious accusations.

¹³I remain confident of this: I will see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.

¹⁴Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord.

Sacred Space this Saturday (2/2); 7:30pm at 39 Harvard St 2fl



MORNING

- READ THIS WEEK'S SCRIPTURE PASSAGE
- SILENCE & REFLECTION ON THE SCRIPTURE PASSAGE
- JOURNAL ANY THOUGHTS
- END WITH THE LORD'S PRAYER



EVENING

- THE DAILY EXAMEN
- JOURNAL ANY THOUGHTS
- END WITH THE LORD'S PRAYER

WEEK FOUR

FEBRUARY 4 – 10

WEEKLY TEXT: COLOSSIANS 2:6-15 (NIV)

⁶So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, ⁷rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.

⁸See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces[a] of this world rather than on Christ.

⁹For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, ¹⁰and in Christ you have been brought to fullness. He is the head over every power and authority. ¹¹In him you were also circumcised with a circumcision not performed by human hands. Your whole self ruled by the flesh[b] was put off when you were circumcised by[c] Christ, ¹²having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through your faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead.

¹³When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you[d] alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, ¹⁴having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross. ¹⁵And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

Please pray for the Discernment Team retreat this Saturday (2/9).

WEEK FIVE

FEBRUARY 11 – 17

WEEKLY TEXT: 1 CHRONICLES 29:10–20 (NIV)

¹⁰David praised the Lord in the presence of the whole assembly, saying,

“Praise be to you, Lord, the God of our father Israel, from everlasting to everlasting. ¹¹Yours, Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendor, for everything in heaven and earth is yours. Yours, Lord, is the kingdom; you are exalted as head over all. ¹²Wealth and honor come from you; you are the ruler of all things. In your hands are strength and power to exalt and give strength to all. ¹³Now, our God, we give you thanks, and praise your glorious name.

¹⁴“But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to give as generously as this? Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand. ¹⁵We are foreigners and strangers in your sight, as were all our ancestors. Our days on earth are like a shadow, without hope. ¹⁶Lord our God, all this abundance that we have provided for building you a temple for your Holy Name comes from your hand, and all of it belongs to you. ¹⁷I know, my God, that you test the heart and are pleased with integrity. All these things I have given willingly and with honest intent. And now I have seen with joy how willingly your people who are here have given to you. ¹⁸Lord, the God of our fathers Abraham, Isaac and Israel, keep these desires and thoughts in the hearts of your people forever, and keep their hearts loyal to you. ¹⁹And give my son Solomon the wholehearted devotion to keep your commands, statutes and decrees and to do everything to build the palatial structure for which I have provided.”

²⁰Then David said to the whole assembly, “Praise the Lord your God.” So they all praised the Lord, the God of their fathers; they bowed down, prostrating themselves before the Lord and the king.



MORNING

- READ THIS WEEK'S SCRIPTURE PASSAGE
- SILENCE & REFLECTION ON THE SCRIPTURE PASSAGE
- JOURNAL ANY THOUGHTS
- END WITH THE LORD'S PRAYER



EVENING

- THE DAILY EXAMEN
- JOURNAL ANY THOUGHTS
- END WITH THE LORD'S PRAYER

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 16



MORNING

- READ THIS WEEK'S SCRIPTURE PASSAGE
- SILENCE & REFLECTION ON THE SCRIPTURE PASSAGE
- JOURNAL ANY THOUGHTS
- END WITH THE LORD'S PRAYER



EVENING

- THE DAILY EXAMEN
- JOURNAL ANY THOUGHTS
- END WITH THE LORD'S PRAYER

WEEK SIX

FEBRUARY 18 – 24

WEEKLY TEXT: HEBREWS 9:1–14 (NIV)

¹Now the first covenant had regulations for worship and also an earthly sanctuary. ²A tabernacle was set up. In its first room were the lampstand and the table with its consecrated bread; this was called the Holy Place. ³Behind the second curtain was a room called the Most Holy Place, ⁴which had the golden altar of incense and the gold-covered ark of the covenant. This ark contained the gold jar of manna, Aaron's staff that had budded, and the stone tablets of the covenant. ⁵Above the ark were the cherubim of the Glory, overshadowing the atonement cover. But we cannot discuss these things in detail now.

⁶When everything had been arranged like this, the priests entered regularly into the outer room to carry on their ministry. ⁷But only the high priest entered the inner room, and that only once a year, and never without blood, which he offered for himself and for the sins the people had committed in ignorance. ⁸The Holy Spirit was showing by this that the way into the Most Holy Place had not yet been disclosed as long as the first tabernacle was still functioning. ⁹This is an illustration for the present time, indicating that the gifts and sacrifices being offered were not able to clear the conscience of the worshiper. ¹⁰They are only a matter of food and drink and various ceremonial washings—external regulations applying until the time of the new order.

¹¹But when Christ came as high priest of the good things that are now already here,[a] he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not made with human hands, that is to say, is not a part of this creation. ¹²He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, thus obtaining[b] eternal redemption. ¹³The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. ¹⁴How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death,[c] so that we may serve the living God!

WEEK SEVEN

FEBRUARY 25 – MARCH 3

WEEKLY TEXT: PSALM 24:1-10 (NIV)

¹The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world,
and all who live in it;

²for he founded it on the seas and established it on the waters.

³Who may ascend the mountain of the Lord?
Who may stand in his holy place?

⁴The one who has clean hands and a pure heart,
who does not trust in an idol or swear by a false god.[a]

⁵They will receive blessing from the Lord and vindication
from God their Savior.

⁶Such is the generation of those who seek him,
who seek your face, God of Jacob.[b][c]

⁷Lift up your heads, you gates; be lifted up, you ancient doors,
that the King of glory may come in.

⁸Who is this King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty,
the Lord mighty in battle.

⁹Lift up your heads, you gates; lift them up, you ancient doors,
that the King of glory may come in.

¹⁰Who is he, this King of glory? The Lord Almighty—
he is the King of glory.

Sacred Space this Saturday (3/2); 7:30pm at 39 Harvard St 2fl

WEEK EIGHT

MARCH 4 – 10

WEEKLY TEXT: DEUTERONOMY 10:12–22 (NIV)

¹²And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God ask of you but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in obedience to him, to love him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, ¹³and to observe the Lord's commands and decrees that I am giving you today for your own good?

¹⁴To the Lord your God belong the heavens, even the highest heavens, the earth and everything in it. ¹⁵Yet the Lord set his affection on your ancestors and loved them, and he chose you, their descendants, above all the nations—as it is today. ¹⁶Circumcise your hearts, therefore, and do not be stiff-necked any longer. ¹⁷For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality and accepts no bribes. ¹⁸He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the foreigner residing among you, giving them food and clothing. ¹⁹And you are to love those who are foreigners, for you yourselves were foreigners in Egypt. ²⁰Fear the Lord your God and serve him. Hold fast to him and take your oaths in his name. ²¹He is the one you praise; he is your God, who performed for you those great and awesome wonders you saw with your own eyes. ²²Your ancestors who went down into Egypt were seventy in all, and now the Lord your God has made you as numerous as the stars in the sky.

*Ash Wednesday Service this Wednesday (3/6); 6pm & 7pm at 39 Harvard St 2fl
Please pray for Discernment Team retreat this Saturday (3/9)*

WEEK NINE

MARCH 11 – 17

WEEKLY TEXT: EXODUS 14:10–22 (NIV)

¹⁰As Pharaoh approached, the Israelites looked up, and there were the Egyptians, marching after them. They were terrified and cried out to the Lord. ¹¹They said to Moses, “Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you brought us to the desert to die? What have you done to us by bringing us out of Egypt? ¹²Didn’t we say to you in Egypt, ‘Leave us alone; let us serve the Egyptians’? It would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the desert!”

¹³Moses answered the people, “Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never see again. ¹⁴The Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still.”

¹⁵Then the Lord said to Moses, “Why are you crying out to me? Tell the Israelites to move on. ¹⁶Raise your staff and stretch out your hand over the sea to divide the water so that the Israelites can go through the sea on dry ground. ¹⁷I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians so that they will go in after them. And I will gain glory through Pharaoh and all his army, through his chariots and his horsemen. ¹⁸The Egyptians will know that I am the Lord when I gain glory through Pharaoh, his chariots and his horsemen.”

¹⁹Then the angel of God, who had been traveling in front of Israel’s army, withdrew and went behind them. The pillar of cloud also moved from in front and stood behind them, ²⁰coming between the armies of Egypt and Israel. Throughout the night the cloud brought darkness to the one side and light to the other side; so neither went near the other all night long.

²¹Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and all that night the Lord drove the sea back with a strong east wind and turned it into dry land. The waters were divided, ²²and the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right and on their left.

WEEK TEN

MARCH 18 – 24

WEEKLY TEXT: EPHESIANS 3:14–20 (NIV)

¹⁴For this reason I kneel before the Father, ¹⁵from whom every family[a] in heaven and on earth derives its name. ¹⁶I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ¹⁷so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, ¹⁸may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, ^vand to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

²⁰Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us,

WEEK ELEVEN

MARCH 25 – 31

WEEKLY TEXT: DEUTERONOMY 10:12–22 (NIV)

¹²And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God ask of you but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in obedience to him, to love him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, ¹³and to observe the Lord's commands and decrees that I am giving you today for your own good?

¹⁴To the Lord your God belong the heavens, even the highest heavens, the earth and everything in it. ¹⁵Yet the Lord set his affection on your ancestors and loved them, and he chose you, their descendants, above all the nations—as it is today. ¹⁶Circumcise your hearts, therefore, and do not be stiff-necked any longer. ¹⁷For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality and accepts no bribes. ¹⁸He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the foreigner residing among you, giving them food and clothing. ¹⁹And you are to love those who are foreigners, for you yourselves were foreigners in Egypt. ²⁰Fear the Lord your God and serve him. Hold fast to him and take your oaths in his name. ²¹He is the one you praise; he is your God, who performed for you those great and awesome wonders you saw with your own eyes. ²²Your ancestors who went down into Egypt were seventy in all, and now the Lord your God has made you as numerous as the stars in the sky.

WEEK TWELVE

APRIL 1 – 7

WEEKLY TEXT: JOHN 15:5–17 (NIV)

⁵“I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. ⁷If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

⁹“As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. ¹⁰If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commands and remain in his love. ¹¹I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. ¹²My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. ¹³Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. ¹⁴You are my friends if you do what I command. ¹⁵I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. ¹⁶You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. ¹⁷This is my command: Love each other.

Thank you so much for praying, fasting, and discerning over these least 12 weeks.
We pray that this process had been a blessing to both you and to our church.
May God bless you as we prepare ourselves for Holy Week, for Easter, and for
the joy of the Christian declaration that; *'HE IS RISEN!'*

